

A Nice Quiet Place, F. Scott Fitzgerald

I

All that week she couldn't decide whether she was a lollipop or a roman candle—through her dreams, dreams that promised uninterrupted sleep through many vacation mornings, drove a series of long, incalculable murmuring in tune with the put-put-put of their cut-outs, "I love you—I love you," over and over. She wrote in the evening:

Dear Ridge:

When I think of not being able to come to the freshman dance with you this June, I could lie down and die, but mother is sort of narrow-minded in some ways, and she feels that sixteen is too young to go to a prom; and Lil Hammel's mother feels the same way. When I think of you dancing around with some other girl and hear you handing her a line, like you do to everybody, I could lie down and scream. Oh, I know—because a girl here at school met you after I left Hot Springs at Easter. Anyhow, if you start rushing some other kid when you come out to Ed Bement's house party this summer, I intend to cut her throat, or my own, or something desperate. And probably no one will even be sorry I'm dead. Ha-ha—

Summer, summer, summer—bland inland sun and friendly rain. Lake Forest, with its thousand enchanted verandas, the dancing on the outdoor platform at the club, and always the boys, centaurs, in new cars. Her mother came East to meet her, and as they walked together out of the Grand Central Station, the symphony of promise became so loud that Josephine's face was puckered and distorted, as with the pressure of strong sunshine.

"We've got the best plans," her mother said.

"Oh, what? What, mother?"

"A real change. I'll tell you all about it when we get to the hotel."

There was a sudden discord; a shadow fell upon Josephine's heart.

"What do you mean? Aren't we going to Lake Forest?"

"Some place much better"—her mother's voice was alarmingly cheerful. "I'm saving it till we get to the hotel."

Before Mrs. Perry had left Chicago, she and Josephine's father had decided, from observations of their own and some revelations on the part of their elder daughter, Constance, that Josephine knew her way around Lake Forest all too well. The place had changed in the twenty years that it had been the summer rendezvous of fashionable Chicago; less circumscribed children of new families were resoundingly in evidence and, like most parents, Mrs. Perry thought of her daughter as one easily led into mischief by others. The more impartial eyes of other members of the colony had long regarded Josephine herself as the principal agent of corruption. But, preventive or penalty, the appalling thing to Josephine was that the Perrys were going to a "nice quiet place" this summer.

"Mother, I simply can't go to Island Farms. I simply—"

"Father feels—"

"Why don't you take me to a reform school if I'm so awful? Or to state's penitentiary? I simply can't go to a horrible old farm with a lot of country jakes and no fun and no friends except a lot of hicks."

"But, dear, it's not like that at all. They just call it Island Farms. In fact, your aunt's place isn't a farm; it's really a nice little resort up in Michigan where lots of people spend the summer. Tennis and swimming and—and fishing."

"Fishing?" repeated Josephine incredulously. "Do you call that something to do?" She shook her head in mute incomprehension. "I'll just be forgotten, that's all. When it's my year to come out nobody will know who I am. They'll just say, 'Who in heck is this Josephine Perry? I never saw her around here.' 'Oh, she's just some hick from a horrible old farm up in Michigan. Let's not invite her.' Just when everybody else is having a wonderful time—"

"Nobody'll forget you in one summer, dear."

"Yes, they will. Everybody'll have new friends and know new dances, and I'll be up there in the backwoods, full of hayseed, forgetting everything I know. If it's so wonderful why isn't Constance coming?"

Lying awake in their drawing-room on the Twentieth Century, Josephine brooded upon the terrible injustice of it all. She knew that her mother was going on her account, and mostly because of the gossip of a few ugly and jealous girls. These ugly and jealous girls, her relentless enemies, were not entirely creatures of Josephine's imagination. There was something in the frank sensuousness of her beauty that plain women found absolutely intolerable; they stared at her in a frightened, guarded way.

