F. SCOTT FITZGERALD
1896–1940

In the 1920s and 1930s F. Scott Fitzgerald was equally famous as a writer and as a celebrity author whose lifestyle seemed to symbolize the two decades; in the 1920s he stood for all-night parties, ’suking, and the pursuit of pleasure while in the 1930s he stood for the glories of excess of “Babylon Revisited,” written immediately after the stock market crash, is simultaneously a personal and a national story.

Fitzgerald was born in a middle-class neighborhood in St. Paul, Minnesota, descended on his father’s side from southern colonial landowners and legislators, on his mother’s from Irish immigrants. Much of his boyhood was spent in Buffalo and Syracuse, New York. His family was not prosperous and it took his aunt’s support to send him to a Catholic boarding school in New Jersey in 1911. Two years later he entered Princeton University, where he participated in extracurricular literary and dramatic activities, formed friendships with campus intellectuals like the future critic Edmund Wilson who were to help him in later years. But he failed to make the football team and felt the disappointment for years. After three years of college Fitzgerald quit to join the army, but the war ended before he saw active service. Stationed in Montgomery, Alabama, he met and courted Zelda Sayre, a local belle who rejected him. In 1919 he went to New York City, determined to make a fortune and win Zelda. Amusingly, he succeeded. A novel he had begun in college, revised, and published in 1920 as The Side of Paradise became an immediate bestseller, making it an author rich and famous at the age of twenty-four. As one of the earliest examples of a novel about college life, This Side of Paradise was received as the novel of the young generation in a society increasingly oriented toward youth. It combined the traditional narrative and rhetorical gifts of a good fiction writer, it appeared, with a thoroughly modern sensibility. A work after the novel appeared, Scott and Zelda were married. Living extravagantly in New York City and St. Paul, and on Long Island, they more than spent the money Fitzgerald made from two collections of short stories—Flappers and Philosophers (1921) and Tales of the Jazz Age (1922)—and a second novel, The Beautiful and Damned (1922). Their only child, a daughter, was born in 1921.

In 1924, the Fitzgeralds moved to Europe to live more cheaply. They made friends with American expatriates, Hemingway, Stein, and Pound among others. During this time Fitzgerald published his best-known and most successful novel, The Great Gatsby (1925), and another book of short stories, All the Sad Young Men (1926). The Great Gatsby tells the story of a self-made young man whose dream of success, personified in a rich and beautiful young woman named Daisy, turns out to be a fantasy of every sense: Daisy belongs to a corrupt society, Gatsby corrupts himself in the quest for her, and above all, the rich have no intention of sharing their privileges. The novel is narrated from the point of view of Nick Carraway, an observer who is lured into and repelled by the life he tells and whose responses form a sort of plot; this experiment in narrative point of view was widely imitated. The structure of The Great Gatsby

is compact; the style dazzling; and its images of automobiles, parties, and garbage heaps seem to capture the contradictions of a consumer society. The novel became an instant classic and remains so to this day.

Fitzgerald wrote dozens of short stories during the twenties, most were published in the mass-circulation weekly Saturday Evening Post, which paid extremely well. Despite the pace at which he worked—in all he wrote 178 short stories—the Fitzgeralds could not get out of debt. Scott became alcoholic, and Zelda broke down in 1929 and spent most of the two of her life in mental institutions. In 1931 Fitzgerald unpublished himself permanently in the United States, living at first near Baltimore, where his wife was hospitalized. A fourth novel, Tender Is the Night, appeared in 1934. The novel follows the emotional decline of a young American psychiatrist whose personal energies are tapped, his career eroded equally by his marriage to a beautiful and wealthy patient and his own weakness of character ("character" was one of Fitzgerald’s favorite concepts). As in The Great Gatsby, the character serves as a mirror: the work ethic and turns into a pursuit of wealth, and the American Dream accordingly turns into a nightmare. Unlike Gatsby, whose characters never really connect with each other, Tender Is the Night shows a sense of intimacies, none of them successful. The novel did not sell well. In 1937 Fitzgerald turned to Hollywood screenwriting; toward the end of the decade things were looking up for him, and he planned to revise his career as a fiction writer. But his health had been ruined by heavy drinking; he died of a heart attack in Hollywood at the age of forty-four, leaving an unfinished novel about a film mogul, The Last Tycoon, which was brought out by Edmund Wilson in 1941. Wilson also successfully promoted Fitzgerald’s posthumous repudiation by editing a collection of his writings, which he called The Crack-Up, in 1945.

