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NATURE STUDY

天性的研究

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桂林文化供應社印行

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The heartiness of Major Cartwright had grown beyond being an acquired attribute of mind and become organic. He exuded it chemically as a horse exudes horsiness; as a matter of fact he exuded a certain amount of horsiness as well. He was large and blond and his skin was brickish in colour, the end of his fleshy nose shaded imperceptibly to mauve but not offensively; it blended in with the small purple veins round his eyes which were pale blue and amiable. His best point really was the even gleaming whiteness of his teeth, these he showed a good deal when he laughed, a loud, non-infectious, but frequent laugh.

The barman treated him with deference and he was popular on board owing to his genial efficiency at deck games. In the early morning and later afternoon he played Deck Tennis in saggy khaki shorts, below which he wore neatly rolled stockings and gym shoes and above a rather old blue silk polo

shirt opened generously — at the neck exposing a few curling fronds of dust-coloured hair.

He was at his best in the smoking-room after dinner, expanding into "outpost of Empire" reminiscence and calling for "stengahs," a bore really but somehow touching in his fidelity to type. It wasn't until after Marseille, where most of the cronies had disembarked to go home overland, that he turned his attention to me. We sat together in the little winter garden place aft of the promenade deck and had a drink before dinner. The lights of Marseilles were shimmering on the horizon and there was a feeling of emptiness in the ship as though the party were over and there were only a few stragglers left. The stragglers consisted of about a dozen planters and their families and three or four yellowish young men from the Shell Company in Iraq, who had joined the ship at Port Said and were going home on leave.

He talked a lot but slowly and with great emphasis, principally, of course, about himself and his regiment. On the few occasions when he forsook the personal for the general it was merely to let fly a cliché such as "That's women all over," or "A man who has a light hand with a horse has a light hand with anything." I gently interposed, "Except with pastry," but he didn't hear. He suggested that he should move over from his now deserted table in the

saloon and join me at mine for the rest of the voyage. I was about to spring to my usual defence in such circumstances, which is that I always have to eat alone as I am concentrated on making mental notes for a book or play, but something in his eyes prevented me, they were almost pleading so I said with as much sincerity as I could muster that nothing would please me more, and that was that.

Our tete-a-tetes for the next few days were, on the whole, not as bad as I feared—he was perfectly content to talk away without demanding too many answers. By the time we reached Gibraltar I knew a great deal about him. He had a wife, but the tropics didn't agree with her so she was at home living with her married sister just outside Newbury, a nice little place they had although the married sister's husband was a bit of a fool, a lawyer of some sort with apparently no initiative.

The Major had no doubt that his wife would be damned glad to see him again. He was proposing to take a furnished flat in Town for part of his leave and do a few shows, after that Scotland and some shooting. A friend of his called, for some unexplained reason, "Old Bge," had quite a decent little shoot near a place the name of which the Major had as much difficulty in pronouncing as I had in understanding.

I listened to his conversation attentively because I was anxious to discover what, if anything, he had learned from the strange places he had been to, the strange people he had met, the various and varied differences in climate, circumstances, motives and human life that he had encountered. There he sat, slouched back in a big armchair in the smoking-room, his large legs stretched out in front of him and a brandy glass in his hand—talking—wandering here and there among his yesterdays without any particular aim and without, alas, the gift of expressing in the least what he really wanted to say and, worse still, without even the consciousness that he wasn't doing so. His limited vocabulary was shamefully overworked—most of his words did the duty of six, like a small orchestra of provincial musicians thinly attempting to play a complicated score by doubling and trebling up on their instruments. I wondered what he knew, actually knew of the facts of life, not complex psychological adjustments and abstractions, they were obviously beyond his ken and also unnecessary to his existence. But any truths, basic truths within his own circumscribed experience. Had he fathomed them or not? Was there any fundamental certainty of anything whatever in that untidy, meagre, amiable mind? Were the badly-dressed phrases that he paraded so grandiloquently aware of their shabbiness, their pretentious

gentility? Did they know themselves to be ill-groomed and obscure; or were they upheld by their own conceits like dowdy British Matrons sniffing contemptuously at a Mannequin Parade?

I tried to visualise him in certain specified situations, crises, earthquakes or shipwrecks, or sudden native uprisings. He would behave well undoubtedly, but why? Could he ever possibly know why? The reason he stood aside to allow the women and children to go first; the exact motive that prompted him to rush out into the compound amid a hail of arrows, brandishing a Service revolver? The impulses that caused his actions, the instincts that pulled him hither and thither, had he any awareness of them, any curiosity about them at all? Was it possible that an adult man in the late forties with a pattern of strange journeys behind him, twenty years at least of potentially rich experience, could have lived through those hours and days and nights, through all those satisfactions, distastes, despondencies and exhilarations without even a trace of introspection or scepticism? Just a bland unthinking acceptance without one query? I looked at him wondering, he was describing a duck shoot in Albania at the moment, and decided that not only was it possible but very probable indeed.

After dinner on the night before we arrived at

Plymouth he asked me into his cabin to see some of his snapshot albums. "They might interest you," he said in a depreccatory tone which was quite false as I knew perfectly well that the thought that they might bore me to extinction would never cross his mind. "There's a damn-good one of that sail-fish I told you about," he went on. "And that little Siamese girl I ran across in K.L. after that Guest Night."

I sat on his bunk and was handed album after album in chronological order, fortunately I was also handed a whisky-and-soda. They were all much the same; groups, picnic parties, bathing parties, schools, fishing parties, all neatly pasted in with names and initials written underneath. "Hong-Kong, March 1927; Mrs. F. Cully; Captain H.; Mrs. Friedlands; Stella; Morgan, W.C." He always indicated his own presence in the group by his initials. I need hardly say that W.C. figured largely in all the albums. He had the traditional passion of his kind for the destruction of life, there was hardly a page that was not adorned with the grinning, morose head of some dimembered animal or fish.

Suddenly, amid all these groups of people I didn't know and was never likely to know, my eye lighted on a face that I recognised. A thin rather sheep-like face with sparse hair brushed straight back and small eye that looked as if it were only the narrow

high-bridged nose that prevented them from rushing together and merging for ever.

"That," I said, "is Ellsworth Ponsonby."

The Major's face lit up. "Do you know old Ponsonby?"

I replied that I had known him on and off for several years. The Major seemed, quite agreeably, stricken by the coincidence.

"Fancy that now!" he said; "Fancy you knowing old Ponsonby." He sat down next to me on the bed and stared over my shoulder at the photograph as though by looking at it from the same angle he could find some explanation of the extraordinary coincidence of my knowing old Ponsonby. Old Ponsonby in the snapshot was sitting in the stern sheets of a small motor-boat. Behind him was the rich, mountainous coastline of the Island of Java, on either side of him were two good-looking young men, one fair and one dark and both obviously bronzed by the sun. Ellsworth Ponsonby himself, even in those tropical surroundings, contrived to look as pale as usual. The word "Old" as applied to him was merely affectionate. He was, I reflected, about forty-three. He was narrow-shouldered and wearing, in addition to his pince-nez, a striped fisherman's jersey which was a trifle since too big for him. The young men were doing, apparently, nothing at all. I asked who they

were, to which the Major replied that they were just a couple of pals of old Ponsenby's, quite decent chaps on the whole. They were making a tour of the Islands in Ponsenby's yacht, the noble proportions of which could just be discerned in the right-hand corner of the photograph.

"Never seen such a thing in my life," said the Major. "Talk about every modern convenience, that yacht was a floating palace; marble bathrooms to every cabin, a grand piano, a cocktail bar, a French chef—there rich Americans certainly know how to do themselves well. I ran across him first in Batavia—I was taking a couple of months' sick leave—had a touch of Dengue, you know, and thought I'd pay a call on an old pal of mine, Topper Watson—wonder if you know him?—used to be in the Sixth—anyway, he'd been invalided out of the army and had this place in Java, plantation of some sort, quite good at shooting and some decent horses, unfortunately married a Javanese girl—quite a nice little woman, but that sort of thing gives one the shudders a bit—not that it was any of my affair, after all a man's life is his own to do what he likes with, still it seemed a pity to see a chap like old Topper on the way to going native."

"Ellsworth," I said wearily. "Ellsworth Ponsenby?"

"Oh yes, old Ponsenby." The Major gave one of

his strong laughs—"Ran up against him in the bar of the Hotel des Indes—got to yarning—you know how one does, and finally he asked me on board this damned yacht of his. By God, I hadn't eaten such a dinner for years, and the brandy he gave us afterwards!" Here the Major smacked his lips and blew a lumbering kiss into the air. "We sat on deck into the small hours talking."

I wondered if the Major had really permitted Ponsonby to do any of the talking. Apparently he had for he heaved a sigh and said, "Damned sad old Ponsonby's, he had a raw deal."

As that did not entirely fit in with what I knew of Ellsworth I asked in what way he had had such a sad life and such a raw deal.

"Wife left him," replied the Major laconically, pursing up his large lips and ejecting a smoke-ring with considerable force. "God, but women can be bitches sometimes! Did you ever know her?"

"Yes," I said. "I knew her."

"Ran off with his own chauffeur—can you imagine a decently bred woman doing such a thing? Old Ponsonby didn't say much but you could see it had broken him a completely—women like that ought to be bloody well horsewhipped. He showed me a photograph of her, pretty in rather a flash sort of way, you know, the modern type, flat-chested, no figure at all, not my idea of beauty,

but each man to his own taste. After we'd looked at the photograph we went up on deck again. You could see old Ponsonby was in a state, he was trembling and hardly said a word for ten minutes and then damn it if he didn't start blubbing! I must say I felt sorry for the poor devil, but there was nothing I could say so I poured him out some more brandy and after a bit he pulled himself together. That was when he told me about her running off with the chauffeur—after all he'd given her everything, you know—she was a nobody before she married him. He met her first in Italy, I believe, just after the War, and they were married in Rome—then he took her over to America to meet his people—So too, I think it was. Then they had a house in London for a couple of seasons and another one in Paris, I believe. Then this awful thing happened." The Major wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, it was getting rather stuffy in the cabin. "My God," he said pensively, "I don't know what I'd do if a woman did a thing like that to me—You old Ponsonby—" He broke off and was silent for a minute or two, then he turned to me, "But you knew her, didn't you?"

"Yes," I said, "I knew her."

So Mrs. Hyde was sister-in-law to the first met
Edward Ponsonby in America just after the War. She

was staying at the Pension Floriana, with her Aunt and a couple of girl-cousins. Ellsworth was at the Grand Hotel with his mother. Old Mrs. Ponsonby was remarkable more as a monument than a human being. Her white hair was so permanently waved and arranged that it looked like conrete. Her face was a mask of white powder and her eyes were cold and hard. Beneath her chin, which was beginning to sag, she wore a light black velvet ribbon by day, and at night a dog-collaz of seed pearls and diamonds. She sat on the terrace of the hotel every morning from eleven until one, lunched, rather resentfully, at a window table in the dining-room, retired to her bed regularly from two until four and then took a short drive through the surrounding country. She over-dressed for dinner and played bridge afterwards, wearing an expression of thinly disguised exasperation whether she won or lost. Ellsworth sometimes came with her drove with her and played bridge with her. Whenever he did the look in her eyes softened a trifle and her face relaxed. She watched him greedily, every gesture that he made, when he was shuffling the cards, when he was taking a cigarette from his elaborate Cartier cigarette case and lighting it, whatever he did her eyes were on him sharp and terribly loving. When he was not with her he was usually with Father Robert. They would walk up and down the beach sometimes in the moonlight after dinner, their dark shadows bumping.

along he found them over the dry sand. Father Robert was plump with fine eyes, a thick, sensual mouth and wide soft hands which moved gently when he talked, not in any way to illustrate what he was saying, but as though they were living a different, detached life of their own. Jennifer and her girl cousins used to allude to him as "The Black Beetle."