It was only recently that gossip had begun to worry Josephine. Her own theory was that, though at thirteen or fourteen she had been "speedy"—a convenient word that lacked the vulgar implication of "fast"—she was now trying to do her best, and a difficult enough business it was, without the past being held against her; for the only thing she cared about in the world was being in love and being with the person she currently loved.

Toward midnight her mother spoke to her softly and found that she was asleep. Turning on the berth light, she looked for a moment at the flushed young face, smoothed now of all its disappointment by a faint, peculiar smile. She leaned over and kissed Josephine's brow, behind which, doubtless, were passing in review those tender and eagerly awaited orgies of which she was to be deprived this summer.

## II

Into Chicago, resonant with shrill June clamor; out to Lake Forest, where her friends moved already in an aura of new boys, new tunes, parties and house parties yet to be. One concession was granted her—she was to come back from Island Farms in time for Ed Bement's house party—which is to say, for Ridgeway Saunders' visit, the first of September.

Then northward, leaving all gayety behind, to the nice quiet place, implicit in its very station, which breathed no atmosphere of hectic arrivals or feverish partings: there was her aunt, her fifteen-year-old cousin, Dick, with the blank resentful stare of youth in spectacles, there were the dozen or so estates with tired people asleep inside them and the drab village three miles away. It was worse, even, than Josephine had imagined; to her the vicinity was literally unpopulated, for, as a representative of her generation, she stood alone. In despair, she buried herself in ceaseless correspondence with the outer world or, as a variant, played tennis with Dick and carried on a slow indifferent quarrel at his deliberately spiteful immaturity.

"Are you going to be this way always?" she demanded, breaking down at his stupidity

one day. "Can't you do anything about it? Does it hurt?"

"What way?" Dick shambled around the tennis net in the way that so offended her.

"Oh, such a pill! You ought to be sent away to some good school."

"I am going to be."

"Why, at your age most of the boys in Chicago have cars of their own."

"Too many," he responded.

"How do you mean?" Josephine flared up.

"I heard my aunt say there was too much of that there. That's why they made you come up here. You're too much for that sort of thing."

Josephine flushed. "Couldn't you help being such a pill, if you honestly tried?"

"I don't know," admitted Dick. "I don't even think that maybe I am one."

"Oh, yes, you are. I can assure you of that."

It occurred to her, not very hopefully, that under proper supervision something might be made of him. Perhaps she could teach him to dance or have him learn to drive his mother's car. She went to the extent of trying to smarten him up, to make him wash his hands bidurnally and to soak his hair and cleave it down the middle. She suggested that he would be more beautiful without his spectacles, and he obediently bumped around without them for several afternoons. But when he developed a feverish headache one night and confessed to his mother why he had been "so utterly insane," Josephine gave him up without a pang.

But she could have cared for almost anyone. She wanted to hear the mystical terminology of love, to feel the lift and pull inside herself that each one of a dozen affairs had given her. She had written, of course, to Ridgeway Saunders. He answered. She wrote again. He answered—but after two weeks. On the first of August, with one month gone and one to go, came a letter from Lillian Hammel, her best friend in Lake Forest.

Dearest Jo:

You said to write you every single thing, and I will, but some of it will be sort of a fatal blow to you—about Ridgeway Saunders. Ed Bement visited him in Philadelphia, and he says he is so crazy about a girl there that he wants to leave Yale and get married. Her name is Evangeline Ticknor and she was fired from Foxcroft last year for smoking; quite a speed and said to be beautiful and something like you, from what I hear. Ed said that Ridgeway was so crazy about her that he wouldn't even come out here in September unless Ed invited her, too; so Ed did. Probably a lot you care! You've probably had lots of crushes up there where you are, or aren't there any attractive boys—

Josephine walked slowly up and down her room. Her parents had what they wanted now; the plot against her was complete. For the first time in her life she had been thrown over, and by the most attractive, the most desirable boy she had ever known, cut out by a girl "very much like herself." Josephine wished passionately that she had been fired from school—then the family might have given up and let her alone.