The text of "Winter Dreams" is from Metropole (1922), that of "Babylon Revisited" is from Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald (1951).
Babylon Revisited

"And where’s Mr. Campbell?" Charlie asked.

"Gone to Switzerland. Mr. Campbell’s a pretty sick man, Mr. Wales."

"I’m sorry to hear that. And George Hardy?" Charlie inquired.

"Back in America, gone to work."

"And where is the Snow Bird?"

"He was in here last week. Anyway, his friend, Mr. Schaefer, is in Paris."

Two familiar names from the long list of a year and a half ago. Charlie scribbled an address in his notebook and tore out the page.

"If you see Mr. Schaefer, give him this," he said. "It’s my brother-in-law’s address. I haven’t settled on a hotel yet."

He was not really disappointed to find Paris was so empty. But the stillness in the Ritz bar was strange and portentous. It was not an American bar. He took his seat, and not as if he owned it. He had gone back into France. He felt the stillness from the moment he got out of the taxi and saw the doorman, usually in a frenzy of activity at this hour, gossiping with a chauffeur by the servants’ entrance.

Passing through the corridor, he heard only a single, bored voice in the one-celebrated women’s room. When he turned into the bar he saw the twenty feet of green carpet with his eyes fixed straight ahead by habit; and then, with his foot firmly on the rail, he turned and surveyed the room, encountering only a single pair of eyes that flitted up from a newspaper in the corner. Charlie turned for the head barman. Paul, who in the latter days of the bull market had come to work in his own custom-built car—disembarking, however, with due nicety at the nearest corner. But Paul was not at his country house today, and Alia was giving him information.

"No, no more," Charlie said. "I’m going slow these days."

Alia congratulated him: "You were going pretty strong a couple of years ago."

1. Babylon was an ancient, prosperous city in Mesopotamia associated by the Hebrews and Greeks with material and sexual pleasure. Here the reference is to Paris, where the story is set—after the aftermath of the stock market crash of 1929.

2. Mesopotamian: a term meaning "land between the rivers" (Greek).
“I'll stick to it all right,” Charlie assured him. “I've stuck to it for over a year and a half now.”

“How do you find conditions in America?”

“I haven't been to America for months. I'm in business in Prague, representing a couple of concerns there. They don't know about me down there.”

Alix smiled.

“Remember the night of George Hardc's bachelor dinner here?” said Charlie.

“Oh, by the way, what's become of Claudine Fessenden?”

Alix lowered his voice confidentially: “He's in Paris, but he doesn't come here any more. Paul doesn't allow it. He ran up a bill of thirty thousand francs, charging all his drinks and his lunches, and usually his dinner, for more than a year. And when Paul finally told him he had to pay, he gave him a bad check.”

Alix shook his head sadly.

“I don't understand it, such a dandy fellow. Now he's all bloated up.” — He plumped up a pile of his hands.

Charlie watched a group of aristocratic queens installing themselves in a corner.

“Nothing affects them, he thought. “Stocks rise and fall, people loaf or work, but nothing really matters. He thought the place oppressed him. He called for the dice and shook with Alix for the drink.

“Here for long, Mr. Wales?”

“I'm here for four or five days to see my little girl.”

“Oh! You have a little girl?”

Outside, the fire-red, gas-blue, ghost-green signs shone smoky through the tranquil rain. It was late afternoon and the streets were in movement; the bistros gleamed. At the corner of the Boulevard des Capucines he took a taxi.

The Place de la Concorde moved by in pink majesty; they crossed the logical Seine, and Charlie felt the sudden provincial quality of the left bank.

Charlie directed his taxi to the Hôtel de Ville.

The Place de la Concorde was deserted, the streets were still in movement; the bistros gleamed. At the corner of the Boulevard des Capucines he took a taxi.

He wanted to see the blue hour spread over the magnificent façade, and imagine that the cab horns, playing endlessly the first few bars of Le Plaisir d'Amour, were the trumpets of the Second Empire. They were closing the iron grill in front of Brunet's Book-store, and people were already at dinner behind the trim little bouquiniste hedge of Duval's. He had never eaten at a really cheap restaurant in Paris. Five-course dinner, four francs fifty; eighteen cents, wine included. For some odd reason he wished that he had.

As they rolled on to the Left Bank and felt its sui generis provincialism, he thought, 'I spoiled this city for myself. I didn't realize it, but the days came along one after another, and then two years were gone, and everything was gone, and I was gone.'

He was thirty-five, and good to look at. The Irish mobility of his face was sobered by a deep wrinkle between his eyes. As he rang his brother-in-law's bell in the Rue Palatine, the wrinkle deepened till it pulled down his brows; he felt a crumbling sensation in his belly. From behind the maid who opened the door darted a lovely little girl of nine who shrieked ’Daddy!’ and flew up, struggling like a fish, into his arms. She pulled his head around by one ear and set her cheek against his.

