

Dice, Brassknuckles And Guitar, F. Scott Fitzgerald

I

Parts of New Jersey are underwater, and other parts are under continual surveillance by the authorities. But here and there lie patches of garden country dotted with old-fashioned frame mansions, which have wide shady porches and a red swing on the lawn; and perhaps, on the widest and shadiest of the porches there is even a hammock left over from the hammock days, stirring gently in a mid-Victorian wind.

When tourists come to such last-century landmarks they stop their cars and gaze for awhile and say: "Well, of course, that house is mostly halls and has a thousand rats and one bathroom, but there's a sort of atmosphere about it—"

The tourist doesn't stay long. He drives on to his Elizabethan villa of pressed cardboard or his early Norman meat-market or his medieval Italian pigeon-coop—because this is the twentieth century and Victorian houses are as unfashionable as the works of Mrs. Humphry Ward. can't see the hammock from the road—but sometimes there's a girl in the hammock. There was this afternoon. She was asleep in it and apparently unaware of the aesthetic horrors which surrounded her, the stone statue of Diana, for example, which grinned idiotically under the sunlight on the lawn.

There was something enormously yellow about the whole scene—there was this sunlight, for instance, that was yellow, and the hammock was of the particularly hideous yellow peculiar to hammocks, and the girl's yellow hair was spread out upon the hammock in a sort of invidious comparison. She slept with her lips closed and her hands clasped behind her head, as it is proper for young girls to sleep. Her breast rose and fell slightly with no more emphasis than the sway of the hammock's fringe. Her name, Amanthis, was as old-fashioned as the house she lived in. I regret to say that her mid-Victorian connections ceased abruptly at this point.

Now if this were a moving picture (as, of course, I hope it will someday be) I would take as many thousand feet of her as I was allowed—then I would move the camera up close and show the yellow down on the back of her neck where her hair stopped and the warm color of her cheeks and arms, because I like to think of her sleeping there, as you yourself might have slept, back in your young days. Then I would hire a man named Israel Glucose to write some idiotic line of transition, and switch thereby to another scene that was taking place at no particular spot far down the road.

In a moving automobile sat a southern gentleman accompanied by his body-servant. He was on his way, after a fashion, to New York but he was somewhat hampered by the fact that the upper and lower portions of his automobile were no longer in exact juxtaposition. In fact from time to time the two riders would dismount, shove the body onto the chassis, corner to corner, and then continue onward, vibrating slightly in involuntary unison with the motor. Except that it had no door in back the car might have been built early in the mechanical age. It was covered with the mud of eight states and adorned in front by an enormous defunct motometer and behind by a mangy pennant bearing the legend "Tarleton, Ga." In the dim past someone had begun to paint the hood yellow but unfortunately had been called away when but half through the task.

As the gentleman and his body-servant were passing the house where Amanthis lay asleep in the hammock, something happened—the body fell off the car. My only apology for stating this so suddenly is that it happened very suddenly indeed. When the noise had died down and the dust had drifted away master and man arose and inspected the two halves.

"Look-a-there," said the gentleman in disgust, "the doggone thing got all separated that time."

"She bust in two," agreed the body-servant.

"Hugo," said the gentleman, after some consideration, "we got to get a hammer an' nails an' tack it on."

They glanced up at the Victorian house. On all sides faintly irregular fields stretched away to a faintly irregular unpopulated horizon. There was no choice, so the black Hugo opened the gate and followed his master up a gravel walk, casting only the blase glances of a confirmed traveler at the red swing and the stone statue of Diana which turned on them a storm-crazed stare.

At the exact moment when they reached the porch Amanthis awoke, sat up suddenly and looked them over.

The gentleman was young, perhaps twenty-four, and his name was Jim Powell. He was dressed in a tight and dusty suit, the coat of which was evidently expected to take flight at a moment's notice, for it was secured to his body by a line of eight preposterous buttons.

There were supernumerary buttons upon the coat-sleeves also and Amanthis could not resist a glance to determine whether or not more buttons ran up the side of his trouser leg. In his green hat a feather from some dejected bird fluttered in the warm wind. He bowed formally, dusting his knees with the hat. Simultaneously he smiled, half-shutting his faded blue eyes and displaying white and beautifully symmetrical teeth.