She was not so much humiliated as full of angry despair, but for the sake of her pride, she had a letter to write immediately. Her eyes were bright with tears as she began:

Dearest Lil:

I was not surprised when I heard that about R. S. I knew he was fickle and never gave him a second thought after school closed in June. As a matter of fact, you know how fickle I am myself, darling, and you can imagine that I haven't had time to let it worry me. Everybody has a right to do what they want, say I. Live and let live is my motto. I wish you could have been here this summer. More wonderful parties—

She paused, knowing that she should invent more circumstantial evidence of gayety. Pen in air, she gazed out into the deep, still mass of northern trees. Inventing was delicate work, and having dealt always in realities, her imagination was ill-adapted to the task. Nevertheless, after several minutes a vague, synthetic figure began to take shape in her mind. She dipped the pen and wrote: "One of the darlinest—" hesitated and turned again for inspiration to the window.

Suddenly she started and bent forward, the tears drying in her eyes. Striding down the road, not fifty feet from her window, was the handsomest, the most fascinating boy she had ever seen in her life.

III

He was about nineteen and tall, with a blond viking head; the fresh color in his slender, almost gaunt cheeks was baked warm and dry by the sun. She had a glimpse of his eyes—enough to know that they were "sad" and of an extraordinary glistening blue. His model legs were in riding breeches, above which he wore a soft sweater jacket of blue chamois, and as he walked he swung a crop acrimoniously at the overhanging leaves.

For a moment the vision endured; then the path turned into a clump of trees and he was gone, save for the small crunch of his boots on the pine needles.

Josephine did not move. The dark green trees that had seemed so lacking in promise were suddenly like a magic wall that had opened and revealed a short cut to possible delight; the trees gave forth a great trembling rustle. For another instant she waited; then she threw herself at the unfinished letter:

—he usually wears the best-looking riding clothes. He has the most beautiful eyes. On top he usually wears a blue chamois thing that is simply divine.

IV

When her mother came in, half an hour later, she found Josephine getting into her best afternoon dress with an expression that was at once animated and far away.

"I thought—" she said. "I don't suppose you'd want to come with me and pay a few calls?"

"I'd adore to," said Josephine unexpectedly.

Her mother hesitated. "I'm afraid it's been a rather stupid month for you. I didn't realize that there wouldn't be anyone your age. But something nice has happened that I can't tell you about yet, and perhaps I'll soon have some news for you."

Josephine did not appear to hear.

"Who shall we call on?" she demanded eagerly. "Let's just call on everybody, even if it takes until ten o'clock tonight. Let's start at the nearest house and just keep going until we've killed everybody off."

"I don't know whether we can do that."

"Come on." Josephine was putting on her hat. "Let's get going, mother."

Perhaps, Mrs. Perry thought, the summer was really making a difference in her daughter; perhaps it was developing in her a more gently social vein. At each house they visited she positively radiated animation, and displayed sincere disappointment when they found no one home. When her mother called it a day, the light in her eyes went out.

"We can try again tomorrow," she said impatiently. "We'll kill the rest of them off. We'll go back to those houses where there was no one home."

It was almost seven—a nostalgic hour, for it had been the loveliest of all at Lake Forest a year ago. Bathed and positively shining, one had intruded then for a last minute into the departing day, and, sitting alone on the veranda, turned over the romantic prospects of the night, while lighted windows sprang out on the blurring shapes of houses, and cars flew past with people late home from tea.

But tonight the murmurous Indian twilight of the lake country had a promise of its own, and strolling out into the lane that passed the house, Josephine broke suddenly into a certain walk, rather an externalized state of mind, that had been hitherto reserved for more sophisticated localities. It implied, through a skimming lift of the feet, through an impatience of the moving hips, through an abstracted smile, lastly through a glance that fell twenty feet ahead, that this girl was about to cross some material threshold where she was eagerly awaited; that, in fact, she had already crossed it in her imagination and left her surroundings behind. It was just at that moment she heard a strong clear whistle in front of her and the sound as of a stick swishing through leaves:

"Hello,  
Fris-co,  
Hello!