“My old pie,” he said.

“Oh, daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy.”

She drew him into the salons, where the family waited, a boy and a girl his daughter's age, his sister-in-law and her husband. He greeted Marion with his voice pitched carefully to avoid either feigned enthusiasm or distaste, but her response was more frankly tepid, though she minimized her expression of unaltered distrust by directing her regard toward his child. The two men clasped hands in a friendly way and Lincoln Peters rested for a moment on Charlie's shoulder.

The room was warm and comfortably American. The three children moved intimately about, playing through the yellowornings that led to other rooms; the cheer of six o'clock spoke in the eager smacks of the fire and the sounds of French activity in the kitchen. But Charlie did not relax; his heart sat up rigidly in his body and he drew confidence from his daughter, who from time to time came close to him, holding in her arms the doll he had brought.

“Really extremely well,” he declared in answer to Lincoln's question. “There's a lot of business there that isn't moving at all, but we're better than ever. In fact, damn well. I'm bringing my sister over from America next month to keep house for me. My income last year was bigger than it was when I had money. You see, the Czechs —

His boasting was for a specific purpose; but after a moment, seeing a faint restiveness in Lincoln's eye, he changed the subject:

“Those are fine children of yours, well brought up, good manners."

“We think Houston's a great little girl too.”

Marion Peters came back from the kitchen. She was a tall woman with worried eyes, who had once possessed a fresh American loveliness. Charlie had never been sensitive to it and was always surprised when people spoke of how pretty she had been. From the first there had been an instinctive antipathy between them.

“Well, how do you find Houston?” she asked.

“Wonderful. I was astonished how much she's grown in ten months. All the children are looking well.”

“We haven't had a doctor for a year. How do you like being back in Paris?”

“It seems very funny to see so few Americans around.”

“I'm delighted,” Marion said vehemently. “At least now you can go into a store without assuming you're rich.”

“We've suffered like everybody, but on the whole it's a good pleasanter.”

“But it was nice while it lasted,” said Charlie. “We were a sort of royalty, almost infallible, with a sort of magic around us, but the bar this afternoon —”

he stammered, seeing his mistake — “there wasn't a man I knew.”

She looked at him keenly. “I should think you’ve had enough of bars.”

“I only stayed a minute. I take one drink every afternoon, and no more.”

“Don’t you want a cocktail before dinner?” Lincoln asked.

“I take only one drink every afternoon, and I’ve had that.”

“He you keep to it,” said Marion. Her dislike was evident in the coldness with which she spoke, but Charlie only smiled; he had larger plans. Her very aggressiveness gave him an advan-

3. Snell, informal restaurants.
4. Paris is divided by the Seine River; the greater buildings and broader streets are on the Right Bank. To Charlie, the Left Bank is more like a town than a city.
5. Le Plaisir d'Amour (More than love), piano composition by French composer Claude Debussy (1862-1918).
tage, and he knew enough to wait. He wanted them to initiate the discussion of what they knew had brought him to Paris.

At dinner he couldn't decide whether Honoria was most like him or her mother. Fortunately if she didn't combine the traits of both that had brought them to disaster. A great wave of protectiveness went over him. He thought he knew what to do for her. He believed in character; he wanted to jump back a whole generation and trust in character again as the eternally valuable element. Everything else were out.

He left soon after dinner, but not to go home. He was curious to see Paris by night with clearer and more judicious eyes than those of other days. He bought a strapless for the Casino and watched Josephine Baker go through her chocolate arabesques.

After an hour he left and strolled toward Montmartre, up the Rue Pigalle into the Place Blanche. The rain had stopped and there were a few people in evening clothes disembarking from taxis in front of cabarets, and coteries prowling singly or in pairs, and many Negroes. He passed a lighted door from which issued music, and stopped with the sense of familiarity; it was Bricktop's, where he had parted with so many hours and so much money. A few doors farther on he found another ancient rendezvous and incanatically put his head inside. Immediately an eager orchestra burst into sound, a pair of professional dancers leaped to their feet and a maître d'hôtel swooped toward him, crying, "Crowd just arriving, sir!" But he withdrew quickly.

"You have to be damn drunk," he thought.

Zellis was closed, the blak and sinister cheap hotels surrounding it were dark; up in the Rue Blanche there was more light and a local, colloquial French crowd. The Poet's Cave had disappeared, but the two great mouthes of the Café de Heaven and the Café de Hell still yawned—even devour, as he watched, the meager contents of a tourist bus—a German, a Japanese, and an American couple who glanced at him with frightened eyes.