"Good-evenin'," he said in abandoned Georgian. "My automobile has met with an accident out yonder by your gate. I wondered if it wouldn't be too much to ask you if I could have the use of a hammer and some tacks for a little while."

Amanthis laughed. For a moment she laughed uncontrollably. Mr. Jim Powell laughed, politely and appreciatively, with her. His body-servant, deep in the throes of colored adolescence, alone preserved a dignified gravity.

"I better introduce who I am, maybe," said the visitor. "My name's Powell. I'm a resident of Tarleton, Georgia. This here nigger's my boy Hugo."

"Your son!" The girl stared from one to the other in wild fascination.

"No, he's my body-servant, I guess you'd call it. We call a nigger a boy down yonder."

At this reference to the finer customs of his native soil the boy Hugo put his hands behind his back and looked darkly and superciliously down the lawn.

"Yas'm," he muttered, "I'm a body-servant."

"Where you going in your automobile," demanded Amanthis.

"Goin' north for the summer."

"Where to?"

The tourist waved his hand with a careless gesture as if to indicate the Adirondacks, the Thousand Islands, Newport—but he said:

"We're tryin' New York."

"Have you ever been there before?"

"Never have. But I been to Atlanta lots of times. An' we passed through all kinds of cities this trip. Man!"

He whistled to express the enormous spectacularity of his recent travels.

"Listen," said Amanthis intently, "you better have something to eat. Tell your—your body-servant to go round in back and ask the cook to send us out some sandwiches and lemonade. Or maybe you don't drink lemonade—very few people do anymore."

Mr. Powell by a circular motion of his finger sped Hugo on the designated mission. Then he seated himself gingerly in a rocking-chair and began fanning himself formally with the feathers of his hat.

"You cer'nly are mighty kind," he told her. "An' if I wanted anything stronger than lemonade I got a bottle of good old com out in the car. I brought it along because I thought maybe I wouldn't be able to drink the whiskey they got up here."

"Listen," she said, "my name's Powell too. Amanthis Powell."

"Say, is that right?" He laughed ecstatically. "Maybe we're kin to each other. I come from mighty good people," he went on. "Pore though. But I did right well this last year so I thought I'd come north for the summer."

At this point Hugo reappeared on the veranda steps and became audible.

"White lady back there she asked me don't I want eat some too. What I tell her?"

"You tell her yes mamm if she be so kind," directed his master. And as Hugo retired he confided to Amanthis: "That boy's got no sense at all. He don't want to do nothing without I tell him he can. I brought him up," he added, not without pride.

When the sandwiches arrived Mr. Powell stood up. Unaccustomed to white servants he obviously expected an introduction.

"Are you a married lady?" he inquired of Amanthis, when the servant was gone.

"No," she answered, and added from the security of eighteen, "Pm an old maid."

Again he laughed politely.

"You mean you're a society girl."

She shook her head. Mr. Powell noted with embarrassed enthusiasm the particular yellowness of her yellow hair.

"Does this old place look like it?" she said cheerfully. "No, you perceive in me a daughter of the countryside. My suitors are farmers—or else, promising young barbers from the next village with somebody's late hair still clinging to their coat-sleeves."

"Your daddy oughtn't to let you go with a barber," said the tourist disapprovingly. He considered—"You ought to be a society girl."

He began to tap his foot rhythmically on the porch and in a moment Amanthis discovered that she was unconsciously doing the same thing.

"Stop!" she commanded. "Don't make me do that."

He looked down at his foot.

"Excuse me," he said humbly. "I don't know—it's just something I do."

This intense discussion was now interrupted by Hugo who appeared on the steps bearing a hammer and a handful of nails.

Mr. Powell arose unwillingly and looked at his watch.

"We got to go, daggone it," he said, frowning heavily. "See here. Wouldn't you like to be a New York society girl and go to those dances an' all, like you read about, where they throw gold pieces away?"

She looked at him and nodded, smiling. Then she got herself by some means from the hammock and they went down toward the road, side by side.

"I'll keep my eyes open for you and let you know," he persisted. "A pretty girl like you ought to go around in society. We may be kin to each other, you see, and us Powells ought to stick together."

"What are you going to do in New York?"