How do you do, my dear?  
I only wish that you were here."

Her heart beat a familiar tattoo; she realized that they would pass each other just where a last rift of sunset came down through the pines.

"Hello,  
Fris-co,  
Hel-lo!"

There he was, a fine shape against the foreground. His gallant face, drawn in a single dashing line, his chamois vest, so blue—she was near enough that she could have touched it. Then she realized with a shock that he had passed without noticing her proximity by a single flicker of his unhappy eyes.

"The conceited pill!" she thought indignantly. "Of all the conceited—"

She was silent during dinner; at the end she said to her aunt, with small preliminary:

"I passed the most conceited-looking young man today. I wonder who he could have been."

"Maybe it was the nephew of old Dorrance," offered Dick, "or the fellow staying at old Dorrance's. Somebody said it was his nephew or some sort of relation."

His mother said pointedly to Josephine: "We don't see the Dorrances. Mr. Charles Dorrance considered that my husband was unjust to him about our boundary some years ago. Old Mr. Dorrance was a very stubborn man indeed."

Josephine wondered if that was why he had failed to respond this afternoon. It was a silly reason.

But next day, at the same place, at the same hour, he literally jumped at her soft "Good evening"; he stared at her with unmistakable signs of dismay. Then his hand went up as if to remove a hat, found none, and he bowed instead and went on by.

But Josephine turned swiftly and walked at his side, smiling.

"You might be more sociable. You really shouldn't be so exclusive, since we're the only two people in this place. I do think it's silly to let older people influence young people."

He was walking so fast that she could scarcely keep up with him.

"Honestly, I'm a nice girl," she persisted, still smiling. "Quite a few people rush me at dances and I once had a blind man in love with me."

They were almost at her aunt's gate, still walking furiously.

"Here's where I live," she said.

"Then I'll say good-by."

"What is the matter?" she demanded. "How can you be so rude?"

His lips formed the words, "I'm sorry."

"I suppose you've got to hurry home so you can stare at yourself at the mirror."

She knew this was untrue. He wore his good looks in almost an apologetic way. But it reached him, for he came to a precipitate halt, immediately moving off a little.

"Excuse my rudeness," he exploded. "But I'm not used to girls."

She was too winded to answer. But as her shaken composure gradually returned, she became aware of an odd weariness in his face.

"At least you might talk to me for a minute, if I don't come any nearer."

After a moment's hesitation he hoisted himself tentatively onto a fence rail.

"If you're so frightened of females, isn't it time something was done about it?" she inquired.

"It's too late."

"Never," she said positively. "Why, you're missing half of life. Don't you want to marry and have children and make some woman a fine wife—I mean, a fine husband?"

In answer he only shivered.

"I used to be terribly timid myself," she lied kindly. "But I saw that I was missing half of life."

"It isn't a question of will power. It's just that I'm a little crazy on the subject. A minute ago I had an instinct to throw a stone at you. I know it's terrible, so if you'll excuse me—"

He jumped down off the fence, but she cried quickly: "Wait! Let's talk it all over."

He lingered reluctantly.

"Why, in Chicago," she said, "any man as good-looking as you could have any girl he wanted. Everyone would simply pursue him."

The idea seemed to distress him still further; his face grew so sad that impulsively she moved nearer, but he swung one leg over the fence.

"All right. We'll talk about something else," she conceded. "Isn't this the most dismal place you ever saw? I was supposed to be a speed in Lake Forest, so the family sentenced me to this, and I've had the most killing month, just sitting and twirling my thumbs. Then yesterday I looked out the window and saw you."

"What do you mean you were a speed?" he inquired.

"Just sort of speedy—you know, sort of pash."

He got up—this time with an air of finality.

"You really must excuse me. I know I'm an idiot on this woman question, but there's nothing to do about it."

"Will you meet me here tomorrow?"

"Heavens, no!"

Josephine was suddenly angry; she had humbled herself enough for one afternoon. With a cold nod, she started homeward down the lane.

