

The Pearl and the Fur, F. Scott Fitzgerald

I

Gwen had been shopping all Saturday afternoon and at six she came home heavy laden. Among other things she had purchased two dozen little tin cylinders to attach to her hair at bedtime and let dangle through the night; a set of grotesque artificial finger nails which violated all disarmament treaties; a set of six inch pennons of Navy, Princeton, Vassar, and Yale; and a packet of travel booklets describing voyages to Bermuda, Jamaica, Havana and South America.

Wearily—as weariness goes at fourteen—she cast it all on the couch and phoned her friend Dizzy Campbell.

“Well, guess what?” she said.

“What?” Dizzy’s voice was full of excitement. “Was it real?”

“It was not,” said Gwen disgustedly, “I took it to the jewel man at Kirk’s and he said it was just a piece of shell that they often have in oysters.”

Dizzy sighed.

“Well, then we don’t go for a trip this Easter.”

“I’m so mad I can scarcely see. Daddy was sure it was a pearl when he almost broke a tooth on it in the restaurant.”

“After all we’d planned,” Dizzy lamented.

“I was so sure that I went to the travel bureau first and got a lot of books with the best pictures of people sitting around swimming pools on the deck and dancing with the cutest boys only seventy dollars minimum—if Daddy would listen to reason.”

They sighed audibly in full mutual comprehension.

“There is one thing, though,” said Dizzy. “—though it isn’t like the other. Mrs. Tulliver wants to take four or five girls from school to New York for a few days. Mother says I can go but I said I’d tell her later because I was waiting to hear about the pearl—Father said it probably wouldn’t be any good if it was cooked anyhow. This would be better than nothing.”

“I guess so,” said Gwen doubtfully. “But you don’t suppose she’d take us to the Rainbow Room and places like that, would she? Would it just be kind of museums and concerts?”

“She’d take us to the theatre and shopping.”

Gwen’s bright blue eyes began to come back to life.

“Well, I’ll ask Daddy,” she said, “He ought to do that anyhow after being wrong about the pearl.”

II

Five young ladies of fourteen and fifteen rode to New York the following Monday. Mrs. Tulliver’s original plan was to stop at an inn for women only, but upon their vehement protest that they wanted music with meals they put up at a “quiet” hotel in the fifties. They saw two plays and went to Rockefeller Center, bought summer

clothes according to their allowances and had a touch of night life in the afternoon by going to a hotel famous for its tea dances and listening to a favorite orchestra play, though they had no partners of their own.

All of them had tried to provide against this contingency by pledging boys to "come up if you possibly can" and even writing frantic letters to long neglected swains met last summer that they would be in the great city on a certain date. Alas, though they leapt at the sound of the telephone it was invariably one of their rooms calling the other.

"Heard anything?"

"No. Had one letter—so sorry and all that sort of thing."

"I had a wire from a boy in New Mexico."

"Mine was from California. Isn't there ever anybody in New York?"

It was all pretty tame, Gwen thought, though they enjoyed themselves.

The trouble was not so much the lack of boys as the impossibility of doing anything very gay and glamorous without boys. On the next to the last day Mrs. Tulliver called them together in her room.

"Now I'm not blind or deaf and I know you haven't had all the excitement you expected, though I didn't promise we'd paint the town red. Still I don't want you to feel you've been chaperoned to death so I have a little plan."

She paused and five glances were bent on her expectantly.

"My plan will give you a few hours of complete independence and it ought to be useful when school opens again."

The gleam went out of the ten young eyes, though they still gave formal attention.

"Now tomorrow morning I want each of you to go out by herself and make an investigation of some part of New York—find out all about it so you could write a composition if you had to—though I'm not going to ask you that in vacation. I'd say go in pairs but I know you'd find out much more if you went by yourselves. You're old enough for such an adventure. Now don't you think it sounds sort of fun?"

"I'll take Chinatown," Gwen volunteered.

"Oh, no, no!" said Mrs. Tulliver hurriedly, "I wasn't thinking of anything like that. I meant something more like the Aquarium for instance though I want each of you to invent some individual experience."

Gathered by themselves the clan debated the matter cynically. Dizzy complained: "If she'd let us go out at night, each to a different night club and bring back our reports in the morning then there'd be some sense to it. I don't know what to do—we've been up in the Empire State and we've seen the flower show and the Planetarium and the flea-circus. I think I'll just go over to the Ritz Hotel and inspect that. You always hear about things being 'Ritzy' and I'd like to see about it."

Gwen had a plan formulating in her head but she did not mention it. The idea of a trip was persistently in her mind, a trip with a set destination perhaps, but nevertheless a voyage, sharply different from the stationary life of school.

I'll get on a 5th Avenue bus, she thought, and go as far as that goes. And then I'll get on a street car or elevated and go as far as that goes.

At nine next morning the troupe embarked on their separate destinies. It was a fine day with the buildings sparkling upward like pale dry ginger-ale through the blue air. An officious woman sitting next to her on top of the bus tried to begin a conversation but Gwen quelled her with a steely regard and turned her eyes outward. The bus followed Riverside Drive along the Hudson and then came to a region of monotonous apartment rows, which embody the true depths of the city, darkly mysterious at night, drab in the afternoon and full of bright hope in the morning. Presently they had reached the end of the line. Gwen asked a question of the conductor and he indicated the mouth of a subway half a block down the street.