Ellsworth had been converted to the Catholic Faith when he was nineteen. Oddly enough his mother had put forward no objections, in some strange intuitive way she probably felt that it would keep Ellsworth close to her, and in this she was right. He had always been emotional as a boy and this Catholic Business seemed somehow to calm him, also it was an outlet that he could discuss with her without outraging any proprieties. She had hoped, in her secret heart, that once away from the strong guiding influence of Father Ryan in Boston, he might, amid the interests and excitements of travel, become a little less ardent; this hope, however, was doomed to disappointment, for on arrival in London they had been met by Father Hill; in Paris by Father Jules; in Lausanne by Father MacMichael; in Rome by Father Philipo; and here, in Alassio, by Father Robert. She had not really minded the other Fathers, in fact Father MacMichael had been quite amusing, but she quite unequivocally detested Father Robert. This was in no way apparent, as her

Bostonish upbringing had taught her to control any but her more superficial feelings; however, the hate was there, lying in her heart, vital, alert, and waiting.

Ellsworth, even if he suspected it, showed no sign and continued to enjoy Father Robert's company as much as he could, which was a great deal.

Mrs. Ponsonby first noticed Jennifer in the lounge of the Hotel, sitting with a young man in flannels and two nondescript girls. Jennifer looked far from nondescript. She radiated a clear, gay, animal vitality. She was wearing a neat white-tennis dress and the ends of her dark hair were damp and curly from bathing. Mrs. Ponsonby watched her for a little, covertly, from behind a novel; quick movements, good teeth and skin, obviously a lady; she smiled a lot and talked eagerly in a pleasant, rather husky voice. When she got up to go on to the terrace with the two girls and the young man, still talking animatedly, Mrs. Ponsonby rose too and went up to her room.

From that moment onwards Mrs. Ponsonby proceeded upon a course of stately espionage. Her sources of information were various. Mrs. Wortley, who was a friend of Jennifer's Aunt; the English padre Mr. Selton; Giulio, the barman in the hotel, even the floor waiter was questioned discreetly as his wife was a laundress in the town and dealt with the washing from the Persion Florians.

In a few days she had found out quite a lot. Jennifer was nineteen, the daughter of a doctor in Cornwall, her name was Hyde. She was evidently not well-off as she had travelled out from England second-class, but she apparently had some wealthy relatives in London, had been out for a season and been presented; Mrs. Wortley was quite enthusiastic about her. "A thoroughly nice girl," she said, "Modern in one way and yet old-fashioned at the same time, if you know what I mean. I do think, of course, that it's a pity she puts quite so much red on her lips, but after all I suppose that's the thing nowadays, and one is only young once. I remember myself when I was a girl my one idea was to be smart. I remember getting into the most dreadful hot water for turning one of my afternoon dresses into an evening frock by snipping off the sleeves and altering the front of the bodice." Here Mrs. Wortley laughed indulgently, but Mrs. Pensonby had lost interest.

A couple of evenings later on the terrace Mrs. Pensonby dropped her book just as Jennifer was passing. Jennifer picked it up and returned it to her with a polite smile and upon being pressed, agreed to sit down and have a glass of lemonade. She talked without shyness but also, Mrs. Pensonby was pleased to observe, without too much self-possession. Before she left to join the friends who were standing about giggling slightly,

in the doorway, Mrs. Ponsonby had extracted a promise from her to come to lunch on the following day.

The lunch party was quite a success. At first Mrs. Ponsonby had been rather disconcerted to discover that Ellsworth had invited Father Robert, but it was not very long before she decided in her mind that it had been a good thing. To begin with the presence of Jennifer made Father Robert ill-at-ease. Mrs. Ponsonby watched with immense satisfaction the corners of his mouth nervously twitching. She also noted that he didn't talk as much as usual. Ellsworth, on the other hand, talked nineteen to the dozen; he was obviously, she observed happily, showing off. The general narrowness of Ellsworth was not so apparent in those days. He was only twenty-six and had a certain soft personal charm when he liked to exert it. On this occasion he was only too keen to exert it. He discussed books and plays wittily with Jennifer, and whenever she laughed at anything he said, he shot rather a smug look at Father Robert. Altogether everything was going very well and Mrs. Ponsonby's spirit purred with pleasure as she watched, with cold eyes, Father Robert's left hand irritably crumbling his bread.

About a week later, during which time Jennifer and Ellsworth had struck up a platonic, pleasant friendship, Mrs. Ponsonby made her supreme gesture by dying suddenly in the lounge after dinner.

Jennifer Ponsonby was, to put it mildly, a reckless gambler, but her gaiety at the tables whether winning or losing was remarkable. She had a series of little superstitions, such as placing one card symmetrically on top of the other and giving the shoe two sharp peremptory little whacks before drawing—if she drew a nine she chuckled delightedly, if she made herself Baccarat she chuckled equally delightedly. Her luck, on the whole, was good, but she won gracefully, shrugging her shoulders and giving a little deprecatory smile when anyone failed to win a Banca against her.

It was the summer of 1933, and I had stopped off in Monte Carlo on my way home from Tunis. Everybody was there, of course, it was the height of the summer season. The Beach Hôtel was full and I was staying at the Hotel de Paris which, actually, I preferred. Jennifer was staying with old Lily Craziani on Cap Ferrat, but she escaped whenever she could and came over to Monte Carlo to dine and gamble. I played at the same table with her for an hour or two, and then when I had lost all that I intended to lose, I asked her to come and have a drink in the bar while the shoe was being made up.

We perched ourselves on high stools, and ordered "Fine a l'eau" and talked casually enough. She

asked me where I'd been and whether or not I'd seen so-and-so lately, and I asked her what she'd been up to and what had become of so-and-so. Presently a chasseur appeared and said that her table was starting again. She slipped down from her stool and said, almost defiantly, "You haven't asked after Ellsworth, but you'll be delighted to hear that he's very well indeed," then she gave a sharp little laugh, more high-pitched than usual, and disappeared into the baccarat room.

I felt a trifle embarrassed and also vaguely irritated. I hadn't mentioned Ellsworth on purpose. (A), because it might have been tactless as I hadn't the remotest idea whether they were still together or not; and (b), because I didn't care for him much anyhow, and never had. I ordered another drink and, when I had drunk it, strolled upstairs to watch the cabaret. There was an inferno of noise going on as I came in, the band was playing full out while two American negroes were dancing a complicated routine in white evening suits and apparently enjoying it. I sat down at a corner table and watched the rest of the show. It was reasonably good. The usual paraphernalia of elaborately undressed beauties parading in and out. The usual low comedy acrobatic act. The usual mournful young woman crooning through the microphone. I glanced round the room occasionally. All the

same faces were there. They had been here last year and the year before, and would be here next year and the year after. They changed round a bit, of course. Baby Leyland was with Georgie this year, and Fobbie had a new blonde. The Gruman-Lewis party looked tired and disgruntled, but then they always did. I felt oppressed and bored and far too hot. I watched Jennifer come in with Tiny Matlock. They were hailed by Freda and Gordon Blake and sat down at their table. It was one of the noisier tables. I think Alastair, who was sitting at the end, must have been doing some of his dirtier imitations, because they were all laughing extravagantly, rather too loudly. I thought, considering the hundreds of times they must have heard them before.

Jennifer laughed with the rest, meanwhile refurbishing her make-up, holding the mirror from her vanity-case at one angle in order to catch the light. Her movements were swift and nervous, she stabbed at her mouth with the lipstick and then, holding the glass at arm's length, looked at it through narrowed eyes and made a slight grimace. Suddenly, in that moment, I don't think why, I knew quite definitely that she was wretched. My memory ran back over the years that I had known her, never intimately, never beyond the easy casualness of Christian names, but always, I reflected, with pleasure. She had always

been gay company, charming to dance with, I fun to discover unexpectedly in a house-party. I remembered the first time I had met her in London, it must have been 1920 or 1921, the pretty young wife of a rich American. That was a long time ago, nearly thirteen years, and those years had certainly changed her. I watched her across the room. She was talking now, obviously describing something, gesticulating a little with her right hand. There was a moment's lull in the general noise, and I caught for a second the sound of her husky laugh, quite a different timbre from that which she had given as she left the bar. "You haven't asked after Ellsworth, but you'll be delighted to hear that he's very well indeed."

I decided to walk back to my hotel rather than take a taxi; the night was cool and quiet after the cigarette smoke and noise of the Casino. I had nearly reached the top of the first hill when I heard a car coming up behind me. It seemed to be coming a great deal too fast, so I stepped warily against the parapet to let it go by. It came whirling round the corner with a screech of brakes, a small open Fiat two-seater. It stopped noisily about a yard away from me and I saw that Jennifer was driving it. "I saw you leaving the Casino and chased you," she said rather breathlessly. "because I wanted to say I was sorry."

I stepped forward. "What on earth for?"

"If you didn't notice so much the better, but I've had a horrid feeling about it ever since I left you in the bar. I tessed my curls at you and spoke harshly; it's no use pretending I didn't because I did, I know I did."

"What nonsense!" I said.

"Get in, there's a darling, and I'll drive you wherever you want to go—where do you want to go? I've got to get to Cap Ferrat."

"Not as far as that anyhow, just the Hotel de Paris."

I got in and sat down beside her. She let in the clutch and we drove on up into the town. The streets were deserted as it was getting on for three in the morning. Suddenly she stopped the car by the kerb in front of a sports shop, the window was filled with tennis racquets, golf clubs and sweaters.

"I'm now going to do something unforgivable," she said in a strained voice. "I've been trying not to for hours, but it's no use." She sat back in the driving seat and looked at me. "I'm going to cry. I hate women who cry, but I can't help it, everything's absolutely bloody, and I know it's none of your business and that this is an imposition, but we've been friends on and off for years and—" Here she broke off and buried her face in her hands. I put my

found her. "I don't think you'd better be too sympathetic," she muttered into my shoulder. "It'll probably make me worse." Then she started to sob, not hysterically, not even very noisily, but they were painful sobs as though she were fighting them too strongly—

"For God's sake let go!" I said sharply. "If you don't you'll probably burst!"

She gave me a little pat and relaxed a bit. Two or three more passed, but she kept her head buried against my shoulder. I sat quite still and looked gloomily at the tennis racquets. I felt rather bewildered and quite definitely uncomfortable. Not that I wasn't touched, that out of all the people she knew she should surprisingly have selected me to break down with. My discomfort was caused by a strange feeling of oppression, a similar sensation to that which one experiences sometimes on entering a sad house, a house wherein unhappy, cruel things have taken place. I almost shuddered, but controlled it. Some intuition must have made her feel this, for she sat up and reached her hand behind her for her vanity case. "I am so dreadfully sorry," she said. I smiled as reassuringly as I could and lit a cigarette for her. She wiped her eyes, powdered her nose, took it and sat silently for a little—I noticed her lip tremble occasionally, but she didn't cry any more. Suddenly she seemed to come to some sort of decision

and leant forward and re-started the engine. "Put drop you home now," she said in a stifled voice which struck me as infinitely pathetic; there was an almost childish gallantry in the way she said it, like a very small boy who has fallen down and broken his knee and is determined to be brave over it.

"You'll do nothing of the sort," I said quickly. "You'll drive me up on to the Middle Corniche and there we'll sit and smoke ourselves silly and watch the sun come up."

She protested: "Honestly, I'm all right now—I swear I am."

"Do what you're told," I said.