So much for the effort and ingenuity of Montmartre. All the catering to vice and waste was on an utterly childish scale, and he suddenly realized the meaning of the word "disparate"—to dissipate in thin air; to make nothing out of something. In the little hours of the night every move from place to place was an enormous human jump, an increase of paying for the privilege of slower and slower motion.

He remembered thousand-franc notes given to an orchestra for playing a single number, hundred-franc notes tossed to a doorman for calling a cab. But it hadn't been given for nothing. It had been given, even the most wildly squandered sum, as an offering to destiny that he might not remember the things most worth remembering, the things that now he would always remember—his child taken from his control, his wife escaped to a grave in Vermont.

In the glaze of a brasserie a woman spoke to him. He bought her some eggs and coffee, and then, eluding her encouraging stare, gave her a twenty-franc note and took his taxi to his hotel.

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BAYLON REVISITED / 1843

He woke upon a fine fall day—football weather. The depression of yesterday was gone and he liked the people on the streets. At noon he sat opposite Honoria at Le Grand Vatel, the only restaurant he could think of not reminiscent of champagne dinners and long luncheons that began at two and ended in a blurred and vague twilight.

"Now, how about vegetables? Oughtn't you to have some vegetables?"

"Well, yes."

"Here's spinach and chou-fleur and carrots and haricots."

"I'd like chou-fleur."

"Wouldn't you like to have two vegetables?"

"I usually only have one at lunch."

The waiter was pretending to be inordinately fond of children. "Qu'elle est mignonne la petite! Elle parle exactement comme une Française."

"How about lettuce? Shall we wait and see?"

The waiter disappeared. Honoria looked at her father expectantly.

"What are we going to do?"

"First, we're going to that toy store in the Rue Saint-Honoré and buy you anything you like. And then we're going to the vaucluse at the Empire."

She hesitated. "I like it about the vaucluse, but not the toy store."

"Why not?"

"Well, you brought me this doll." She had it with her. "And I've got lots of things. And we're not rich any more, are we?"

"We never were. But today you are to have anything you want."

"All right," she agreed resignedly.

When he had been his mother and a French nurse he had been inclined to be strict; now he extended himself, reached out for a new tolerance; he must be both parents to her and not shut any of her out of communication. I want to get to know you," he said gravely. "First let me introduce myself. My name is Charles J. Wades, of Prague."

"Oh, daddy!" her voice cracked with laughter.

"And who are you, please?" he persisted, and she accepted a rôle immediately.

"Honoria Wales, Rue Palatine, Paris."

"Married or single?"

"No, not married. Single."

He indicated the doll. "But I see you have a child, madame." Unwilling to disinherit it, she took it to her heart and thought quickly: "Yes, I've been married, but I'm not married now. My husband is dead."

He went on quickly. "And the child?"

"Simone. That's after my best friend at school."

"I'm very pleased that you're doing so well at school."

"I'm third this month," she boasted. "Elise—that was her cousin—is only about eighteen, and Richard is about at the bottom."

"You like Richard and Elise, don't you?"

"Oh, yes. I like Richard quite well and I like her all right."
Cautiously and casually he asked: "And Aunt Marion and Uncle Lincoln—which do you like best?"

"Oh, Uncle Lincoln, I guess."

He was increasingly aware of her presence. As they came in, a murmur of "... adorable" followed them, and now the people at the next table bent all their silences upon her, staring as if she were something no more conscious than a flower.

"Why don't I live with you?" she asked suddenly. "Because mamma's dead!"

"You must stay here and learn more French. It would have been hard for daddy to take care of you so well."

"I don't really need much taking care of any more. I do everything for myself."

Going out of the restaurant, a man and a woman unexpectedly hailed him.

"Well, the old Wales!"

"Hello there, Lorraine. . . . Dunc."

Sudden ghosts out of the past. Duncan Schaeffer, a friend from college. Lorraine Quarrlies, a lovely, pale blonde of thirty; one of a crowd who had helped them make months into days in the lavish times of three years ago.

"My husband couldn't come this year," she said, in answer to his question. "We're poor as hell. So he gave me two hundred a month and told me I could do my worst on that. . . . This your little girl?"

"What about coming back and sitting down?" Duncan asked.

"Can't do it. He was glad for an excuse. As always, he felt Lorraine's passionate, provocative attraction, but his own rhyb was different now.

"Well, how about dinner?" she asked.

"I'm not free. Give me your address and let me call you.