"Wait!"

Now that there was thirty feet between them, his timidity had left him. She was tempted to go back, resisted the impulse with difficulty.

"I'll be here tomorrow," she said coolly.

Walking slowly home, she saw, by instinct rather than logic, that there was something here she failed to understand. In general, a lack of self-confidence was enough to disqualify any boy from her approval; it was the unforgivable sin, the white flag, the refusal of battle. Yet now that this young man was out of sight, she saw him as he had appeared the previous afternoon—unself-conscious, probably arrogant, utterly debonair. Again she wondered if the unpleasantness between the families could be responsible for his attitude.

In spite of their unsatisfactory conversation, she was happy. In the soft glow of the sunset it seemed certain that it would all come right tomorrow. Already the oppressive sense of being wasted had deserted her. The boy who had passed her window yesterday afternoon was capable of anything—love, drama, or even that desperate recklessness that she loved best of all.

Her mother was waiting on the veranda.

"I wanted to see you alone," she said, "because I thought Aunt Gladys would be offended if you looked too delighted. We're going back to Lake Forest tomorrow."

"Mother!"

"Constance is announcing her engagement tomorrow and getting married in ten days. Malcolm Libby is in the State Department and he's ordered abroad. Isn't it wonderful? Your sister's opening up the Lake Forest house today."

"It'll be marvellous." After a moment Josephine repeated, with more conviction: "Perfectly marvellous."

Lake Forest—she could feel the fast-beating excitement of it already. Yet there was something missing, as if the note of an essential trumpet had become separated from the band. For five weeks she had passionately hated Island Farms, but glancing around her in the gathering dusk, she felt rather sorry for it, a little ashamed of her desertion.

Throughout dinner the odd feeling persisted. She would be deep in exciting thoughts that began, "Won't it be fun to—" then the imminent brilliance would fade and there would be a stillness inside her like the stillness of these Michigan nights. That was what was lacking in Lake Forest—a stillness for things to happen in, for people to walk into.

"We'll be terribly busy," her mother said. "Next week there'll be bridesmaids in the house, and parties, and the wedding itself. We should have left tonight."

Josephine went up to her room immediately and sat looking out into the darkness. Too bad; a wasted summer after all. If yesterday had happened sooner she might have gone away with some sense of having lived after all. Too late. "But there'll be lots of boys," she told herself—Ridgeway Saunders.

She could hear their confident lines, and somehow they rang silly on her ears. Suddenly she realized that what she was regretting was not the lost past but the lost future, not what had not been but what would never be. She stood up, breathing quickly.

A few minutes later she left the house by a side door and crossed the lawn to the gardener's gate. She heard Dick call after her uncertainly, but she did not answer. It was dark and cool, and the feeling that the summer was rushing away from her. As if to overtake it, she walked faster, and in ten minutes turned in at the gate of the Dorrance house, set behind the jagged silhouettes of many trees. Someone on the veranda hailed her as she came near:

"Good evening. I can't see who it is."

"It's the girl who was so fresh this afternoon."

She heard him catch his breath suddenly.

"May I sit here on the steps for a moment? See? Quite safe and far away. I came to say good-by, because we're going home tomorrow."

"Are you really?" She could not tell whether his tone showed concern or relief. "It'll be very quiet."



"I want to explain about this afternoon, because I don't want you to think I was just being fresh. Usually I like boys with more experience, but I just thought that since we were the only ones here, we might manage to have a good time, and there weren't any days to waste."

"I see." After a moment he asked, "What will you do in Lake Forest? Be a—a speed?"

"I don't much care what I do. I've wasted the whole six weeks."

She heard him laugh.

"I gather from your tone that someone is going to have to pay for it," he said.

"I hope so," she answered rather grimly. She felt tears rise in her eyes. Everything was wrong. Everything seemed to be fixed against her.

"Please let me come up there on the settee," she asked suddenly.

There was a creak as it stopped swinging.

"Please don't. I hate to ask you, but really I'll have to go if you do. Let's talk about—Do you like horses?"