She gave the ghost of a smile and off we went.

We stopped just the other side of Eze, left the car parked close into the side of the wood, having taken the cushions out of it, and arranged ourselves facing the view, with our backs against a low stone wall. Jennifer hardly spoke, and we sat there for quite a long while in silence. Far below us on the right, Cap Ferrat stretched out into the sea like a quiet sleeping animal. Occasionally a train, looking like an elaborate mechanical toy, emerged from a tunnel, ran along by the edge of the sea for a little way and then disappeared, again the lights from its carriage windows stripping the trees and rocks and houses as it passed. The rumbling sound of it came to us late when it

was no longer in sight. Every now and then but not very often, a car whirred along the road behind us and we could see its headlights diminishing in the distance, carving the darkness into fantastic shapes and shadows as it went. The path of the moon glittered across the sea to the horizon and there were no ships passing.

"I suppose it would be too obvious if I said: 'Now then?'"

Jennifer sighed. "'Now then,' is a bit discouraging," she said. "Too arbitrary—couldn't we lead into it a little less abruptly?"

"How is Ellsworth?" I said airily. "Or rather, where is Ellsworth?"

"Very well indeed, and in Taormina."

There was a long silence while we both looked at Ellsworth in Taormina. I can't vouch for Jennifer's view, but mine was clear: I saw him going down to bathe, wearing sandals, a discreetly coloured jumper and flannel trousers with a faint stripe. I saw him at lunch in the cool monastic hotel dining-room, talking earnestly with a couple of Catholic Fathers. I saw him in the evening, after dinner, sitting in a cafe with a few of the young locals round him, standing them drinks and speaking in precise, rather sibilant Italian with a strong Bostonian accent.

"He can't get sunburnt, you know," said Jennifer

irrelevantly. "And he does try so hard. Isn't it sad?"

"Not even pink?"

"Only very occasionally, and that fades almost immediately."

"Freckles?"

"A few, but in the wrong places."

"How much does he mind?"

"Desperately, I think," Jennifer sighed again, deeply. "It's become a sort of complex with him. He has quite a lot of complexes really. The Catholic Church, Italian Gothic, Walt Whitman and not over-tipping. He's a beauty lover, I'm afraid."

"You should never have married a beauty lover."

She nodded. "Beauty lovers certainly are Hell."

"Why did you?"

"Why did I what?"

"Marry him."

"Hold on to your hats, boys, here we go!" She laughed faintly and said, "I think I'd better have another cigarette, I'm told it gives one social poise. I'm afraid my social poise has been rather over-strained during these last few years."

I gave her a cigarette. "Why not begin at the beginning?" I suggested. "You know it's all coming out eventually, you might just as well go the whole hog."

"I wonder where that expression originated?" she said. "It doesn't really make sense—you can't go a

hog, whole or otherwise.”

“Never mind about that.”

“I don’t really.”

“Why did you marry him?”

“I was an innocent girl,” she replied. “When I say innocent girl, I naturally mean a bloody fool. I was ignorant of even the most superficial facts of life. Circumstances conspired against me—doesn’t that sound lovely?—but it’s honestly true, they did. I was in Italy, staying with Aunt Dora in a pension, and Ellsworth and his mother were at the Grand Hotel. They had a suite, of course, and as far as the hotel was concerned they were the star on account of being American and very rich. The old girl took a fancy to me, why I shall never know, and asked me to lunch. And there was Ellsworth. He really was quite sweet in those days and funny; he said funny things and knew a lot and was nice to be with. There was a priest there, too, Father Robert, who I suspect had his eye on the Ponsonby fortune—some priests on behalf of their church have a strong commercial sense—anyhow, he took a hatred to me on sight which I rather enjoyed. Then came the moment when circumstances conspired against me. Old Mrs. Ponsonby upset and died of a heart attack in the lounge of the hotel just as we were all having our after-dinner coffee. It really was very horrid, and I was

Desperately sorry for poor Ellsworth. That was where the trouble started. Pity may be a Christian virtue, but it's dangerous to muck about with, and can play the devil with common-sense. Well, to continue, as they say, from that moment onwards, Ellsworth clung to me; you see, I had unwittingly and most unfortunately ousted Father Robert from his affections. He cried a good deal, which was natural enough, as he'd never been aways from his mother all his life. I went with him to the funeral, which was pretty grim, and did my best to comfort him as well as I could. Then the night after the funeral he suddenly appeared at our pension and said he wanted to talk to me. My Aunt Dora was in a fine flutter, being one of those nice-minded British matrons who can only see any rich young man as a prospective bed-mate for their younger unattached female relatives. I think she probably regretted that Ellsworth didn't want to talk to Grace or Vera, who were her own daughters—and God knows she couldn't have regretted it half as much as I did later—but still, I was an unmarried niece, and half a loaf is better than whatever it is, and so out I went into the sweet-scented Italian night with Ellsworth and her blessing. We walked for a long way, first of all through the town and then along the beach. Ellsworth didn't say much until we sat down with our

backs to a wall, rather like we're sitting here, only without the view, just the sea lapping away and a lot of stars. Then he started. "Oh dear!" Jennifer shifted herself into a more comfortable position. "He told me all about himself from the word go, not in any exhibitionistic way, but as though he just had to get it out of his system in spite of caution and decency and traditionally bred reticence—again like I'm doing now." She laughed rather sharply. "I wonder why people do it? I wonder if it's ever any use?"

"It's all right," I said, "when there are no strings attached. Don't get discouraged, it will do you a power of good."

"You're very sweet," she said. "I do hope I'm not going to cry again!"

There was silence for a few moments and then she went on, speaking more quickly.

"I can't possibly tell you all she said, because it wouldn't be fair. I couldn't ever tell anybody, but the main thing was that he was frightened, frightened to death of himself. That was why he had become a Roman Catholic, that fear. He wasn't very articulate about it really, and he jumped from one thing to another so that on the whole I was pretty bewildered, but I did feel dreadfully touched and sad for him, and foolishly, wholeheartedly anxious to help him. He said, among other things, that he'd always

been terrified of women until he met me and that the thought of marriage sort of revolted him. Of course, he hadn't had to worry about it much as long as his mother was alive, but now he was utterly lost, he couldn't face the loneliness of having no one. Father Robert had tried to persuade him to join the Church in some capacity or other. I don't exactly know what, but he fought shy of this, because he didn't feel that he had a genuine vocation or enough faith or something. He went on and on rambling here and there. One minute he'd be talking about Father Robert and how wonderful the Church was, because it knew everything about everyone and could solve all problems if only one believed enough. Then he'd jump back, a long way back, into his childhood and talk about a friend he had at his prep school called Homer—aren't Americans awful giving their children names like that?—Homer was apparently very important, he kept on creeping up. You've an idea how strange it was sitting there on the sand with all that emotion and fright and unhappiness whirling round my head: I was only nineteen and didn't understand half of what he was talking about, but I do remember feeling pent-up and strained and rather wanting to scream. Presently he calmed down a bit and said something about how terrible it was to live in a world where no one understood you, and

that Society was made for the normal, ordinary people, and there wasn't any place for the misfits. Then, then he asked me to marry him. To do him justice he was as honest as we could be. He said I was the only person he could trust and that we could travel and see the world and entertain and have fun. He didn't talk about the money side of it, but he implied a great deal. I knew perfectly well he was rich, anyhow—” She paused for a moment and fumbled in her bag for her handkerchief. “But that wasn't why I married him, honestly it wasn't. Of course it had something to do with it, I suppose. You see, I'd been poor all my life, Father's practice wasn't up to much and the idea of having all the clothes and things that I wanted and being able to travel, which I'd always longed to do, probably helped a bit, but it wasn't the whole reason or anything like it, I swear it wasn't. The real reason was much stronger and more complicated and difficult to explain. On looking back on it, I think I can see it clearly, but even now I'm not altogether sure. I was very emotional and romantic and really very nice inside when I was young, far nicer than I am now. There ought to be a law against bringing children up to have nice instincts and ideals, it makes some of the things that happen afterwards so much more cruelly surprising than they need be, I can see, now,

that I quite seriously married Ellsworth from a sense of duty—doing my good deed for the day. Girl Guides for ever. I knew perfectly well that I didn't love him, at least my brain knew it and told me so, but I didn't listen and allowed my emotions, my confused, adolescent, sentimental emotions, to drag me in the other direction. I remember forcing myself to imagine what it would be like, the actual sex part, I mean, and thinking, quite blithely, that it would be lovely and thrilling to lie in Ellsworth's arms and be a comfort to him and look after him and stand between him and his loneliness. Of course, my imagination over all this wasn't very clear, as my sex experience to date had consisted of little more than an unavowed and beautiful passion for Miss Hilton-Smith, our games mistress at St. Mary's, Plymouth, and a few daring kisses from a young man at a hunt ball in Bodmin. Obviously, I hadn't the remotest idea what I was letting myself in for, so I said 'Yes,' and two days later, still in a haze of romantic and emotional confusion, we went off to Nice, without letting anyone suspect a thing, and were married in some sort of office by a man with a goitre."

Jennifer held out her hand for another cigarette. I lit one for her and, without saying a word, waited for her to go on.

"Then the trouble started." She gave a slight

shudder. "I'm not going to tell you all the details, but it was all very frightening and horrid and humiliating, I think humiliating more than anything else. After a few weeks, during which time Father had appeared and Aunt Dora and a very pompous uncle of Ellsworth's, and there had been a series of scenes and discussions and a great deal of strain, Ellsworth and I went to Rome and stayed there for months. In due course I was received into the Church. I didn't have much feeling about that one way or another and Ellsworth was very insistent, so there it was. We were finally married properly with a great deal of music and rejoicing and a lot of American-born Italian Marchesses giving parties for us. As a matter of fact, old Lily Graziani was one of them, the nicest one, I'm staying with her now." She indicated Cap Ferrat with a vague gesture. "Then we went away, practically right round the world, starting with Boston and all Ellsworth's relations. Oh, dear!" she gave a little laugh. "That was very tricky, but some of them were all right. After that, we went to Honolulu and Japan and China, then to India and Egypt and back to England. That was when we first met, wasn't it, at the house in Great Cumberland Place? By that time, of course, I'd become a bit hardened. I was no longer romantic and innocent and nice. I'd learned a lot of things, I'd joined the Navy and seen the

world. All these lovely-places, all those chances for happiness, just out of reach, thrown away. Don't misunderstand me, it wasn't the sex business that was upsetting me, at least I don't think it was. I'd faced the failure of that ages before. Oh no, it was Ellsworth himself. I should have been perfectly happy, well, if not happy, at least content, if Ellsworth had played up and been kind and ordinary and a gay companion, but he didn't and he wasn't, I suppose people can't help being beastly, can they? It's something to do with glandular secretions and environment and things that happened to you when you were a child. I can only think that the most peculiar thing certainly happened to Ellsworth when he was a child and his glandular secretions must have been something fierce. At any rate, I hadn't been with him long before I knew, beyond a shadow of doubt that he was a thoroughly unpleasant character. Not in any way bad in the full sense of the word. Not violent or realistic or going off on dreadful drunks and coming back and beating me up. Nothing like that, nothing nearly so direct. He was far too refined and carefully cultured, you said it, just now, a league player, that's what he was, a hundred per cent rip-snorting beauty lover. Oh dear, how can one reconcile being a beauty lover with being mean, grunting, selfish and pettishly tyrannical almost to a point of malice?