"Charlie, I believe you're sober," she said judicially. "I honestly believe his sober. Dunc. Pinch him and see if he's sober."

Charlie inquired of Honoria with his head. They both laughed.

"What's your address?" said Duncan skeptically.

He hesitated, unwilling to give the name of his hotel.

"I'm not settled yet. I'd better call you. We're going to see the vaudeville at the Empire.

"There! That's what I want to do," Lorraine said. "I want to see some clowns and acrobats and jugglers. That's just what I'd do, Dunc."

"We've got to do an errand first," said Charlie. "Perhaps we'll see you there."

"All right, you snob. . . . Good-by, beautiful little girl!"

"Good-by."

Honoria bobbed politely.

"She's been an unwelcome encounter. They liked him because he was functioning, because he was serious; they wanted to see him, because he was stronger than they were now, because they wanted to draw a certain sustenance from his strength.

At the Empire, Honoria proudly refused to sit upon her father's folded coat. She was already an individual with a code of her own, and Charlie was more and more absorbed by the desire of putting a little of himself into her before she crystallized utterly. It was hopeless to try to know her in so short a time.

Between the acts they came upon Duncan and Lorraine in the lobby where the band was playing.

"Have a drink?"

"All right, but not up at the bar. We'll take a table."

"The perfect father."

Listening abstractedly to Lorraine, Charlie watched Honoria's eyes leave their table, and he followed them wistfully about the room, wondering what they saw. He met her glance and she smiled.

"I liked that lemonade," she said.

What had she said? What had he expected? Going home in a taxi afterward, he pulled her over until her head rested against his chest.

"Darling, do you ever think about your mother?"

"Yes, sometimes," she answered vaguely.

"I don't want you to forget her. Have you got a picture of her?"

"Yes, I think so. Anyhow, Aunt Marion has. Why don't you want me to forget her?"

"She loved you very much."

"I loved her too."

"They were silent for a moment."

"Daddy, I want to come and live with you," she said suddenly.

His heart leaped; he had wanted it to come like this.

"Aren't you perfectly happy?

"Yes, but I love you better than anybody. And you love me better than anybody, don't you, now that mamma's dead?"

"Of course I do. But you won't always like me best. Honey, you'll grow up and meet somebody your own age and go marry him and forget you ever had a daddy."

"Yes, that's true," she agreed tranquilly.

He didn't go in. He was coming back at nine o'clock and he wanted to keep himself fresh and new for the thing he must say."

"When you're safe inside, just show yourself in that window."

"All right. Good-by, dads, dads, dads, dads."

He waited in the dark street until she appeared, all warm and glowing, in the window above and kissed her fingers out into the night.

III

They were waiting. Marion sat behind the coffee service in a dignified black dinner dress that just faintly suggested mourning. Lincoln was walking up and down with the animation of one who had already been talking. They were as anxious as he was to get into the question. He opened it almost immediately.

"I suppose you know what I want to see you about—why I really came to Paris."

Marion played with the black stars on her necklace and frowned.

"I'm awfully anxious to have a home," he continued. "And I'm awful anxious to have Honoria in it. I appreciate your taking in Honoria for her mother's sake, but things have changed now—he hesitated and then continued more forcibly—changed radically with me, and I want to ask you to reconsider the matter. It would be silly for me to deny that about three years ago I was acting badly—"
Marion looked up at him with hard eyes.

"—but all that's over. As I told you, I hadn't had more than a drink a day for over a year, and I take that drink deliberately, so that the idea of alcohol won't get too big in my imagination. You see the idea?"

"No," said Marion succinctly.

"It's a sort of stunt I set myself. It keeps the matter in proportion."

"I get you," said Lincoln. "You don't want to admit it got any attraction for you."

"Something like that. Sometimes I forget and don't take it. But I try to take it. Anyhow, I couldn't afford to drink in my position. The people I represent are more than satisfied with what I've done, and I'm bringing my sister over from Burlington to keep house for me, and I want awfuly to have Honoria too. You know that even when her mother and I weren't getting along well we never let anything that happened touch Honoria. I know she's fond of me and I know I'm able to take care of her and—well, there you are. How do you feel about it?"

He knew that now he would have to take a beating. It would last an hour or two hours, and it would be difficult, but if he modulated his inevitable resentment to the chastened attitude of the reformed sinner, he might win his point in the end.

Keep your temper, he told himself. You don't want to be justified. You want Honoria.

Lincoln spoke first: "We've been talking it over ever since we got your letter last month. Here. She's a dear little thing, and we're glad to be able to help her, but of course that isn't the question—"

Marion interrupted suddenly. "How long are you going to stay sober, Charlie?" he asked.