She got up swiftly, mounted the steps and walked toward the corner where he sat.

"No," she said, "I think that what I'd like would be to be liked by you."

In the light of the moon just lifting over the woods his face was positively haggard. He jumped to his feet; then his hands were on her arms and he was drawing her slowly toward him.

"You simply want to be kissed," he was saying through scarcely opened lips. "I knew it the first time I saw that mouth of yours—that perfectly selfish, self-sufficient look that—"

Suddenly he dropped his arms and stepped away from her with a gesture of horror.

"Don't stop!" she cried. "Do anything, tell me anything, even if it isn't complimentary. I don't care."

But he had vaulted swiftly over the railing and, with his hands clasping the back of his head, was walking across the lawn. In a minute she overtook him and stood beseechingly in his path, her small bosom rising and falling.

"Why do you suppose I'm here?" he demanded suddenly. "Do you think I'm alone?"

"What—"

"My wife is with me."

Josephine shivered.

"Oh—oh—then why doesn't anybody know?"

"Because my wife is—my wife is colored."

If it had not been so dark Josephine would have seen that for an instant he was laughing silently and uncontrollably.

"Oh," she repeated.

"I didn't know," he continued.

In spite of a subconscious scepticism, an uncanny feeling stole over Josephine.

"What dealings could I have with a girl like you?"

She began to weep softly.

"Oh, I'm sorry. If I could only help you."

"You can't help me." He turned gruffly away.

"You want me to go."

He nodded.

"All right. I'll go."

Still sobbing, she half walked, half backed away from him, intimidated now, yet still hoping he would call to her. When she saw him for the last time from the gate, he was standing where she had left him, his fine thin face clear and handsome in the suddenly streaming light of an emergent moon.

She had gone a quarter of a mile down the road when she became conscious of running footsteps behind her. Before she could do more than start and turn anxiously, a figure sprang out at her. It was her cousin, Dick.

"Oh!" she cried. "You frightened me!"

"I followed you here. You had no business going out at night like this."

"What a sneaky thing!" she said contemptuously.

They walked along side by side.

"I heard you with that fellow. You had a crush on him, didn't you?"

"Will you be quiet! What does a horrible little pill like you know about anything?"

"I know a lot," said Dick glumly. "I know there's too much of that sort of thing at Lake Forest."

She scorned to answer; they reached her aunt's gate in silence.

"I tell you one thing," he said uncertainly. "I'll bet you wouldn't want your mother to know about this."

"You mean you're going to my mother?"

"Just hold your horses. I was going to say I wouldn't say anything about it--"

"I should hope not."

"--on one condition."

"Well?"

"The condition is—" He fidgeted uncomfortably. "You told me once that a lot of girls at Lake Forest had kissed boys and never thought anything about it."

"Yes." Suddenly she guessed what was coming, and an astonished laugh rose to her lips.

"Well, will you, then—kiss me?"

A vision of her mother arose—of a return to Lake Forest in chains. Deciding quickly, she bent toward him. Less than a minute later she was in her room, almost hysterical with tears and laughter. That, then, was the kiss with which destiny had seen fit to crown the summer.

V

Josephine's sensational return to Lake Forest that August marked a revision of opinion about her; it can be compared to the moment when the robber bandit evolved through sheer power into the feudal seignior.

To the three months of nervous energy conserved since Easter beneath the uniform of her school were added six weeks of resentment—added, that is, as the match might be said to be added to the powder. For Josephine exploded with an audible, visible bang; for weeks thereafter pieces of her were gathered up from Lake Forest's immaculate lawns.

It began quietly; it began with the long-awaited house party, on the first evening of which she was placed next to the unfaithful Ridgeway Saunders at dinner.