The answer is that one can, because there are several sorts of beauty lovers. There are those who like kindness and good manners and wide seas and dignity, and others who like Bellini Madonnas and Giotto's and mysticism and incense and being able to recognise, as publicly as possible, a genuine old this or old that, I don't believe it's enough——" Jennifer's voice rose a little. "I don't believe it's enough, all that preoccupation with the dead and done with, when there's living life all round you and sudden, lovely unexpected moments to be aware of. Sudden loving gestures from other people, without motives: nothing to do with being rich or poor or talented or cultured, just our old friend human nature at its best! That's the sort of beauty worth searching for; it may sound pompous, but I know what I mean. That's the sort of beauty lover that counts. I am right, ain't I! It's taken me so many miserable hours trying to puzzle things out." She stopped abruptly, almost breathless and looked at me appealingly.

"Yes," I said, "I think you're right."

"The trouble with Ellsworth," she went on more calmly, "was that he had no love in his heart for any living soul except himself. Even his mother, who I suppose meant more to him than anyone else, faded quickly out of his memory. After the first few weeks he hardly ever referred to her and if he did it was

lightly, remotely, as though she had been someone of little importance whom he had once met and passed a summer with. If he had been honest with me or even honest with himself, it would have been all right but he was neither. He dealt in lies small, insignificant lies; this was at first, later the lies became bigger and more important. He made a lot of friends as we pursued our rather dreary social existence, some of them appeared to be genuinely fond of him, at any rate in the beginning; others quite blatantly fawned on him for what they could get out of him. I watched, rather anxiously sometimes, and occasionally tried to warn him. I still felt there was a chance, you know, not of reforming him, I wasn't as smug as that, but of reaching a plane of mutual companionship on which we could both live our own lives and discuss things, and have a certain amount of fun together without conflict and irritation and getting on each other's nerves. But it wasn't any use. He distrusted me, principally I think because I was a woman. There wasn't anything to be done. It was hopeless. Then, after we'd been married for several years, a situation occurred. It was in New York, we were staying at the Waldorf, and it was all very unpleasant and nearly developed into a front-page scandal. I'm a bit vague as to what actually happened myself there were so many co-

flicting stories, but anyhow, Ellsworth was black-mailed, and I had to interview strange people and tell a lot of lies, and a lot of money was handed out and we sailed, very hurriedly, for Europe. After that, things were beastlier than ever. He was sulky and irritable and took to making sarcastic remarks at me in front of strangers. All the resentment of a weak nature, that had been badly frightened, came to the top. Finally, I could bear it no longer and asked him to divorce me. That was the only time I have ever seen him really furious. He went scarlet in the face with rage. He was a Catholic and I was a Catholic. That was that. There could be no question of such a thing. Then I lost my head, and told him what I really thought of him, and that I was perfectly sure that the Catholic business was not really the reason for his refusal at all. He was really worried about what people would say; terrified of being left without the nice social buttress of a wife who could preside at his table, arrive with him at pompous receptions and fashionable first nights and in fact, usually at least, cover his tracks. We had a blistering row, and I left the house, that was the house in Paris, you remember it in the Avenue d'Iena, and went to London to stay with Marjorie Bridges. He followed me in a week, and a series of dreary scenes took place. He actually cried during one of them, and said that he

was really devoted to me deep down and that he would never again do anything to humiliate me in any way. I think he was honestly dreadfully frightened of my leaving him. Frightened of himself, I mean, that old fear that he had told me about, sitting on the beach, when he first asked me to marry him. I gave in in the end. There wasn't anything else to do really. And that's how we are now. He goes off on his own every now and then and does what he likes, but never for very long. He hasn't the courage for real adventure. Then we join up again, and open the house in Paris, and give parties, and do everything that everyone else does. Sometimes we go for a yachting cruise through the Greek Islands, or up the Italian coast or round about here. Actually, I'm waiting now for him to come back, and I suppose we'll collect a dozen people that we don't care for, and who don't care for us, and off we shall go to Corsica or Mallorca or Tangier. It's a lovely life."

She sat silently for a moment, looking out over the sea, then she rose to her feet and began to kick a stone with the toe of her evening shoe. "That's about all," she said.

I got up, too, and we clambered over the wall and walked slowly over to the car.

"Not quite all," I said mildly, putting the cushions into the car. "You haven't yet told me why you were

crying.”

“Isn't that enough?”

“Not quite.”

She got into the car and started fiddling with the engine. She spoke without looking at me. “I have never been unfaithful to Ellsworth,” she said in a dry, flat voice. “I know I could have easily, but it always seemed to me that it might make the situation even more squalid than it is already. Anyhow, I have never found anyone among the people we meet whom I could love enough to make it worth it. Perhaps something will happen some day—I wouldn't like to die an old maid.”

She started the car and drove me back to Monte Carlo. It was getting quite light and the whole landscape looked as though it had been newly washed. She dropped me at the Hotel de Paris then, just as she was about to drive away, she leant over the side of the car and kissed me lightly on the cheek. She said: “Thank you darling, I'll be grateful always to you for having been so really lovingly kind.”

I watched the car until it had turned the corner and was out of sight.

4

“—But a chap's own chauffeur,” the Major was saying. “I mean that really is going too far—”

"Where are they now?" I interrupted. "She and the chauffeur—did he tell you?"

"Out in Canada, I believe; the man's a Canadian. They run a garage or a petrol station or something—funnily enough, she wouldn't take any of old Ponsoby's money, he offered it, of course, he's that sort of chap, you know 'quixotic' is that the word?"

"Yes," I said, "that's the word."

The Major collected the photograph albums and packed them in his suit-case, as he did so he hummed a tune rather breathily. My mind went back to that early, newly washed morning four years ago—driving down through the dawn to Monte Carlo. I remembered the emptiness in Jennifer's voice when she said: "Anyhow, I have never found anyone among the people we meet whom I could love enough to make it worth it—perhaps something will happen some day—I wouldn't like to die an old maid."

The Major straightened himself. "What about a nightcap?" he said.

We went up on deck. The air was clear and cold, and there was hardly any wind. Far away on the port bow a lighthouse on the French coast flashed intermittently.

In the smoking-room the Major flung himself, with a certain breezy abandon, into a leather armchair which growled under the strain.

"Fancy you knowing old Ponsonby," he said, "The world certainly is a very small place. You know there's a lot of truth in those old chestnuts." I nodded absently and lit a cigarette. He snapped his fingers loudly to attract the steward's attention. "I shall never forget that night as long as I live, seeing that poor chap crying like a kid, absolutely broken up. It's a pretty bad show when a man's whole life is wrecked by some damned woman. What I can't get over—" he leant forward and lowered his voice; there was an expression of genuine, horrified bewilderment in his, by now, slightly bloodshot eyes—"is that she should have gone off with his own chauffeur!"

"I suspect," I said gently, "that was why he was crying."

"Steward! Two stengahs!" said the Major.

天性的研究

卡脫拉哀脫少校的熱心，已經發展到這程度，它的性質已經超乎其為內心獲得的屬性，而變成了生物的屬性。他就如馬兒發洩馬性般化學般地發洩他底熱心。實際上，他也發洩相當成份的馬性。他身材龐大，金髮碧眼，皮膚帶火紅色，肥碩的鼻子底末端，不知不覺地變成蓬鬆而不惹眼的紫色，同眼睛四週的紫色小靜脈相併合。他的眼睛帶灰藍而溫和。他最漂亮的地方，實在是一口均勻黃光雪白的牙齒。當他笑一個高朗而不傳染人的常笑的大笑時，白牙齒露出得太多。

酒席間莫當極其爲放地招待他，在船上他頗受人歡迎，因爲他對於甲板遊戲玩得令人喜歡地精彩。在清晨和薄暮時分，他穿了寬大的茶褐色短褲玩甲板馬球，下面穿着捲得極整齊的長統襪和運動鞋，上身穿着一件稍蓋的球賽用的藍綢襯衫，頸口解鬆地開着，露出幾叢灰色鬚毛。

晚飯後在吸煙室裏是他最上勁的時候，他大談其「帝國前哨」的回憶錄，叫着「斯了格」酒，實在是一個討厭人物，但因爲他忠於其所屬的典型，所以又似乎動人感情。他的知己，多數都在馬賽上岸由陸路回家去了，因此直到過了馬賽，他才注意到我，我們一起坐在散步甲板後部的小多爾裏，在晚飯前喝酒。馬賽的燈火，在地平線上閃爍着微光。那裏似乎有一種空虛之感，好像主要已過，只留下了幾個流浪的人。這些流浪者包括大約十一二個南極地帶者，他們的家眷和從伊拉地礦務汽油公司來的三四個黃毛青年，他們在奧特港上船，

正告假回鄉去。

他談了好多話，但講得緩慢而且着重得很。自然，主要的是講他自己和他所屬的隊伍，很少的時候，當他捨去私人的事不講而講一般的事時，也只不過是講一句普通的成語，就如：「那完全是女人」，或是「一個善於駕御馬兒的人，就能够駕御任何事物。」我溫文地插口說「除了糕餅」，但是他沒有聽見。他進議說其餘一半路上，他要從大餐間裏冷落的長桌上搬過來，加入我的一桌。我正要立刻應用在這種場合下我常用的防禦法，那就是我時常得一個人用著，因為我正集中思想構思一本書或戲劇，但他眼睛裏的某種表情阻止了我，這種表情近乎懇請，所以我極力誠懇地說，沒有比這真使我高興了。事情就這樣定了下來。

一般說來，我們下幾天的對談，並不像我所懼怕的那樣壞——他完全滿足於傾談自己的話，不十分要求我回答他。等我們到直布羅陀時，關於他的事我知道了好多。他有一個妻子，但熱帶的氣候不合她的健康，因此她在家鄉，就和她出來的姊姊住在紐培蘭的城外，有一個很不差的地方，雖然這位姊姊有點笨頭笨腦，顯然是一個沒有獨創力的律師之類。

少校確保他和他的妻子重會，她會一百萬分的高興。他將提議在假期裏的一部份時候，在城裏租一層有家具的房子住下，看幾場戲，之後，再到察格爾，再打獵去。他的一個叫「老愛靈」的老朋友——爲了某種不可解的理由而有此別號——在某地附近有一塊很好的小獵場，那地名少校念得非常困難，我也頗難聽懂。

我專心地傾聽這談話，因爲，如果我能夠發現的話，我極切望能夠發現在他到過的陌生地方，他所碰見的陌生人，和他所經歷到的各種氣候，環境，動機和人的生活，以及其變易中，他有什么變益。他就坐在那裏，身子埋在吸煙室的大圈手椅裏，粗大的腿兒鬆開在面前，手裏拿着一只白蘭地酒杯——談着——在他的過去裏他兒那兒隨便地閃爍着，沒有任何特別的目的。並且，可嘆的，對於他真正要說的話也完全沒有表達的天才，而更難的，他自己竟一點也不知道自己不會表達。他有限用字彙真應用過度得難以爲情——大半的字眼，每

一字盡了六個字的責任，就像小地方音樂家的小音樂隊雙倍的或三倍的增加他們的樂器，企圖勉強演奏一支複雜的樂譜。我真不知道他對於生命的事實，真正知道了些什麼，且不提複雜的心理調適和抽象的東西，——顯然那些是在他識見之外，對於他的生存也是不必須的；就只是任何真理，在他自己有限的環境裏的基本真理吧，他有沒有了解呢？在那個不修邊幅的，貧瘠和愛的心裏，對於任何事情是否有什麼基本的確定呢？他對於自己誇張地發揮出來醜劣字彙，是否明白它們的難聽和偽飾的文雅？這些字彙是不是自知其被錯誤應用，意義曖昧，還是自以為傲，就像醜惡的英國女總管輕視地恥笑着人體模型遊行一樣？