"Permanently, I hope."

"How can anybody count on that?"

"You know I never did drink heavily until I gave up business and came over here with nothing to do. Then Helen and I began to run around with—"

"Please leave Helen out of it. I can't bear to hear you talk about her like that."

He stared at her grimly; he had never been certain how fond of each other the sisters were in life.

"My drinking only lasted about a year and a half—from the time we came over until—collapsed."

"It was time enough."

"It was time enough," he agreed.

"My duty is entirely to Helen," she said. "I try to think what she would have wanted me to do. Frankly, from the right you did that terrible thing you haven't really existed for me. I can't help that. She was my sister."

"Yes."

"When she was dying she asked me to look out for Honoria. If you hadn't been in a sanitarium then, it might have helped matters."

He had no answer.

"I'll never in my life be able to forget the morning when Helen knocked at my door, soaked to the skin and shivering and said you'd locked her out."

Charlie gripped the sides of the chair. This was more difficult than he expected; he wanted to launch out into a long exposition and explanation, but he only said: "The night I locked her out—" and she interrupted, "I don't feel up to going over that again."

After a moment's silence Lincoln said: "We're getting off the subject. You want Marion to set aside her legal guardianship and give Honoria to you. I think the main point for her is whether she has confidence in you or not."

"I don't blame Marion," Charlie said slowly, "but I think she can have entire confidence in me. I had a good record up to three years ago. Of course, it's within human possibilities I might go wrong any time. But if we wait much longer I'll lose Honoria's childhood and my chance for a home." He shook his head, "I'll simply lose her, don't you see?"

"Yes, I see," said Lincoln.

"Why didn't you think of all this before?" Marion asked.

"I suppose I did, from time to time, but Helen and I were getting along badly. When I consented to the guardianship, I was flat on my back in a sanitarium and the market had cleaned me out. I knew I'd acted badly, and I thought if it would bring any peace to Helen, I'd agree to anything. But now it's different. I'm functioning. I'm behaving damn well, so far as—"

"Please don't swear at me," Marion said.

He looked at her, startled. With each remark the force of her dislike became more and more apparent. She had been at all her fear of life into one wall and faced it toward him. This trivial reproof was possibly the result of some trouble with the cook several hours before. Charlie became increasingly alarmed at leaving Honoria here. She's a dear little thing, and we're glad to be able to help her, but of course that isn't the question—"

"No, no," he said. "I've learned. I worked hard for ten years, you know—until I got lucky in the market, like so many people. Terribly lucky. It won't happen again."

"There was a long silence. All of them felt their nerves straining, and for the first time in a year Charlie wanted a drink. He was sure now that Lincoln Peters wanted him to have his child. Marion shuddered suddenly; part of her saw that Charlie's feet were planted on the earth now, and her own maternal feeling recognized the naturalness of his desire; but she had lived for a long time with a prejudice—"

"A prejudice founded on a curious delusion in her sister's happiness, and which,
in the shock of one terrible night, had turned to hatred for him. It had all happened at a point in her life where the discouragement of ill health and adverse circumstances made it necessary for her to believe in tangible villany and a tangible villain.

"I can't help what I think," she cried out suddenly. "How much you were responsible for Helen's death, I don't know. It's something you'll have to square with your own conscience."

An electric current of agony surged through him; for a moment he was almost on his feet, an unuttered sound echoing in his throat. He hung on to himself for a moment, another moment.

"Hold on there," said Lincoln uncomfortably. "I never thought you were responsible for that."

"Helen died of heart trouble," Charlie said dully.

"Yes, heart trouble." Marion spoke as if the phrase had another meaning for her.

Then, in the flatness that followed her outburst, she saw him plainly and she knew he had somehow arrived at control over the situation. Glancing at her husband, the sight of the man who had loved so many days - a man she'd rather see her - she managed to check herself. "You two decide it. I can't stand this. I'm sick. I'm going to bed."

She hurried from the room; for a moment Lincoln said:

"This has been a hard day for her. You know how strongly she feels - his voice was almost apologetic: "When a woman gets an idea in her head."

"Of course.

"It's going to be all right. I think she sees now that you-can provide for the child, and so we can't very well stand in your way or Honoria's way."

"Thank you, Lincoln."

"I'd better go along and see how she is."

"I'm going."