They were now almost at the gate and the tourist pointed to the two depressing sectors of his automobile.

"I'm goin' to drive a taxi. This one right here. Only it's got so it busts in two all the time."

"You're going to drive that in New York?"

Jim looked at her uncertainly. Such a pretty girl should certainly control the habit of shaking all over upon no provocation at all.

"Yes mamm," he said with dignity.

Amanthis watched while they placed the upper half of the car upon the lower half and nailed it severely into place. Then Mr. Powell took the wheel and his body-servant climbed in beside him.

"I'm cer'nly very much obliged to you indeed for your hospitality. Convey my respects to your father."

"I will," she assured him. "Come back and see me, if you don't mind barbers in the room."

He dismissed this unpleasant thought with a gesture.

"Your company would always be charming." He put the car into gear as though to drown out the temerity of his parting speech. "You're the prettiest girl I've seen up north—by far."

Then with a groan and a rattle Mr. Powell of Georgia with his own car and his own body-servant and his own ambitions and his own private cloud of dust continued on north for the summer.

She thought she would never see him again. She lay in her hammock, slim and beautiful, opened her left eye slightly to see June come in and then closed it and retired contentedly back into her dreams.

But one day when the midsummer vines had climbed the precarious sides of the red swing in the lawn, Mr. Jim Powell of Tarleton, Georgia, came vibrating back into her life. They sat on the wide porch as before.

"I've got a great scheme," he told her.

"Did you drive your taxi like you said?"

"Yes mamm, but the business was right bad. I waited around in front of all those hotels and theatres an' nobody ever got in."

"Nobody?"

"Well, one night there was some drunk fellas they got in—only just as I was gettin' started my automobile came apart. And another night it was rainin' and there wasn't no other taxis and a lady got in because she said she had to go a long ways. But before we got there she made me stop and she got out. She seemed kinda mad and went walkin' off in the rain. Mighty proud lot of people they got up in New York."

"And so you're going home?" asked Amanthis sympathetically.

"No mamm. I got an idea." His blue eyes looked closely at her. "Has that barber been around here—with hair on his sleeves?"

"No. He's—he's gone away."

"Well, then, first thing is I want to leave this car of mine here with you. It ain't the right color for a taxi. To pay for its keep I'd like to have you drive it just as much as you want. Long as you got a hammer an' nails with you there ain't much bad that can happen—"

"I'll take care of it," interrupted Amanthis, "but where are you going?"

"Southampton. It's one of the swellest places they got up here, so that's where I'm going."

She sat up in amazement.

"What are you going to do there?"

"Listen." He leaned toward her confidentially. "Were you serious about wanting to be a New York society girl?"

"Deadly serious."

"That's all I wanted to know," he said inscrutably. "You just wait here on this porch a couple of weeks and—and sleep. And if any barbers come to see you with hair on their sleeves you tell 'em you're too sleepy to see 'em."

"What then?"

"Then you'll hear from me, mamm," he continued decisively. "You talk about society! Before one month I'm goin' to have you in more society than there is."

Further than this he would say nothing. His manner conveyed that she was going to be suspended over a pool of gaiety and periodically immersed: "Is it gay enough for you, mamm? Shall I let in a little more excitement, mamm?"

"Well," answered Amanthis, lazily considering, "there are few things for which I'd forego the luxury of sleeping through July and August—but if you'll write me a letter I'll run up to Southampton."

Three days later a young man wearing a yellow feather in his hat rang the doorbell of the enormous and astounding Madison Harlan house at Southampton. He asked the butler if there were any people in the house between the ages of sixteen and twenty. He was informed that Miss Genevieve Harlan and Mr. Ronald Harlan answered that description and thereupon he handed in a most peculiar card and requested in fetching Georgian that it be brought to their attention.

As a result he was closeted for almost an hour with Mr. Ronald Harlan (who was a student at the Hillkiss School) and Miss Genevieve Harlan (who was not uncelebrated at Southampton dances). When he left he bore a short note in Miss Harlan's handwriting which he presented together with his peculiar card at the next large estate. It happened to be that of the Clifton Garneaus. Here, as if by magic, the same audience was granted him.