我設法揣想他在某種特殊情況下，譬如危急時，地震，沉船，或是突然發生的土人暴動時，他的行為將如何。無疑的，他會處理得很得宜的，但是爲什麼？他真會知道爲什麼嗎？他站在一邊，讓女人們和孩子們先走的理由是什麼呢？促使他奔到在箭雨下的外人圍地裏，揮舞着一枝公家手槍的實質在在的動機又是什麼呢？使他的行動的衝動，把他牽引到這裏那裏的直覺，——他是否知道它們的存在，他對於它們有沒有有一點兒好奇心呢？一個四十七八歲的大人，也曾經歷過各種奇異的旅行，至少有二十年可能是豐富的經驗，能够在一刻刻中，日日夜夜裏生活過來，能够經歷着種種滿足，厭惡，沮喪和狂喜的感覺而甚至於沒有一絲一毫的自省或懷疑，會是可能的嗎？就只是茫然不思索的接受，沒有一句詢問？我驚疑地望着他，當時他正在描述阿爾巴尼亞的獵鴨故事，他認爲這件事不僅是可能，而且真的非常可行的呢。

在我們抵達漢里毛斯當之前一夜，在晚飯後，他邀我到他的船房裏去看他的幾本照片簿。「也許它們會使你發生興趣，」他用十分虛偽的求懇音調說，因爲我完全知道他從不會想到這些照片會使我討厭得要死的。「有一張我告訴過你的頂剖剖的帆魚照，」他繼續說，「還有在 K.L. 的會賓之夜後我遇見的那個暹羅小女孩。」

我坐在他的船榻上，他把照片簿按年份一本本的遞給我。幸運的，他還給了我一杯茶汀水沖威士忌酒。這些照片都是大同小異的；第

圓，野宴會，游泳會，打獵的魚會，都整齊地貼在上面，在下面寫着名稱和簡名。「香港，一九二七年三月，H.克夫蘭太太，H.少校，佛倫特蘭茲小姐，司且益，莫爾根，W.C.」他時常拿兩張照片用簡名把自己指出來。我幾乎無需證明，在所有的照片裏，W.C.要佔去半數。就和他同類的人一樣，他有一種強生的威統感。差不多沒每一頁上不是裝飾着某些被宰割的獸類或魚兒的屍體溫溫的頭兒，突然的，在所有這一羣緊我所不認識的，且也永遠不懂得會認識的人中間，我的眼睛停留在我所認識的一張面孔上。那是一张瘦削而有山羊的面孔，稀疏的頭髮拖到後面去，小眼睛，看來好像是因爲那條窄而且高的鼻樑受阻，這雙眼睛才沒有衝到一處，永遠合成一只。

「那是愛爾蘭章哥·潘松培，」我說。

少校的面孔亮了起來。「你認識老潘松培的嗎？」

我對他說我新近才認識了他有好幾年。少校似乎被這偶合之事所感動，十分欣悅。

「真想不到！」他說。「想不到你也認識老潘松培的。」他俯看我坐在末上，從我的肩頭上來觀看這張照片，就像他從同一個角度望着它，便可以找出我之所以認識老潘松培這非常偶合之事的理由一般。在照片裏老潘松培坐在小摩托艇的尾座。他的背後是爪哇三寶壟多山的海岸。在他的左右，有兩個漂亮的青年，一個是白皮膚的，一個是深色皮膚的，顯然兩人那被太陽晒得古銅色了。潘松培自己呢，就在那個顯帶的地方，他還是平常的一樣的蒼白。加在他身上的「老」這稱呼，不過是視初的表示罷了。我回想起來，他大概有四十三歲。他的那裝着，除了襯衣與褲之外，還穿了一件比他的身材要大好多號的漁夫線毛線衫。顯然那兩個青年都一動不動。我問他這兩人是誰。少校得回身問那兩個潘松培的朋友，大概說不是很好的人。他們坐了潘松培的這隻摩托艇遊小島之行，在照片的右角，恰巧可以辨明那紅的雷圖的一角。

「我一點都沒有看見這隻一隻獅子，」少校說。「從各種時代的設備來講，那隻獅子就是一個大巨靈宮。每一間巨宮裏都有大型巨

洗澡堂，一隻遑臺的鋼琴，一個酒排間，一個法國廚子頭——那些有錢的美國人真敢享樂呢。我第一次遇見他時是在巴達維亞，我正告了幾個月的病假——患了一點兒熱帶流行病，你知道，我就想去看看我的老朋友托特·華脫遜——不曉得你認識他嗎？——時常在第六軍團的——無論如何，他因生病而脫離了軍隊，在爪哇弄到一個種畜場之類的地方，還有很好的獵場和一些好馬，不幸同一個爪哇女孩結了婚——一個很好的小女人，但是那種事情真使人有些心寒——並不是說這與我有什麼關係，歸結起來，一個人的生命是他自己的，他喜歡怎樣辦就怎樣辦，但是眼看老托特優美的士人化，總似乎是件憾事。」

「愛爾司韋斯，」我旋之地說，「潘松培。」

「噢是呀，老潘松培。」少校笑一盡讚賞的高興——「在弗萊斯威爾，酒館剛要到了他——長談了一陣子——你知道一個人會怎樣談上勁的，最後他叫我到他的那只寶具邊上去。老天爺呀，我仔幾年都沒有吃過這樣一頓好飯了，還有他多來呀我們喝的那白蘭地酒！」

「講到這裏，少校「扎扎」地敲齒嚼着，向空中送一個重吻。「我們坐在甲板土，一直談到後半夜。」

「我不曉得少校有沒有真的允許潘松培講任何話。顯然，他聽潘松培講的，因為他受驚一聲說，「老潘松培的生活真他媽的不幸，他吃了個大虧。」

因為這情形和我所知道的愛爾司韋斯的情形不大完全相同，我便問他怎樣愛爾司韋斯會有這樣一個不幸的生活，和這樣的一個大虧。

「太太壓倒了他」，少校簡括地說，曲起大拇指，指書用勁地吐出一個煙圈。「天哪，女人有時真會變成畜生的啊！你認識她嗎？」

「是的，」我說「我認識她的。」

「和他自己的車夫私奔了——你能够想像一個有錢的女人會做出這種事情來嗎？老潘松培沒有聽多少，但是你可以看得出來這件事把他整個的毀了。——像這種的女人真能狠狠的用馬鞭打她一頓。簡把她的一張照片給我，帶帶試試的辦法。你知道，那種像蛋殼頭，平胸部，完全沒有身材，不合了我的美的觀念，但是每個人都看他的審美標準的。我們看了這張照片之後，又回到甲板上——你可以看得

出來，老潘松培激動得很，他顫抖着，有十分鐘光景幾乎一句話也不說，他嬌弱地竟開始哭泣起來了呢！我的的確確替這可憐的傢伙難過，但是我不能夠說什麼話呢，所以我倒一些白蘭地給他，他喝了一些之後，恢復過來了。那是當他告訴我她和汽車夫私奔的時候——他畢竟已經把一切都給了她的，你知道——在她和他結婚之前，她真是個無名丫頭。他最初遇見她時在意大利，我相信，就在大戰之後，他們在羅馬結婚——於是便帶她到美國去見他的家裏人，——我想是在波士頓。於是他們在倫敦住了幾季，又在巴黎住了一些時，我相信。於是這樣醜事就發生了。』少校用手帕擦擦他的前額，船房裏的空氣有點悶塞了。『我的天，』他愁慘地說，『如果一個女人對我幹了那種事情，我真不知道自己會怎麼辦了——可憐的老潘松培——』他說不下去了，靜默了一兩分鐘，於是他轉向我：『但是你認識她的，不是嗎？』『是的』我說。『我認識她的。』

傑妮弗·海德第一次和愛爾司韋斯·潘松培在阿爾雪屋會面時，她是十九歲。那時剛在大戰之後。她正同她的寡母和幾個長姊妹們一起住在佛羅立安那公寓裏。愛爾司韋斯和他的母親住在大飯店裏。那位潘松培太太，作為紀念物倒要比作為活人更來得引人注意些。她的白頭髮電燙過，打扮得又那樣利害，看來像濕凝土一樣。她的臉是一張白粉面具，她的眼睛冷酷而殘忍。在開始她垂的頰下，她白天圍一條很厚的天鵝絨帶子，晚上圍一條細珍珠和鑽石鑲成的頸賞，每天從上午十一時到下午一時，她總坐在旅館裏的土台上，稍有些怕地在餐室裏的一張靠窗的桌子上吃中飯，從兩點到四點，她規矩地回到房內休息，接着開了汽車在四週鄉下兜一下風，過分盛裝若用晚餐，過後便玩橋牌戲，不管橋贏，總是帶着一種假裝掩飾的激怒；有時愛爾司韋斯同她一起吃飯，一起坐汽車，一起玩橋牌戲。無論什麼時候他同她在一起時，她的「醋意」表情便溫柔了一些，臉部的表情也舒展了。她食婪地凝望着他；他的每一動作，當他洗牌時，從他精緻的木底安煙風裏拿出一隻香煙來點燃時，不論他做什麼事，她的眼睛總是尖銳地

，無限熱愛地看着他。他同她在一起時，他通常總是和勞勃脫神父在一起。有時在晚飯後，他們在沙灘上月光下來回地走着，他們的黑影在他們的身後底乾沙灘上跳撞着。勞勃脫神父身材肥胖，有一雙漂亮的眼睛，一張厚而肉感的嘴，寬闊柔軟的手掌。當他講話時，手兒斯文地擺動着，決不是要說明他所講的話，而就像這雙手兒運着一種獨立的，不相聯帶的生活一般。傑妮弗和她的表姊妹們時常在暗中說他是一個「黑甲虫」。

愛爾司韋斯在十九歲時便信奉天主教。很奇怪的，他的母親沒有提出什麼反對；在某種古怪的直覺裏，她也許覺得這樣反會使愛爾司韋斯更接近她，而在這件事上她是對的。在兒童時代，他常是容易動感情的，而這天主教勾當，似乎就使他平靜一點。并且這也是一個出路，他可以和母親討論而不會侵犯任何禮儀。在她的私心裏，她曾經希望他一點離波士頓的羅揚神父強烈的影響，他也許可以在旅行中興趣和興奮裏，變得不太熱心一些。可是這希望却命定了要失望的，因為他到倫敦，他們又碰見了黑爾神父，在巴黎認識了裘爾斯神父，在洛桑遇見了麥克麥格爾神父；在羅馬認識了菲列樸神父，而到了此地，在阿爾雲屋又遇見了勞勃脫神父。實際上她對於那的神父不大在意，事實上麥克麥格爾神父非常有趣，但總却非常真心地憎惡勞勃脫神父。但這憎惡却並不顯露出來，因為她的波士頓教養教她除較表面的感情外，要控制其他一切的感情。可是憤恨總是存在的，她在她的心裏，基本，重要，警覺而等待着。

就使愛爾司韋斯疑心到這情況，他也不表示什麼，繼續儘可能的和勞勃脫神父快樂地交往，而這快樂是非常之大的。

潘格塔太太第一次注意到傑妮弗時，是在旅館客廳裏。她和一个穿兩層絨西裝的青年和兩個難以描寫的女孩坐在一起。傑妮弗的樣子可完全不是難以描寫的。她發散出一種明確，愉快，動物性的生命力。她那天穿着一件整潔的白色網球衫，黑髮的尾端，因游泳而潮濕卷曲。潘格塔太太暗地裏在小說背後窺視了她一忽兒；動作敏捷，一口好牙齒，好皮膚，顯然是一個好人家的女孩。她時常微笑，帶着愉快而稍有點沙啞的聲音熱烈地談着。當她站起來同兩個女孩和那青年走