"I certainly felt pretty badly when you threw me over," Josephine said indifferently—to rid him of any lingering idea that he had thrown her over. Once she had chilled him into wondering if, after all, he had come off best in the affair, she turned to the man on the other side. By the time the salad was served, Ridgeway was explaining himself to her. And his girl from the East, Miss Ticknor, was becoming increasingly aware of what an obnoxious person Josephine Perry was. She made the mistake of saying so to Ridgeway. Josephine made no such mistake; toward the end of dinner she merely asked him the innocent question as to who was his friend with the high button shoes.

By ten o'clock Josephine and Ridgeway were out in somebody's car—far out where the colony becomes a prairie. As minute by minute she grew wearier of his softness, his anguish increased. She let him kiss her, just to be sure; and it was a desperate young man who returned to his host's that night.

All next day his eyes followed her about miserably; Miss Ticknor was unexpectedly called East the following afternoon. This was pathetic, but certainly someone had to pay for Josephine's summer. That score settled, she returned her attention to her sister's wedding.

Immediately on her return she had demanded a trousseau in keeping with the splendor of a maid of honor, and under cover of the family rush had so managed to equip herself as to add a charming year to her age. Doubtless this contributed to the change of attitude toward her, for though her emotional maturity, cropping out of a schoolgirl dress, had seemed not quite proper, in more sophisticated clothes she was an incontestable little beauty; and as such she was accepted by at least the male half of the wedding party.

Constance was openly hostile. On the morning of the wedding itself, she unburdened herself to her mother.

"I do hope you'll take her in hand after I'm gone, mother. It's really unendurable the way she's behaving. None of the bridesmaids have had a good time."

"Let's not worry," Mrs. Perry urged. "After all, she's had a very quiet summer."

"I'm not worrying about her," said Constance indignantly.

The wedding party were lunching at the club, and Josephine found herself next to a jovial usher who had arrived inebriated and remained in that condition ever since. However, it was early enough in the day for him to be coherent.

"The belle of Chicago, the golden girl of the golden West. Oh, why didn't I come out here this summer?"

"I wasn't here. I was up in a place called Island Farms."

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "Ah-ha! That accounts for a lot of things—that accounts for the sudden pilgrimage of Sonny Dorrance."

"Of who?"

"The famous Sonny Dorrance, the shame of Harvard, but the maiden's prayer. Now don't tell me you didn't exchange a few warm glances with Sonny Dorrance."

"But isn't he," she demanded faintly—"isn't he supposed to be—married?"

He roared with laughter.

"Married—sure, married to a mulatto! You didn't fall for that old line. He always pulls it when he's reacting from some violent affair—that's to protect himself while he recovers. You see, his whole life has been cursed by that fatal beauty."

In a few minutes she had the story. Apart from everything else, Sonny Dorrance was fabulously rich—women had pursued him since he was fifteen—married women, débutantes, chorus girls. It was legendary.

There actually had been plots to entangle him into marriage, to entangle him into anything. There was the girl who tried to kill herself, there was the one who tried to kill him. Then, this spring, there was the annulled marriage business that had cost him an election to Porcellian at Harvard, and was rumored to have cost his father fifty thousand dollars.

"And now," Josephine asked tensely, "you say he doesn't like women?"

"Sonny? I tell you he's the most susceptible man in America. This last thing shook him, and so he keeps off admirers by telling them anything. But by this time next month he'll be involved again."

As he talked, the dining room faded out like a scene in a moving picture, and Josephine was back at Island Farms, staring out the window, as a young man appeared between the pine trees.

"He was afraid of me," she thought to herself, her heart tapping like a machine gun. "He thought I was like the others."

Half an hour later she interrupted her mother in the midst of the wedding's last and most violent confusion.

"Mother, I want to go back to Island Farms for the rest of the summer," she said at

once.

Mrs. Perry looked at her in a daze, and Josephine repeated her statement.

"Why, in less than a month you'll be starting back to school."

"I want to go anyhow."

"I simply can't understand you. In the first place, you haven't been invited, and in the second place, I think a little gayety is good for you before you go back to school, and in the third place, I want you here with me."