He went on—it was a hot day, and men who could not afford to do so were carrying their coats on the public highway, but Jim, a native of southernmost Georgia, was as fresh and cool at the last house as at the first. He visited ten houses that day. Anyone following him in his course might have taken him to be some gifted bootlegger.

There was something in his unexpected demand for the adolescent members of the family which made hardened butlers lose their critical acumen. As he left each house a close observer might have seen that fascinated eyes followed him to the door and excited voices whispered something which hinted at a future meeting.

The second day he visited twelve houses. He might have kept on his round for a week and never seen the same butler twice but it was only the palatial, the amazing houses which intrigued him.

On the third day he did a thing that many people have been told to do and few have done—he hired a hall. Exactly one week later he sent a wire to Miss Amanthis Powell saying that if she still aspired to the gaiety of the highest society she should set out for Southampton by the earliest possible train. He himself would meet her at the station.

Jim Powell was no longer a man of leisure, so when she failed to arrive at the time her wire had promised he grew restless. He supposed she was coming on a later train, turned to go back to his project—and met her entering the station from the street side.

"Why, how did you—"

"Well," said Amanthis, "I arrived this morning instead, and I didn't want to bother you so I found a respectable boarding house on the Ocean Road."

She was quite different from the indolent Amanthis of the porch hammock, he thought. She wore a suit of robin's-egg blue and a rakish young hat with a curling feather—she was attired not unlike those young ladies between sixteen and twenty who of late were absorbing his attention. Yes, she would do very well.

He bowed her profoundly into a taxi-cab and got in beside her.

"Isn't it about time you told me your scheme?" she suggested.

"Well, it's about these society girls up here." He waved his hand airily. "I know 'em all."

"Where are they?"

"Right now they're with Hugo. You remember—that's my body- servant."

"With Hugo!" Her eyes widened. "Why? What's it all about?"

"Well, I got—I got sort of a school, I guess you'd call it."

"A school?"

"It's a sort of academy. And I'm the head of it. I invented it."

He flipped a card from his case as though he were shaking down a thermometer.

"Look."

She took the card. In large lettering it bore the legend

JAMES POWELL; J. M.

"Dice, Brassknuckles and Guitar"

She stared in amazement.

"Dice, Brassknuckles and Guitar?" she repeated in awe.

"Yes mamm."

"What does it mean? What- do you sell 'em?"

"No mamm, I teach 'em. It's a profession."

"Dice, Brassknuckles and Guitar? What's the J. M.?"

"That stands for Jazz Master."

"But what is it? What's it about?"

"Well, you see, it's like this. One night when I was in New York I got talkin' to a young fella who'd been drinking some. He was one of my fares. And he'd taken some society girl somewhere and lost her."

"Lost her?"

"Yes mamm. He forgot her, I guess. And he was right worried. Well, I got to thinkin' that these girls nowadays—these society girls—they lead a sort of dangerous life and my course of study offers a means of protection against these dangers."

"You teach 'em to use brassknuckles?"

"Yes mamm, if necessary. Look here, you take a girl and she goes into some cafe where she's got no business to go. Well then, her escort he gets a little too much to drink an' he goes to sleep an' then some other fella comes up and says 'Hello,

sweet mamma' or whatever one of those mashers says up here. What does she do? She can't scream, on account of no real lady'll scream nowadays. She just reaches down in her pocket and slips her fingers into a pair of Powell's Defensive Brassknuckles, debutante's size, executes what I call the Society Hook, and Wham! that big fella's on his way to the cellar."

"Well—what's the guitar for?" whispered the awed Amanthis. "Do they have to knock somebody over with the guitar?"

"No, mamm!" exclaimed Jim in horror. "No mamm! In my course no lady would be taught to raise a guitar against anybody. I teach 'em to play. Shucks! you ought to hear 'em. Why, when I've given 'em two lessons you'd think some of 'em was colored."

"And the dice?"

"Dice? I'm related to a dice. My grandfather was a dice. I teach 'em how to make those dice perform. I protect pocketbook as well as person."

"Did you— Have you got any pupils?"

"Mamm I got all the really nice, rich people in the place. What I told you ain't all. I teach lots of things. I teach 'em the Boodlin' Bend—and the Mississippi Sunrise. Why, there was one girl she came to me and said she wanted to learn to snap her fingers. I mean really snap 'em—like they do. She said she never could snap her fingers since she was little. I gave her two lessons and now Wham! Her daddy says he's goin' to leave home."