上土合時，潘松培太太也站起來到她的房裏去了。

從這一次以後，潘松培太太便進行公開的偵探工作。她的第幾來源有好多種。華脫萊太太，她是傑妮弗的虔母黨朋友；英爾祭司愛爾頓先生；傑利立溫，旅館裏酒肆間的當班人。連樓上的侍者也被謹慎地盤問着，因為他的妻子是城裏的洗衣婦，洗佛綠立安那公寓裏所送出來的衣服。

幾天之內，她探聽到好許多事。傑妮弗十九歲，是康華爾的一個醫生或女兒，姓海德。顯然的，她不大有錢，因為她從英國出來時坐二等輪，但顯然她在倫敦有些有錢的親戚，曾經參加過盛天的宴會，親見過皇帝皇后。華脫萊太太對她非常熱心。「完完全全是個好女孩子，」她說。「又摩登，可是同時又是舊式，如果你懂得我的意思。自然，我確以為她在嘴唇上塗了那末許多口紅是很可惜的，但是我想究竟這是現在所流行的，而且一個人祇年青一次。我記得當我自己是個女孩子的時候，我就是愛漂亮。我記得有一次我把一件家常衣服的袖子剪掉，把胸部修改一番，改成一件夜禮服，鬧了一個天大的笑話。」——講到這裏，華脫萊太太放縱地大笑起來，但是潘松培太太却失了興趣。

過了幾晚之後，正當傑利那走過土合時，潘松培太太的書掉落在地上。傑妮弗把書拾起來，送還給她，還有禮地微笑了一笑，在整詰之後，應允坐下來喝一杯檸檬水。她毫不羞慚地談着，並且潘松培太太非常高興地注意到她也並不泰然自若。在羅羅去到她的朋友們那裏去之前——她的朋友們正站在門口，小聲吃吃地笑着——潘松培太太強使她答應下一天一同午餐。

午餐極成功。最初，潘松培太太發現愛爾司韋斯已經請了勞勃脫神父，有幾分倉惶，但沒有過多久，她便私心決定這是一件好事情。第一，傑妮弗的在座，使勞勃脫神父不安。潘松培太太窺視着他的嘴角神經質地扭動，非常開心。她也注意到他談得沒有平常般多。而在另一方面，愛爾司韋斯却眉宇不舒；他忽然在誇獎自己。她快樂地觀察着。在那些日子，愛爾司韋斯的一股是她的談者，還沒有那嚴厲着。他才只二十六歲，當他要發現自己的可愛處時，也有一種特有的溫

柔迷人的可愛。在這一天，他真是太熱心於發揮這種可愛了。他機智和妮弗討論書本和戲劇，無論什麼時候她因他所說的話而大笑時，他對勞勃說祖父投射一個頗有點沾沾自喜的瞥視。幸無例外的，一切都順利，當潘松培太太冷眼望顧着勞勃說祖父的左手激動地搓着麵包時，她簡直快樂得意起來。

大約一星期之後，一一在這一時期，傑妮弗和麥爾司莫斯已經開始一種愉快的精神友誼——潘松培太太為表演她的最高姿態，竟於飯後在客廳裏突然故世了。

說得溫和一點，傑妮弗·潘松培是一個輕率的賭客，但是不管輸贏，她在得意愉快的表情是頗引人注意的。她有一串小小的迷信，例如把一張牌對稱地放在另一張牌上，在抽牌之前，腳兒丁踢踢地發出兩聲尖銳而執的小小重踏聲。——如果她抽出一張九番來，她便快活地咯咯笑着，如果她自己做了拔格拉（一），她也同樣的快活。整個說來，她的運氣是好的，但是她贏的時候態度優雅，聳聳肩，當任何人要贏她一個彭谷不成功時，她便露出一個求恕的微笑。

是一九三三年夏天，我從奧尼斯回家，中途在蒙脫卡羅停留下來。自然，所有的遊客都在那裏，那時正是夏季最熱鬧的時候。海濱旅館已經客滿，我正住在巴黎旅館，事實上我倒喜歡那家旅館。傑妮弗和老莉爾·格倫齊安尼一起住在客棧，凡拉說，但是一有機會，她便溜出來到蒙脫卡羅來吃賭博。我和她在同一張桌上賭了一兩點鐘，當我把預備輸掉的錢輸光之後，在整理賭桌等待賭客時，我請她到酒排間裏去吃杯酒。

我們對坐在高凳上，叫了「上酒」，極隨便地談着。她問我一向在那裏，我最近有沒有看見某某人。我問她一向在幹些什麼，某某人現在怎樣了。不久侍着來關照她的桌子又要開賭了。她從凳子上滑身下來，近乎挑戰地說，「你還沒有問起過愛爾司韋斯呢，但是你聽了會很高興的，他真的生活得很好呢。」於是她露出一聲尖銳的小笑，笑得比平常更高，便走進拔格拉室不見了。

我覺得猶如有一點憤恨，同時又彷彿有點生氣。我故意沒有提亞爾司舉手，(甲)因為我完全不曉得他們是否依舊住在一起，那末提起他也許會是笨拙的；而(乙)，因為無論如何，我並不喜歡他，也從不會喜歡他。我又叫了杯酒，喝了之後，閃爍着上樓去看歌舞。當我進去時，廳裏面正鬧得要命。音樂家正奏得上勁，兩個美國黑人正穿了白色夜禮服跳一支舞步複雜的舞蹈，並且顯然正跳得高興。我在一張靠近廳角的桌子邊坐下，看其餘的表演。表演還相當不差，苦心經營的漂亮美人底幾套普通行頭走進走出的表演着。普通的下流滑稽劇的武術表演。普通的令人悲傷的年青女人在傳音器裏輕聲演唱，我偶然瞥視着全室。所有的熟面孔都在那裏。他們在去年，在前年都在那裏，明年和後年也會在那裏。自然，他們也稍為有點更動。今年，小蘭倫和喬治在一起，鮑皮有一個白膚金髮碧眼的新女人。格魯孟·魯意斯這一對看來疲乏而不起勁，不過他們總是那樣的。我覺得悶壓，厭煩，而且實在太熱了。我看着傑妮弗和丁納。麥脫洛克走進來。佛蘭克和高露。白蘭克招呼他們，他們便在那張桌邊坐下。這是張比較吵鬧的桌子，我想坐在桌子一端，阿萊斯泰爾一定做了什麼常演的頗卑鄙的模倣表演，因為他們都放縱地太笑着，我想他們也許笑得太多響了一點，因為他們以前一定也會被他模倣過幾百次了。

傑妮弗跟着別人一起大笑，其間她又化裝一番，為要順光綫，她把化裝匣裏的鏡子朝某個角度拿着，動作快捷而帶神經質，她把口紅在嘴上刺刺，於是把鏡子拿得一肘遠，細起眼睛看着它，做了一個小小的鬼臉。突然的，在那一忽兒，我也想不出為什麼，我很肯定地明白她是不幸的。我又追想到我認識她的那幾年，我們從不會親密過，從不會超過稱呼名字的隨便交往的限度，但是我回想起來，總覺得愉快的。她一向都是個快樂的友伴，可愛的舞伴，在家庭宴會上意外相遇，使人高興。我記得第一次我在倫敦遇見她時，總是在一九二〇年或是一九二一年罷，她是一個有錢的漂亮美國青年底妻子。那是很久以前了，差不多是十三年以前，而這十三年的確把她改變了。我把眼光橫過舞臺看給她。她正在講話，顯然在講着什麼，她的右手在稍作着手勢。在樂隊喧鬧聲中，有一陣子的平靜。我正聽見她嘎嘎大笑，

這笑聲和她離開酒排間時所發出的笑聲底音實極其不同。「你還沒有問起過愛爾司韋斯，但是你聽了會高興的，他真的生活得很好呢。」

我決定不坐汽車，走回旅館裏去。在跳舞廳的煙霧和喧鬧之後，黑夜顯得涼爽而平靜。正當我差不多要走到第一個小山的山頭時，我聽見一輛車子在我後面馳來。車子似乎開得簡直太快，所以我小心地站在護牆邊，讓它馳過。車子的煞車發出一聲尖叫，便像旋風般從路角邊轉過來——一輛無蓋的雙人座費費脫小汽車。它在離我幾碼遠的地方噪鬧地停下來，我看見黛妮弗在開車。「我看見你離開跳舞廳，就來追趕你；」她幾乎透不過氣來地說，「因為我要向你說，我對不起你。」

我走向前去。「到底爲了什麼事呢？」

「如果你沒有留心到，那就更好了。但是我自從在酒排間裏離開你到現在，一直有一種可怕的感覺。我高傲地把頭朝你一昂，粗暴地說話。我假裝自己沒有那樣做也是沒有用的，因為我是那樣做了的，我知道我做了的。」

「真是胡說啊！」我說。

「進來罷，乖一點罷，你要到那裏去，我就開你到那裏去——你要到那裏去呢？我總得到客棧。凡拉脫去的。」

「決沒有那樣遠的，就是巴黎旅館。」

我走進車去，在她旁邊坐下。她放開手閘，我們便向城裏駛去。街道上冷寂得很，因為快到清晨三時了。她突然在一家運動用具店面前底邊石旁把車停下。店舖的櫥窗裏擺滿了網球拍，高爾夫球棒和運動衫。

「我要幹一樁不能寬恕的事情了，」她帶着抑制的口音說。「好幾小時來我都想法子要自己別那樣，但是沒有用。」她把背靠在開車的座位上，望着我。「我要哭了。我很那些會哭的女人，但是我做不來，一切事情都是絕對殘忍的；我知道這和你完全沒有關係，我這樣待於你是一種勒索，但是我們斷斷做做朋友也有好幾年了，而——」講到這裏，她講不下去了，把面孔埋在雙手裏。我把手臂挽住她的腰兒。「我想你還是不要太表同情的好，」她暗暗地在我的肩膀裏說着

。「這樣也許會使我更壞一點的。」於是她啜泣起來，不是神經質地，甚至也不是極大聲地，却是一種苦痛的哭泣，就像她正在和哭泣非常強烈地鬥爭着。——

「看老天的面上，痛快的哭吧！」我銳利地說，「如果你不痛快的哭，你也許會爆炸的！」

她輕輕地拍了我一下，稍為和緩一點。兩三輛車子馳過去了，但是她依舊把頭埋在我的肩上。我動也不動地坐着，朝網球場黯淡地望着。我覺得有「迷惑」，十二分地不舒服。並不是說我沒有感動，而是不明白在塔斯認識的人中間，她竟會出乎我意料地選我出來痛哭一番。我的不安是於一種古怪的壓逼感所引起的，這感覺就像有時一個人走進一間悲哀的房子，走進一間發生過不幸，殘忍的事底房子時所發生之感。我幾乎要發抖，但自制住了。她一定由於直覺而感受到了，因為她坐直起來，伸手到後面去拿她的化妝匣。「我真是萬分的抱歉，」她說。我竭力使她安心地微笑了一下，替她點了一根香煙。她擦着眼睛，在鼻子上撲些粉，接了香煙，靜靜地坐了一忽兒——我覺察到她的嘴唇間或顫動着，但是她沒有再哭泣。突然的，她似乎下了什麼決心，俯向前去，又開動引擎。「我現在送你回家去罷，」她帶着強硬的口氣說，我覺得這聲音無限的可憐，她的口氣裏，有一種近乎偉大的英勇。就像一個每年幼的孩子跌了一交，摔破了膝頭，決心再敢忍受過去。