He was still trembling when he reached the street, but a walk down the Baie Bonaparte to the quai set him up, and as he crossed the Seine, fresh and new by the quai lamps, he felt exubertant. But back in his room he couldn't sleep. The image of Helen haunted him. Helen whom he had loved so until they had senselessly begun to abuse each other's love, tear it into shreds. On that terrible February night that Marion remembered so vividly, a slow quarrel had gone on for hours. There was a scene at the Florida, and then he attempted to take her home, and then she kissed young Webb at a table; and after that was what she had hysterically said. When he arrived home alone he turned the key in the lock in wild anguish. He found her, and the attendant attendant. They were "reconciled," but that was the beginning of the end, and Marion, who had seen with her own eyes and who imagined it to be one of many scenes from her sister's martyrdom, never forgot.

Going over it again brought Helen nearer, and in the white, soft light that steals upon half sleep near morning he found himself talking to her again. She said that he was perfectly right about Honoria and that she wanted Honoria to be with him. She said she was glad he was being good and doing better. She said a lot of other things - very friendly things - but she was in a swing in a white dress, and swinging faster and faster all the time, so that at the end he could not hear clearly all that she said.

IV

He woke up feeling happy. The door of the world was open again. He made plans, vistas, futures for Honoria and himself; but suddenly he grew sad, remembering all the plans he and Helen had made. She had not planned to die. The present was the thing — work to do and someone to love. But not to love too much, for he knew the injury that a father can do to a daughter or a mother to a son by attaching them too closely; afterward, out in the world, the child would seek in the marriage partner the same blind tenderness and, falling probably to find it, turn against love and life.

It was another bright, crisp day. He called Lincoln Peters at the bank where he worked and asked if he could count on taking Honoria when he left for Prague. Lincoln agreed that there was no reason for delay. One thing - the legal guardianship. Marion wanted to retain that while a while longer. He was upset by the whole matter, and it would all things if she felt that the situation was still in her control for another year. Charlie agreed, wanting only the tangible, visible child.

Then the question of a governess. Charlie sat in a gloomy agency and talked to a cross Barisaime and to a bunet Breton peasant, neither of whom he could have endured. There were others whom he would see tomorrow. He runched with Lincoln Peters at Griffiths, trying to keep down his exultation.

"There's nothing quite like your own child," Lincoln said. "But you understand how Marion feels too."

"She's forgotten how hard I worked for seven years there," Charlie said. "She just remembers one night."

"There's another thing." Lincoln hesitated. "While you and Helen were tearing around Europe throwing money away, we were just getting along. I didn't touch any of the prosperity because I never got ahead enough to carry anything but my insurance. I think Marion felt there was some kind of injustice — - you even not working toward the end, and getting richer and richer."

"It went just as quick as it came," said Charlie.

"Yes, a lot of it stayed in the hands of chausson and saxophone players and maids et hôtel — well, the big party's over now. I just wanted to explain Marion's feeling about those crazy years. If you drop in about six o'clock tonight before Marion's too tired, you'll settle the details on the spot."

Back at his hotel, Charlie found a pâtesquinque that had been redirected from the Ritz bar where Charlie had left his address for the purpose of finding a certain man.

5. Jean and Breton are two French provinces (properly French provinces.)

6. Put in front of "spent" to make it read like French prose.

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felt very safe and important; the mother and father were serious, watchful. They had things to do for the children more important than his visit here. A spoonful of medicine was, after all, more important than the strained relations between Marston and himself. They were not dull people, but they were very much in the grip of life and circumstances. He wondered if he couldn't do something to get Lincoln out of his rut at the bank.

A long pool of the drone-board, the house à tout hâte' passed through and went down the corridor. The door opened; no one there. How about trying other time voices, and the three in the salon looked up expectantly. Richard moved to bring the corridor within his range of vision, and Marston rose. Then the maid came back along the corridor, closely followed by the voices, which developed under the light into Duncan Schaeffer and Lorraine Quadrelle.

They were gay, they were hilarious, they were roaring with laughter. For a moment Charlie was astounded; unable to understand how they ferreted out the Peters's address.

"Ah-hi!" Duncan wagged his finger ruminatively at Charlie. "Ah-hi!" They both slid down another cascade of laughter. Aroused and at a loss, Charlie shook hands with them quickly and presented them to Lincoln and Marston. Marston nodded, scarcely speaking. She had drawn back a step toward the fire; her little girl stood beside her, and Marston put an arm about her shoulder.

With growing annoyance at the intrusion, Charlie waited for them to explain themselves. After some concentration Duncan said:

"We came to invite you out to dinner. And what I insist that all this shit, cagy business 'bout your address got to stop."

Charlie came closer to them, as if to force them backward down the corridor.

"Sorry, but I can't. Tell me where you'll be and I'll phone you in half an hour."