"When do you have it?" demanded the weak and shaken Amanthis.

"Three times a week. You'll just be one of the pupils. I got it fixed up that you come from very high-tone people down in New Jersey. I told 'em your daddy was the man that had the original patent on lump sugar."

She gasped.

"So all you got to do," he went on, "is to pretend you never saw any barber."

They were now at the south end of the village and Amanthis saw a row of cars parked in front of a two-story building. The cars were all low, long, rakish and of a brilliant hue. Then she was ascending a narrow stairs to the second story. Here, painted on a door from which came the sounds of music and voices were the words:

JAMES POWELL; J. M.

"Dice, Brassknuckles and Guitar"

Mon.—Wed.—Fri.

Hours 3-5 P. M.

"Now if you'll just step this way—" said the Principal, pushing open the door.

Amanthis found herself in a long, bright room, populated with girls and men of about her own age. The scene presented itself to her at first as a sort of animated afternoon tea but after a moment she began to see, here and there, a motive and a pattern to the proceedings.

The students were scattered into groups, sitting, kneeling, standing, but all rapaciously intent on the subjects which engrossed them. From six young ladies gathered in a ring around some indistinguishable objects came a medley of cries and exclamations—plaintive, pleading, supplicating, exhorting, imploring and lamenting—their voices serving as tenor to an undertone of mysterious clatters.

Next to this group, four young men were surrounding an adolescent black, who proved to be none other than Mr. Powell's late body-servant. The young men were roaring at Hugo apparently unrelated phrases, expressing a wide gamut of emotion. Now their voices rose to a sort of clamor, now they spoke softly and gently, with mellow implication. Every little while Hugo would answer them with words of approbation, correction or disapproval.

"What are they doing?" whispered Amanthis to Jim.

"That there's a course in southern accent. Lot of young men up here want to learn southern accent—so we teach it—Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Eastern Shore, Ole Virginian. Some of 'em even want straight nigger—for song purposes."

They walked around among the groups. Some girls with metal knuckles were furiously insulting two punching bags on each of which was painted the leering, winking face of a masher. A mixed group, led by a banjo tom-tom, were rolling harmonic syllables from their guitars; there were couples dancing flat-footed in the corner to a record made by Rastus Muldoon's Savannah Band. "Now, Miss Powell, if you're ready I'll ask you to take off your hat and go over and join Miss Genevieve Harlan at that punching bag in the corner." He raised his voice. "Hugo," he called, "there's a new student here. Equip her with a pair of Powell's Defensive Brassknuckles—debutante size."

### III

I regret to say that I never saw Jim Powell's famous Jazz School in action nor followed his personally conducted tours into the mysteries of Dice, Brassknuckles and Guitar. So I can give you only such details as were later reported to me by one of his admiring pupils. During all the discussion of it afterwards no one ever denied that it was an enormous success, and no pupil ever regretted having received its degree—Bachelor of Jazz.

"If I could keep it dark," Jim confided to Amanthis, "I'd have up Rastus Muldoon's Band from Savannah. That's the band I've always wanted to lead."

He was making money. His charges were not exorbitant—as a rule his pupils were not particularly flush—but he moved from his boarding house to the Casino Hotel where he took a suite and had Hugo serve him his breakfast in bed.

The establishing of Amanthis as a member of Southampton's younger set was easier than he had expected. Within a week she was known to everyone in the school by her first name. Jim saw less of her than he would have liked. Not that her manner toward him changed—she walked with him often, she was always willing to listen to his plans—but after she was taken up by the fashionable her evenings seemed to be monopolized. Several times Jim arrived at her boarding house to find her out of breath, as if she had just come in at a run, presumably from some festivity in which he had no share.

So as the summer waned he found that one thing was lacking to complete the triumph of his enterprise. Despite the hospitality shown to Amanthis, the doors of Southampton were closed to him. Polite to, or rather, fascinated by him as his pupils were from three to five, after that hour they moved in another world.