「你可不能那樣做，」我急速地說，「你送我上中康尼高去，我們在那裏坐下來抽它一陣煙，看日出。」

她抗議說：「真的，我現在好了——我罰咒我是好了。」

「照我吩咐你的做去罷，」我說。

她展開一絲笑容，車子便開動了。

我們正巧在哀茲的另一邊停下，把車子停在緊靠森林的那一邊，拿出車墊，安排我們自己臨海坐下，背靠着矮石牆，但我們幾乎沒有講話，我們在那裏靜靜地坐了好一忽兒。老遠的，在我們的右邊腳下，客渡。凡拉克像一隻靜產的野鸞般一直伸展到海裏去。偶或間，一輛火車像一個精緻的玩具一般從這這裏出來，消滅駛行了一段

路，於是又不見了。當它經過時，車窗裏的燈光一條條照射到樹上，山石上和屋子上。當火車已經消失在我們的眼簾上時，轆轤的車聲才遲遲的傳到我們的耳朵裏。每隔一會兒，但不大常有的，一輛汽車在我們背後疾馳過去，我們可以看見車頭燈的光芒遠遠的微弱下去。當車子行駛時，燈光把黑暗彫刻成奇形怪狀的形象和黑影。月亮的光芒閃閃着射過海面，一直投到地平綫上，海裏沒有船來往。

「如果我說『現在可以講吧？』也許太顯著一點罷？」

傑妮弗嘆着。『『現在可以講吧，』是有一點挫人銳氣。』她說，『太武斷一點了——我們並不能夠別那末唐突，把話頭引到這上面來？』

「愛爾司韋斯近況怎樣？」我靈巧地說，『或者不如說，愛爾司韋斯在那裏？』

「他很好，在塔米納。」

接着是一陣長長的沉默，我們兩人都想望着在塔米納的愛爾司韋斯。我不能够保證傑妮弗的想像如何，但是我的想像是很清楚的。我看見他走下海灘去遊泳，穿着露腳趾的鞋子，顏色莊嚴的寬鬆外衣，條紋隱約的佛蘭絨褲。我看見他在涼爽的僧院式旅館餐室裏吃午飯，同那三個天主教神父熱切地談話。我看見他在晚上晚飯後坐在一家咖啡店裏，還有幾個年青的本地人坐在他身邊，他請他們喝酒，帶着驕烈的波士頓口音用正確而帶帶點廣音的意大利語談談話。

「他總是顯不黑的，你知道，」傑妮弗不適切地說。『而他的確想盡方法要顯黑。這不太悲哀嗎？』

「連漢紅都不？」

「間或有，而且差不多立刻就退掉了。」

「雀斑呢？」

「有幾點，但是在不該有的地方。」

「他很介意嗎？」

「介意得要命，我想。」傑妮弗又深沉地嘆息了。『這件事在他成了一種變態心理。是的，他有好幾種心理，天主教，意大利海牙歌式建築（二），藝術（三），章特曼（三），小模不付得過份多。我恐

怕他是一個愛美者。」

「你應該永遠不要和一個愛美者結婚的。」

她點點頭，「愛美者們的確是閻羅王。」

「那你又爲什麼呢？」

「我爲什麼怎樣？」

「嫁給他。」

「等一下罷，哦，我們又講到這上頭來了！」她淡淡地笑着說：「我想我不如抽一枝烟罷，人家告訴我香烟更使人有社交姿勢。我恐怕我的社交姿勢在這最近幾年來有點擺得太足了。」

我給了她一支香烟。「爲什麼不從開頭說起呢？」我建議。「你知道這一切總要講到的，又爲什麼不從頭底說起呢？」

「我不知道這意思的出處在那裏？」她說。「這句話真沒有意義，——不論從頭底板或是一部份，你總講不出多少的。」

「別管它罷。」

「我不過隨便說說罷了。」

「你爲什麼要嫁給他呢？」

「那時我是一個不懂事的女孩子，」她回答。「當我說：『惱其的女孩子，我自然是指一個笨透的笨伯。我連生活上最膚淺的事都不懂。』環境就和我作對——這句話聽來不怪漂亮嗎？——但倒是實實在在的。環境，確和我作對。我那時在意大利，同杜拉姨母一起住在公寓裏，而愛爾司韋斯和他的母親住在飯店裏。當然的，他們住整個套房，從旅館方面說來，因爲他們是美國人而又是極有錢，自然是上賓了。那位老太太看中了我，是什麼理由，我將永遠不會明白。她請我吃中飯，愛爾司韋斯也在座。在那些日子他的確很甜密，有趣。他講着有趣的事情，知道好些東西，同他在一起很開心。當時還有一個牧師在座，叫勞勃脫神父的，我猜想他看中了潘松培的財產——有些牧師爲了他們的教堂，有極強烈的商業意識——無論如何，他一看見我就恨我，而我却覺得很有趣。接着就來了環境和我作對的那瞬間。就在我們一同在晚飯後喝咖啡時，老潘松培太太就在旅館的客廳裏因心臟病發作而突然故世了。這真是非常可怕的，十二分的慘可憐的愛爾

司韋斯離過。麻煩就那樣開始的。也奇憐憫是一種基督教的好德性，但亂用是危險的，它還能昏迷一個人的常識。哦，繼續講下去，就像別人所說的，從那時起，愛爾司韋斯就緊拉住我；你瞧，我竟無意地，而且最不幸地把勞勃脫神父從他的愛情裏驅逐出去了。他哭了好一大陣，這也是極平常的，因為他一生都不曾離開過他的母親。我同他一起去送葬，情景非常黯淡，我儘可能地，竭力地安慰他。於是，在下葬之後的下一夜，他突然出現在我們的公寓裏，說他要同我講話。我的杜拉真毋須猜得很，因為她就是那種心地良善的英國女學生。在她的恨裏，只有有錢的青年，才是她較年青的未婚女親眷裏預期的配偶。我想她也許憐愍愛爾司韋斯不想和葛蘭絲或是維拉講話，她們是她的親女兒。一天曉得，她的悔怨，決沒有我後來的悔怨抵一半。那末多——但是不論怎樣，我是一個未婚的甥女，而半個麵包總比沒有好，能够把自己的甥女嫁給他，也總比被別的女孩佔了去的好。因此我帶着她的祝願，和愛爾司韋斯走到芳香的意大利之夜度懷抱裏去了。我們走了好客路，首先走過城裏，接着沿海濱走去。愛爾司韋斯沒有講多少話，一直等到我們坐下來，背靠着牆，就像我們現在在這裏坐着一樣，不過沒有這景色；只有海在遠處輕蕩着，還有許多星星。於是他就頓頭了。「喂，天啊！」傑妮弗把自己移到一個比較舒服的位置。『他把自己的一切，從頭的一五一十地告訴我。他的態度並沒有什麼誇揚自己的地方，而就像對於謹慎，禮貌和傳統的社交上的靜謐都不顧了，——他就非得傾吐出來不行——又勸像我現在所做的。』她稍帶點尖銳地笑着。「我不曉得為什麼人們要那樣做？我不曉得這樣做真有什麼用處？」

「沒有關係的，」我說，「只要沒有條件附着就好了。別浪費起來罷，說出來對於你是非常有益的。」

「你其實還太，」她說，「我真希望我不再哭起來。」

接着靜默了一些時，於是她繼續說下去，講得更快一點。

「我不能把他所說的統統都告訴你，因為這樣對你不公平。我也永遠不能告訴任何人，但主要的是他懼怕着，對自己懼怕得要命。那就為什麼他對成羅馬天主教徒，就爲了那種恐懼。實在她講得不大

清楚有系統，他從一件事轉到另一件，所以整個來說，我頗有點迷惑，但是我的確覺得非常感動，替他悲哀，惡毒地，忠誠地盼望幫助他。此外，他還說到在盧昂我之輩，他一直怕和女人接近的，而像結婚這樣的念頭，使他憤懣。自然，只要他的母親活着，他是不會爲這件事憂慮，但現在他完全不知所措了，他不能忍受舉目無親的孤單。勞勃說神父會勸他在教會裏找一些事做，我不知道那會是什麼，但是他避而遠之，因爲他不覺得自己有一個真正的事業，足夠的信仰或別的什麼。他繼續這哀哀胡亂談着。一下子他會講到勞勃說神父，講到宗教是多麼的神妙，因爲它知道每一個人的每一件事，只要一個人信心深，宗教就可以解決一切問題。於是他又跳回來，跳得好遠，回到他的童年時代，講到他的小學校裏的一個叫荷馬的親友。——美國人不可怕嗎，替孩子們取這樣的名字？顯然荷馬是非常重要的。他不斷的在他的談話裏出現。你真想像不到當時的情形是多麼的古怪，在沙上坐着，所有的感情，恐懼，不快，都在我腦子裏旋轉。那時我祇有十九歲，他所講的話，我懂不到一半，但是我還記得那時感到抑壓緊張，而近乎要哀號出來。不久，他平靜了一點，說在一箇前都不了解你的世界裏生活是多麼的可怕，說社會是爲正常的人所設的，却沒有什麼地方留給畸形的人。於是，他求我嫁給他。替他說句公平話，他那時是不能够再老實了。他說我是他唯一能够信任的人，又說我們可以旅行，見見這世界，娛樂，執活。他沒有講到金錢這一方面，但是也常常暗示到的。我知道他是有錢的，無論如何——她停了一忽兒，在皮包裏摸着手帕。但是那可不是我嫁給他的理由，真的那可不是理由。自然這也有一點關係，我懂。你瞧！我一生都是貧窮的，父親行醫所得的收入也算不了什麼，而想讓我能够有我所要的一切衣服和東西，還可以旅行，——我時常渴望着旅行的——也許有一點影響，但這不是全部理由，也不是近乎全部的理由，我賭咒也不是的。真正的理由是要古怪，更複雜，更難於解釋。現在回憶起來，我想我能够看得很清楚的，但是就在現在，我也不能夠完全確定。我非常的感情，浪漫，在年青的時候，我決心隱約確是非常之好的，比我現在要好得多。世界上應該有一條法律，不准培養孩子們

良善的天性和理想，它使後來發生的某些事物，顯得比平時殘忍地可憐百倍。現在我能够看得清楚，我是因爲一——實正感而非常激蕩地緣於愛爾司韋斯的一行一件善事。永遠是女童子軍了。我知道得十分清楚，我沒有愛他，至少我的腦子知道這回事，而那樣地告訴我，但是我沒有聽從，一任我的感情，我的迷惑的少年人，衝動的愛情，把我拖到另一個方向去。我記得我強迫自己想像結婚會是怎麼一回事——我指的是實際的性生活的一部分。我非常快樂地想着自己躺在愛爾司韋斯的懷裏，作他的安慰者，看護他，把他和寂寞隔開，會是可愛，興奮而有趣的。自然，我對這一切的想法都不十分清楚，因爲截至那時爲止，我的性的經驗，不過是對於在模立毛斯的聖瑪利亞學校我們的遊戲指導員赫爾登·斯密司小姐的未曾明言而美麗的熱愛，還有在下特明的一個舞會上——一個青年的幾乎冒失的親吻。顯然，對於我自己把自己委身在怎樣的一種命運裏，我是一點兒也不知道的。因此我說，「好的。」兩天之後，依舊在浪漫情感為混亂的迷霧裏，我們起程到尼斯去，一點也不讓酒癡心什麼，在一個什麼辦公室裏讓一個生頭際禿的人替我們結了婚。」