"Mother," Josephine wailed, "don't you understand? I want to go! You take me up there all summer when I don't want to go, and just when I do want to, you make me stay in this ghastly place. Let me tell you this isn't any place for a sixteen-year-old girl, if you knew everything."

"What nonsense to be bothering me with just at this time!"

Josephine threw up her hands in despair; the tears were streaming down her cheeks.

"It's ruining me here!" she cried. "Nobody thinks of anything but boys and dances from morning till night. They go out in their cars and kiss them from morning till night."

"Well, I know my little girl doesn't do anything like that."

Josephine hesitated, taken a little aback.

"Well, I will," she announced. "I'm weak. You told me I was. I always do what anybody tells me to do, and all these boys are just simply immoral, that's all. The first thing you know I'll be entirely ruined, and then you'll be sorry you didn't let me go to Island Farms. You'll be sorry—"

She was working herself into hysteria. Her distracted mother took her by the shoulders and forced her down into a chair.

"I've never heard such silly talk. If you weren't so old I'd spank you. If you keep this up you'll be punished."

Suddenly dry-eyed, Josephine got up and stalked out of the room. Punished! They had been punishing her all summer, and now they refused to punish her, refused to send her away. Oh, she was tired of trying. If she could think of something really awful to do, so that they would send her away forever—

Mr. Malcolm Libby, the prospective bridegroom, happened upon her fifteen minutes later, in an obscure corner of the garden. He was pacing restlessly about, steadying himself for the rehearsal at four o'clock and for the ceremony two hours later.

"Why, hello!" he cried. "Why, what's the matter? You've been crying."

He sat down on the bench, full of sympathy for Constance's little sister.

"I'm not crying," she sobbed. "I'm just angry."

"About Constance going away? Don't you think I'll take good care of her?"

Leaning over, he patted her hand. If he had seen the look that flashed suddenly

across her face it would have alarmed him, for it was curiously like the expression associated with a prominent character in Faust.

When she spoke, her voice was calm, almost cool, and yet tenderly sad:

"No, that wasn't it. It was something else."

"Tell me about it. Maybe I can help."

"I was crying"—she hesitated delicately—"I was crying because Constance has all the luck."

Half an hour later when, with the rehearsal twenty minutes late, the frantic bride-to-be came searching through the garden and happened upon them suddenly, Malcolm Libby's arm was around Josephine, who seemed dissolved in uncontrollable grief, and on his face was a wildly harassed expression she had never seen there before. Constance gave a little gasping cry and sank down upon the pebbled path.

The next hour passed in an uproar. There was a doctor; there were shut doors; there was Mr. Malcolm Libby in an agonized condition, the sweat pouring off his brow, explaining to Mrs. Perry over and over that he could explain if he could only see Constance. There was Josephine, tight-lipped, in a room, being talked to coldly by various members of the family. There was the clamor of arriving guests; then frantic last minutes' patching up of things, with Constance and Malcolm in each other's arms and Josephine, unforgiven, being bundled into her dress.

Then a solemn silence fell and, moving to music, the maid of honor, her head demurely bowed, followed her sister up the two aisles of people that crowded the drawing-room. It was a lovely, sad wedding; the two sisters, light and dark, were a lovely contrast; there was as much interest in one as in the other. Josephine had become a great beauty and the prophets were busy; she stood for the radiant future, there at her sister's side.

The crush was so great at the reception that not until it was over was Josephine missed. And long before nine o'clock, before Mrs. Perry had time to be uneasy, a note from the station had been handed in at the door:

My Dearest Mother:

Ed Bement brought me here in his car, and I am catching the train to Island Farms at seven. I have wired the housekeeper to meet me, so don't worry. I feel I have behaved terribly and am ashamed to face anyone, and I am punishing myself as I deserve by going back to the simple life. It is, after all, better for a girl of sixteen, I feel, and when you think it over you will agree. With dearest love. Josephine.

After all, thought Mrs. Perry, perhaps it was just as well. Her husband was really angry, and she herself was exhausted and didn't feel up to another problem at the moment. Perhaps a nice quiet place was best.