His was the position of a golf professional who, though he may fraternize, and even command, on the links, loses his privileges at sundown. He may look in the club window but he cannot dance. And, likewise, it was not given to Jim to see his teachings put into effect. He could hear the gossip of the morning after—that was all.

But while the golf professional, being English, holds himself proudly below his patrons, Jim Powell, who "came from a right good family down there—pore though," lay awake many nights in his hotel bed and heard the music drifting into his window from the Katzbys' house or the Beach Club, and turned over restlessly and wondered what was the matter. In the early days of his success he had bought himself a dress-suit, thinking that he would soon have a chance to wear it—but it still lay untouched in the box in which it had come from the tailor's. Perhaps, he thought, there was some real gap which separated him from the rest. It worried him.

Late in September came the Harlan dance, which was to be the last and biggest of the season for this younger crowd. His academy would close the day before because of the general departure of his pupils for more conventional schools. Jim, as usual, was not invited to the dance. He had hoped that he would be. The two young Harlans, Ronald and Genevieve, had been his first patrons when he arrived at Southampton—and it was Genevieve who had taken such a fancy to Amanthis. To have been at their dance—the most magnificent dance of all—would have crowned and justified the success of the waning summer.

His class, gathering for the afternoon, was loudly anticipating the next day's revel and he was relieved when closing time came.

"Good-bye," he told them. He was wistful because his idea was played out and because, after all, they were not sorry to go. Outside, the sound of their starting motors, the triumphant putt- putt of their cut-outs cutting the warm September air, was a jubilant sound—a sound of youth and hopes high as the sun.

They were gone—he was alone with Hugo in the room. He sat down suddenly with his face in his hands.

"Hugo," he said huskily. "They don't want us up here."

"Don't you care," said a voice.

He looked up to see Amanthis standing beside him.

"You better go with them," he told her.

"Why?"

"Because you're in society now and I'm no better to those people than a servant. You're in society—I fixed that up. You better go or they won't invite you to any of their dances."

"They won't anyhow, Jim," she said gently. "They didn't invite me to the one tomorrow night."

He looked up indignantly.

"They didn't?"

She shook her head.

"I'll make 'em!" he said wildly. "I'll tell 'em they got to. I'll— I'll—"

She came close to him with shining eyes.

"Don't you mind, Jim," she soothed him. "Don't you mind. They don't matter. We'll have a party of our own tomorrow—just you and I."

"I come from right good folks," he said, defiantly. "Pore though."

She laid her hand softly on his shoulder.

"I understand. You're nicer than any of them, Jim."

He got up and went to the window and stared out mournfully into the late afternoon.

"I reckon I should have let you sleep in that hammock."

She laughed.

"I'm awfully glad you didn't."

He turned and faced the room, and his face was dark.

"Sweep up and lock up, Hugo," he said, his voiced trembling. "The summer's over and we're going down home."

Autumn had come early. Jim Powell woke next morning to find his room cool, and the phenomenon of frosted breath in September absorbed him for a moment to the exclusion of the day before. Then the lines of his face drooped with unhappiness as he remembered the humiliation which had washed the cheery glitter from the summer. There was nothing left for him except to go back where he was known.

After breakfast a measure of his customary light-heartedness returned. He was a child of the South—brooding was alien to his nature. He could conjure up an injury only a certain number of times before it faded into the great vacancy of the past.

But when, from force of habit, he strolled over to his defunct establishment, melancholy again dwelt in his heart. Hugo was there, a specter of gloom, deep in the lugubrious blues.

Usually a few words from Jim were enough to raise him to an inarticulate ecstasy, but this morning there were no words to utter. For two months Hugo had lived on a pinnacle of which he had never dreamed. He had enjoyed his work simply and passionately, arriving before school hours and lingering long after Mr. Powell's pupils had gone.

The day dragged toward a not-too-promising night. Amanthis did not appear and Jim wondered forlornly if she had not changed her mind about dining with him that night. Perhaps it would be better if she were not seen with them. But then, he reflected dismally, no one would see them anyhow—everybody was going to the big dance at the Harlans' house.

When twilight threw unbearable shadows into the hall he locked it up for the last time, took down the sign "James Powell; J. M., Dice, Brassknuckles and Guitar" and went back to his hotel. Looking over his scrawled accounts he saw that there was another month's rent to pay on the hall and some bills for windows broken and new equipment that had hardly been used. Jim had lived in state, and he realized that financially he would have nothing to show for the summer after all.