傑克那神手來要一枝香烟。我替他點了一枝，一句話也不說，等她繼續下去。

「接着麻煩就開始了。」她稍微顫抖了一下。「所有詳細的情形，我不告訴你了。但一切都非常驚恐，可怕，羞人，我比最刻薄的莫道於羞人。隔了幾星期——在其時父親來了，還有杜拉姨母，還有愛爾司韋斯，一個非常神氣活現的伯父。一幕幕的情景，討論和萬分緊張——愛爾司韋斯和我到羅馬去，在那裏住了幾星期。在相當時期，我就入了獄。我對於入獄這件事也不熱心，也不反對，而愛爾司韋斯却非常堅持，所以我就進了獄。最後我們正式結了婚，有好些音樂，歌劇，還有許多美國生的意大利侯爵太太宴請我們。實上，老荷蘭，格倫齊安尼就是其中的一個，最要好的一個，我現在就住在她家裏。她做了「波蘭的婆婆，指指榮榮，凡拉尼。」於是我們就起程了，簡直到了全地，然後回頭和所有「西爾斯」的船起頭。噫，天啊！」她小聲的哭了一下。「那是非常很棒的，但是有些我成日不差。過後

，我們到檀香山，日本和中國，於是到印度，埃及，又回到英國。那就是我們初次相識的時候，不是嗎？在大青靈倫場，房子裏？自那時候我已經堅硬了一點。我不再是浪漫，不懂事和良善了。我已經知道了好些事情，我已經巡過海洋，見過世界。所有那些可愛的地方，所有那些快樂的機會，都翻巧不能及而丟開在一邊。別誤會我，並不是在生活使我煩惱。至少我不以為這是原因。在這方面，我早就遭到失敗了。囉，不，這是愛爾司韋斯本人，如果愛爾司韋斯就試試看討人喜歡一點，和氣，普通，做一個愉快的伴侶，我就會完全幸福的，哦，如果不是幸福，至少也會滿足，但是他可沒有那麼誠，而且也不是那樣的人。我想也許人不得不殘忍，是不是？這同分泌腺環境，在童年時所遭遇的事情有關係的。我想像得到愛爾司韋斯在童年時一定會經過最奇特的事情，他腺分泌一定非常強烈。無論如何，我和他在一起不久，就絲毫沒有懷疑地知道他是一個徹底令人不愉快的。我並不是說他壞——從壞字的整個字義上來說。也不是凶暴，淫癡狂，或是任情喝得酩酊大醉，回來毆打我。完全不是這樣，決不是這樣的直截。他實在太斯文，教養得太拘謹，就像你剛才所說的般，是一個愛美者，他就是這樣的人，十全十足的愛美者。嚙，天啊！一個人怎樣能夠是愛美者，而同時又是卑鄙，好色，乖戾，易怒地淺薄得幾乎近於狂態呢？回答是能夠的。因為愛美者有好幾種。有些愛美者喜歡和愛，有禮貌，平靜寬大，尊嚴，而有些愛美者喜歡伯利尼式的聖母瑪利亞像，吉涅托司^①，神祕主義，香料，儘可能公開地結交這一個真正的老什麼，那一個真正的老什麼。我不相信這樣能夠使人滿足的——」傑妮弗的聲音稍為提高一點。「當環繞四週的都是活生生的生命，你可以體驗那突然來到的，可愛地沒有預想到的時刻，所有這一切對於死人和過去的事底關切凝神，我不相信是能夠使人滿足的。別人意想不到的親切的姿態，沒有動機，和貧富才能教養完全沒有關係，就只是老老實實最好的人性！這種樣子的美才是值得尋求的；這總來也許有點誇張，但是我知道我的意思是什麼。這種樣子的愛美者，才是有價值的。我是對的，不是嗎？這真費了我好許多悲慘的時期，我才設法把事情想出個頭緒來。」她突兀地停住，幾乎連氣都透

不過來，懇求地望著我。

「是的，」我說，「我想你是對的。」

「愛爾司韋斯的毛病，」她比較平靜地繼續說下去，「就在除了對於自己之外，他心裏對誰都沒有愛情。就是他的母親罷，我想在他，她比誰都更寶貴一點，但是連她也很快地在他的記憶裏消逝了。過了最初幾個星期之後，他幾乎不再提起她，如果誰提到她，也是極輕鬆地，遙遠地，好像她對於他是一個無關緊要的人，他只碰見過她一次，一同過了一個夏天。如果他曾經老實地對待我，或者就是對自己老實，那一切也就好了，但是他對兩者都不。他說謊，小的，無足輕重的謊話。在最初是這樣，後來謊話更大了，更重要了。當我們進行着我們近乎淒涼的社會生存時，他結交了好些朋友，其中有些似乎真正的喜歡他，至少在開頭是那樣。別的一些人，因為看中他的金錢，莽撞地趨奉他。我注視着，有時也有點擔憂，間或也想法子警告他。我依舊覺得還有一個機會，你知道，我並不是要改良他，我還不至於自大到那個樣子，而是希望我們能夠達到一種互功的伴侶關係，我們可以各自按自己的生活方式生活，討論事情，在一起時有相當的趣味，沒有衝突，激怒，或是惹起對方的煩惱。但是也沒有什麼用。他不信任我；我想主要的因為我是一個女人。這情形一點辦法也沒有。也毫無希望。於是，在我們結了婚幾年之後，發生了一件事情。這是在紐約，我們住在華爾多夫，一切都非常難堪，幾乎發展成第一版的新聞醜聞。我自己都弄不清楚那時到底是怎麼一回事，各種矛盾的故事是那樣的，可是，無論如何，愛爾司韋斯被人嚇怕了，我必須和陌生人會談，寫一大堆講話，化了好許多錢，我們就非常急忙地起程到歐洲去了。這件事發生以後，情形比以前更來得難堪。他變得乖戾，容易生氣，時常在陌生人面前嘲笑我。受到十二分驚嚇的條件中底一切憎恨都表露出來了。最後，我再也不能忍受，叫他同我離婚。我看見他真正大怒起來，這是第一次他的面孔氣忿得通紅。他是一個天主教徒，我也是一個天主教徒。就是那個樣子。絕對不能有離婚這種事情。於是我失掉了自制，把我對於他的真正的意見都告訴他，又說我完全明白他的所以拒絕和我離婚，完全不是因為什麼天主教徒的關係

。實際上他擔心着別人會說些什麼話；他嚇慌了，因為怕自己被獨個兒遺下，沒有個妻子作忠實的社交支柱，她可以在宴席上充當主人，在炫耀的歡迎會上，在時髦的開幕典禮的晚上，同他一起出席，而事實上，至少在人衆看起來，一直跟着他。我們中間發生了一場痛心的爭吵，我就離開了，那是汪巴黎的家裏，你記得嗎，在那裏，我到倫敦去同瑪吉遜，麥利奇斯住在一起。隔了一星期他跟着來了，於是一幕冷淡的情景發生了。有一次他真的哭了，說他心裏真的深深愛着我，他以後永遠不再做任何屈辱我的事情了。我想他真心真意地懼怕我離開他。我的意思是，他懼怕自己，就是當我們坐在海灘上，他第一次要我嫁給他的時候他講給我聽的那種懼怕。最後我屈服了。實際上也沒有什麼特別的新法。而這就是我們現在之所以如此。他不獨自出行去，做他自己喜歡做的事情，但是從來不會太長久的。他沒有真正冒險的勇氣。於是我們又一起同居，在巴黎住下，設宴會，幹所有的人所幹的一切的事。有時我們在希臘羣島裏作遊歷，或是上達爾美歌亞海岸去，或是環遊到此地來。實際上，我現在正等待他回來，我想我們會聚集十二三個我們並不喜歡他們而他們也不喜歡我們的人，我們會上科錫加或是馬洛利遜，或是湯奇遠去。這樣的生活真可愛。」

她沉默地坐了一回，眺望着海面，於是她站起來，開始用她夜裏穿的鞋子亂踢一塊石子。「這就是不多是全部的情形了。」她說。

我也站了起來，我們爬過矮牆，慢慢地走到汽車邊去。

「還不完全，」我溫柔地說，把坐墊放回汽車裏。「你沒有告訴我你剛才為什麼要哭泣。」

「這還不夠嗎？」

「還不完全。」

她走到車子裏去，開始弄着引擎。她聲都不響地說：「我對於愛爾蘭草而從來不會不真過。」她用乾硬平板的聲音說。「我以為我要那樣幹是很容易的，不過我常常覺得這樣也許會使已經那麼荒涼更來得不堪。無論如何，在我們所認識的人中間，我還沒有看見一個

「我能够愛他到值得我這樣幹的人。也許將來有一天會發生什麼事情——我可不願意到死都是一個老處女。」

她開動車子，把我帶回到蒙脫卡羅去。天色已經很光亮了，整個景色看來好像剛被洗過一樣。她開我到巴黎旅館前，讓我下車。正當她要開車時，她俯身到車子邊來，在我的額上輕吻了一下。她說：「給親愛的，你對我恩德真正可愛地溫柔，我將永遠感激你的。」

我凝望着那汽車，直到它轉了彎，消失在我不見蹤影。

「——但是一個人自己的車夫，」少校說着，「我的意思，那真太過份了一點。——」

「他們現在在那裏？」我打斷他的話，「她同那個車夫——他告訴你沒有？」

「我是在加拿大；那個車夫是加拿大人。他們開了一間汽車行，或是汽油站，或是別的什麼——很複雜的，老練穩妥的錢她一點也不肯拿，自然，他叫她拿的，他就是那樣的傢伙，你知道，「吉涅脫式」(六)，是這個字眼嗎？」

「是的，」我說，「是這個字眼。」

少校收起照片簿子，把它們放在提箱裏，當他收拾時，他有點氣喘地哼着一支歌曲。我回想到四年前那個被新洗過的清晨，——在晨光裏開車到蒙脫卡羅去。我把起線呢褲穿裏的衣袋，當她說：「無論如何，在我們所認識的人中間，我還沒有發現一個我能够愛他到值得我這樣幹的——也許將來有一天會發生什麼事情——我可不願意到死都是一個老處女。」

少校整整衣服，「去喝一杯美酒好嗎？」他說。

我們到甲板上去。空氣清新而寒冷，差不多一點風也沒有。遠遠的，在船頭的左邊，法國海岸上的燈塔間歇地閃爍着。

到了吸煙室裏，少校便放棄了謹慎的放任，把自己這隻四手皮沙發裏，沙發和他那重疊的毯子——地纏起來。

「想不到你也認識老潘松塔，」他說。「這世界真是一塊極小的地方。你知道那些老話裏倒有些真理呢。」我心不在焉地點點頭，燃着一支香烟。他高雅地彈指作聲，引起茶房的注意。「只要我活着，我永遠不會忘掉那一夜的，看那可憐的傢伙像一個孩子般哭泣，傷心到了極點。一個人整個生命被一個混賬女人毀壞了，真是非常滲透透透事。我所不能釋然的——」他把自己俯向前面，放低聲音；在他那雙現在有點赤血的眼睛裏，露出真誠而可怖的迷惑的表情——「就是她真的會和他自己的草穴私奔！」

「我疑心，」我柔和地說，「這就是爲什麼他要哭泣。」

「茶房！兩杯斯丁格酒！」少校說。

註（一）一種法國紙牌戲。

（二）一一六〇——一五三〇年所流行之建築，以其尖頂拱門和尖塔屋頂爲特色。

（三）美國有名的詩人，一八一九——九二。

（四）柏利尼是意大利威尼斯的畫家，一四二七？——一五六四。其兄郭汶尼柏利尼，亦爲畫家，一四二六——一五一六。

（五）吉涅托司，（一二七六？——一五三七？）爲意大利佛羅倫丁的畫家兼建築家。

（六）吉涅羅式：西班牙作家賽望帝斯，曾著有小說底·吉涅脫，小說中的主人公唐·吉涅脫，是一類典型人物，以其滑稽的武俠行爲爲特色。

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