This made no impression. Lorraine sat down suddenly on the side of a chair, and focusing her eyes on Richard, cried, "Oh, what a nice little boy! Come here, little boy!" Richard glanced at his mother, but did not move. With a perceptible shrug of her shoulders, Lorraine turned back to Charlie.

"Come and dine. Sure your cousins won't mind. See you so Com. Or solemnly."

"I can't," said Charlie sharply. "You two have dinner and I'll phone you.

Her voice became suddenly unpleasant. "All right, we'll go. But I remember once when you hammered on my door at four a.m. I was enough of a good sport to give you a drink. Come on, Dunc..."  Still in slow motion, with blurred, angry faces, with uncertain feet, they retired along the corridor.

"Good night," Charlie said.

"Good night!" responded Lorraine emphatically. When he went back into the salon Marston had not moved, only now her son was standing in the circle of her other arm. Lincoln was still swinging Honoria back and forth like a pendulum from side to side.

"What an outrage!" Charlie broke out. "What an absolute outrage!"

Neither of them answered. Charlie dropped into an armchair, picked up his drink, set it down again and said:

"You're a monster, Charlie..."
"People I haven't seen for two years having the colossal nerve—"

He broke off. Marion had made the sound "Oh!" in one swift, furious burst, turned her body from him with a jerk and left the room.

Lincoln set down Honoraria carefully.

"You children go in and start your soup," he said, and when they obeyed, he said to Charlie:

"Marion's not well and she can't stand shocks. That kind of people make her really physically sick."

"I didn't tell them to come here. They wormed your name out of somebody."

"Well, it's too bad. It doesn't help matters. Excuse me a minute."

Left alone, Charlie sat tense in his chair. In the next room he could hear the children eating, talking in monosyllables, already oblivious to the scene between their elders. He heard a murmur of conversation from a farther room and then the ticking bell of a telephone receiver picked up, and in a panic he moved to the other side of the room and out of earshot.

In a minute Lincoln came back. "I looked here, Charlie. I think we'd better call off dinner for tonight. Marion's in bad shape."

"Is she angry with me?"

"Sort of," he said, almost roughly. "She's not strong and—"

"You mean she's changed her mind about Honoraria?"

"She's pretty bitter right now. I don't know. You phone me at the bank tomorrow."

"I wish you'd explain to her I never dreamed these people would come here. I'm just as sore as you are."

"I couldn't explain anything to her now."

Charlie got up. He took his coat and hat and started down the corridor. Then he opened the door of the dining room and said in a strange voice,

"Good night, children."

Honoraria rose and ran around the table to hug him.

"Good night, sweetheart," he said vaguely, and then trying to make his voice more tender, to conciliate somewhat, "Good night, dear children."

V

Charlie went directly to the Ritz bar with the furious idea of finding Lorraine and Duncan, but they were not there, and he realized that in any case there was nothing he could do. He had not touched his drink at the Peters, and now he ordered a whisky and soda. Paul came over to say hello.

"It's a great change," he said sadly. "We do about half the business we did. So many fellows I heard about lack in the States lost everything, perhaps not in the first crash, but then in the second. Your friend George Hardt lost every cent. I hear. Are you back in the States?"

"No, I'm in business in Prague."

"I heard that you lost a lot in the crash."

"I did," and he added grimly, "but I lost everything I wanted in the boom."

"Selling short.

"Something like that."

Again the memory of those days swept over him like a nightmare—the money he had lost, the friends who couldn't, the old men of it.

John Dos Passos (1894–1970)

John Dos Passos's trilogy U.S.A. (1938) ranks with John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath (1939) as a major piece of post-Depression leftist fiction. Always politically committed to the rights of the individual, Dos Passos evolved from social radicalism in the 1930s to social conservatism in the 1950s. He was born in Chicago to Portuguese-American parents who were unmarried, and lived with his mother. He went to the exclusive Choate School and then to Harvard, graduating in 1916. At first he followed his father's wishes and studied architecture in Spain, but in 1917, like many young men impatient at the United States' delay in entering World War I, he joined the famous Norton-Harjes volunteer ambulance corps. After the United States entered the war, he became a medical corpsman in the U.S. Army.

After the war he married and spent a decade as a freelance journalist, traveling in Spain and Europe, and writing poetry, travel essays, and, fiction on the side. His novel Three Soldiers (1921) showed three young men from different backgrounds—a factory worker from San Francisco, a Harvard-educated country boy from Indiana—destroyed by their own bureaucratic environments. Another novel, Manhattan Transfer (1925), experimented with kaleidoscopic and cinematographic techniques to pre-