When he had finished he took his new dress-suit out of its box and inspected it, running his hand over the satin of the lapels and lining. This, at least, he owned and perhaps in Tarleton somebody would ask him to a party where he could wear it.

"Shucks!" he said scoffingly. "It was just a no account old academy, anyhow. Some of those boys round the garage down home could of beat it all hollow."

Whistling "Jeanne of Jelly-bean Town" to a not-dispirited rhythm Jim encased himself in his first dress-suit and walked downtown.

"Orchids," he said to the clerk. He surveyed his purchase with some pride. He knew that no girl at the Harlan dance would wear anything lovelier than these exotic blossoms that leaned languorously backward against green ferns.

In a taxi-cab, carefully selected to look like a private car, he drove to Amanthis's boarding house. She came down wearing a rose-colored evening dress into which the orchids melted like colors into a sunset.

"I reckon we'll go to the Casino Hotel," he suggested, "unless you got some other place "

At their table, looking out over the dark ocean, his mood became a contented sadness. The windows were shut against the cool but the orchestra played "All Alone" and "Tea for Two" and for awhile, with her young loveliness opposite him, he felt himself to be a romantic participant in the life around him. They did not dance, and he was glad—it would have reminded him of that other brighter and more radiant dance to which they could not go.

After dinner they took a taxi and followed the sandy roads for an hour, glimpsing the now starry ocean through the casual trees.

"I want to thank you," she said, "for all you've done for me, Jim."

"That's all right—we Powells ought to stick together."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to Tarleton tomorrow."

"I'm sorry," she said softly. "Are you going to drive down?"

"I got to. I got to get the car south because I couldn't get what she was worth by sellin' it. You don't suppose anybody's stole my car out of your barn?" he asked in sudden alarm.

She repressed a smile.

"No."

"I'm sorry about this—about you," he went on huskily, "and— and I would like to have gone to just one of their dances. You shouldn't of stayed with me yesterday. Maybe it kept 'em from asking you."

"Jim," she suggested eagerly, "let's go and stand outside and listen to their old music. We don't care."

"They'll be coming out," he objected.

"No, it's too cold."

She gave the chauffeur a direction and a few minutes later they stopped in front of the heavy Georgian beauty of the Madison Harlan house whence the windows cast their gaiety in bright patches on the lawn. There was laughter inside and the plaintive wind of fashionable horns, and now and again the slow, mysterious shuffle of dancing feet.

"Let's go up close," whispered Amanthis in an ecstatic trance. "I want to hear."

They walked toward the house, keeping in the shadow of the great trees. Jim proceeded with awe—suddenly he stopped and seized Amanthis's arm.

"Man!" he cried in an excited whisper. "Do you know what that is?"

"A night watchman?" Amanthis cast a startled look around.

"It's Rastus Muldoon's Band from Savannah! I heard 'em once, and I know. It's Rastus Muldoon's Band!"

They moved closer till they could see first pompadours, then slicked male heads, and high coiffures and finally even bobbed hair pressed under black ties. They could distinguish chatter below the ceaseless laughter. Two figures appeared on the porch, gulped something quickly from flasks and returned inside. But the music had bewitched Jim Powell. His eyes were fixed and he moved his feet like a blind man.

Pressed in close behind some dark bushes they listened. The number ended. A breeze from the ocean blew over them and Jim shivered slightly. Then, in a wistful whisper:

"I've always wanted to lead that band. Just once." His voice grew listless. "Come on. Let's go. I reckon I don't belong around here."

He held out his arm to her but instead of taking it she stepped suddenly out of the bushes and into a bright patch of light.

"Come on, Jim," she said startingly. "Let's go inside."

"What—?"

She seized his arm and though he drew back in a sort of stupefied horror at her boldness she urged him persistently toward the great front door.

"Watch out!" he gasped. "Somebody's coming out of that house and see us."

"No, Jim," she said firmly. "Nobody's coming out of that house—but two people are going in."

"Why?" he demanded wildly, standing in full glare of the porte-cochere lamps. "Why?"

"Why?" she mocked him. "Why, just because this dance happens to be given for me."

He thought she was mad.

"Come home before they see us," he begged her.

The great doors swung open and a gentleman stepped out on the porch. In horror Jim recognized Mr. Madison Harlan. He made a movement as though to break away and run. But the man walked down the steps holding out both hands to Amanthis.

"Hello at last," he cried. "Where on earth have you two been? Cousin Amanthis—" He kissed her, and turned cordially to Jim. "And for you, Mr. Powell," he went on, "to make up for being late you've got to promise that for just one number you're going to lead that band."

#### IV

New Jersey was warm, all except that part that was underwater, and that mattered only to the fishes. All the tourists who rode through the long green miles stopped their cars in front of a spreading old-fashioned country house and looked at the red swing on the lawn and the wide, shady porch, and sighed and drove on—swerving a little to avoid a jet-black body-servant in the road. The body-servant was applying a hammer and nails to a decayed flivver which flaunted from its rear the legend, "Tarleton, Ga."

A girl with yellow hair and a warm color to her face was lying in the hammock looking as though she could fall asleep any moment. Near her sat a gentleman in an extraordinarily tight suit. They had come down together the day before from the fashionable resort at Southampton.

"When you first appeared," she was explaining, "I never thought I'd see you again so I made that up about the barber and all. As a matter of fact, I've been around quite a bit—with or without brassknuckles. I'm coming out this autumn."

"I reckon I had a lot to learn," said Jim.

"And you see," went on Amanthis, looking at him rather anxiously, "I'd been invited up to Southampton to visit my cousins—and when you said you were going, I wanted to see what you'd do. I always slept at the Harlans' but I kept a room at the boarding house so you wouldn't know. The reason I didn't get there on the right train was because I had to come early and warn a lot of people to pretend not to know me."

Jim got up, nodding his head in comprehension.

"I reckon I and Hugo had better be movin' along. We got to make Baltimore by night."

"That's a long way."

"I want to sleep south tonight," he said.

Together they walked down the path and past the idiotic statue of Diana on the lawn.

"You see," added Amanthis gently, "you don't have to be rich up here in order to go around, any more than you do in Georgia—" She broke off abruptly. "Won't you come back next year and start another academy?"

"No mamm, not me. That Mr. Harlan told me I could go on with the one I had but I told him no."

"Haven't you— didn't you make money?"

"No mamm," he answered. "I got enough of my own income to just get me home. One time I was ahead but I was livin' high and there was my rent an' apparatus and those musicians."

He didn't consider it necessary to mention that Mr. Harlan had tried to present him with a check.

They reached the automobile just as Hugo drove in his last nail. Jim opened a pocket of the door and took from it an unlabeled bottle containing a whitish-yellow liquid.

"I intended to get you a present," he told her awkwardly, "but my money got away before I could, so I thought I'd send you something from Georgia. This here's just a personal remembrance. It won't do for you to drink but maybe after you come out into society you might want to show some of those young fellas what good old corn tastes like."

She took the bottle.

"Thank you, Jim."

"That's all right." He turned to Hugo. "I reckon we'll go along now. Give the lady the hammer."

"Oh, you can have the hammer," said Amanthis tearfully. "Won't you promise to come back?"

"Someday—maybe."

He looked for a moment at her yellow hair and her blue eyes misty with sleep and tears. Then he got into his car and as his foot found the clutch his whole manner underwent a change.

"I'll say good-bye mamm," he announced with impressive dignity. "We're goin' south for the winter."

The gesture of his straw hat indicated Palm Beach, St. Augustine, Miami. His body-servant spun the crank, gained his seat and became part of the intense vibration into which the automobile was thrown.

"South for the winter," repeated Jim. And then he added softly, "You're the prettiest girl I ever knew. You go back up there and lie down in that hammock, and sleep—sle-eep—"

It was almost a lullaby, as he said it. He bowed to her, magnificently, profoundly, including the whole North in the splendor of his obeisance—

Then they were gone down the road in quite a preposterous cloud of dust. Just before they reached the first bend Amanthis saw them come to a full stop, dismount and shove the top part of the car onto the bottom part. They took their seats again without looking around. Then the bend—and they were out of sight, leaving only a faint brown mist to show that they had passed.