"But isn't there an elevated?" she demanded.

"The subway gets to be an elevated part of the time."

The northbound train for Kingsbridge was almost deserted. Kingsbridge—Gwen could see it already: great mansions with Norman keeps and Gothic towers. Southampton was probably somewhere around here and Newport, all such fashionable places, which she vaguely supposed resembled the outlying sections of her own city.

At Two hundred and thirtieth Street she followed the last two passengers out into Kingsbridge—and found herself on a bleak plain, scarred with a few isolated "developments," a drug store, a gas station and a quick lunch. Going up a little hill she looked back with some pride over the distance she had come. She was actually at the dead end of New York—even in the crystalline air the skyscrapers of Manhattan Island were minute and far away. She wondered if Dizzy was really rowing a boat on Central Park Lake or if Clara had gone to enroll herself in a theatrical casting agency—this last having been Gwen's suggestion. They were somewhere within that great battlement of a city and she was without, as detached as in an aeroplane.

Gwen looked at her watch and discovered she had been traveling a long time—she could just get back in time for one o'clock lunch. Returning to the subway she saw the train by which she had come gathering momentum as it left the station. A negro cleaning the platform told her there would be another one in an hour.

—Here's where I miss the matinee, she mourned. And it was the last one.

"Do they have taxies out here?" she asked.

"They's a stand by the drug store, but ain't usually no cabs around."

She was in luck, though. A single taxi stood there and beside it was the driver, a very young man wearing an expression of some anxiety. When Gwen asked him if he was free this seemed to clear away, as if her words were an open-sesame to something and he said with obvious eagerness:

"I certainly am free. Walk right in—I mean step right in."

Shutting the door after her he got in front.

"Where do you want to go?"

She named her hotel. He produced a little red book, brand new, and thumbed through it.

"Madison and Fifty-fifth Street," he announced.

"I could have told you that," said Gwen.

"Yes—I suppose you could. I'm not very familiar with the city yet. Excuse me for being so dumb."

He sounded rather nice.

"Don't you live in New York?" she asked.

"I do now, but I'm from Vermont. What's that street again—Madison and—?"

"Madison and Fifty-fifth."

He started the motor and as quickly shut it off—turned around apologetically.

"I'm sorry, there'll be a short delay. This is what they call a dead-head—"

"Something wrong with the car?"

"No—nothing wrong with the car. In the taxi business they call this a dead-head and when you're at one you've got to call up the office and say you're leaving."

With that he was out of the car and into the quick lunch shop, whence presently she heard his voice saying something inexplicable over the phone. Presently he was back inquiring:

"You're not the miscall, are you?"

"The what?"

"The party that called and then took the subway instead. That's why I'm a dead-head."

Their eyes met and stared gravely. Gwen was the first to appreciate the situation.

"I still don't know what a dead-head is," Gwen protested, "But how could I have called a taxi and then taken the subway and still be here?"

"That's right," he admitted. "You see a dead-head is—"

"I know—it's a man that takes drugs."

"No, that's a hop-head," he corrected her. "A dead—"

"I think we ought to start," she suggested primly.

"Oh, that's right."

Obediently he climbed in the driver's seat again. But as they started off he was constrained to turn around once more.

"I might as well tell you frankly: This is the first time I've ever driven a cab. Oh, don't be scared," he added at her alarmed expression, "I didn't say a car, I said a cab. It just happens it's my first day—you've got to start somewhere."

Still perturbed Gwen demanded as they drove off.

"How old are you?"

"Seventeen—I mean eighteen—" He looked back at her quickly, dodging a milk wagon, "I'm sixteen, if you want to know. I've got a driver's license but the company only takes you at eighteen, so I said I was eighteen to get the job."

After a few miles they reached the first outlying apartment houses, first an isolated sextet of green-gray brick, then two forlorn streets on an ambitious scale save that where they should have led into a public square and a fountain, they slipped coyly into a rubble field, as though they had suddenly forgotten. In one of these rural intervals he volunteered:

"You asked me what was a dead-head. Well, I've just got it straight myself. It's when you report that you're going somewhere without a passenger or else when they send you where there might be a passenger and you have to wait and see. I didn't know but what they might be kidding me this morning because I was a new driver, sending me out there. And on my first day I didn't want to be wasting time—"

"Yes," Gwen said.

She was not listening. For several minutes her eyes had focused straight before her, but not on this morning's dream of endless peregrination.

"—They seem to mean two things by it," the young driver continued, "They mean—"

Gwen reached down suddenly and drew it up over her knees. At first she had taken it for a robe; but it didn't look like a robe. And when she saw the jeweled ornament pinned at the shoulder and felt the indescribable softness of it, she knew she was holding a chinchilla cape worth several thousand dollars.

III

She hummed a bar from "Goody-Goody" to conceal the slight swish it made as she dropped it to the floor of the car again. Two ideas occurred to her. This nice young man might, for all she knew, be a crook who had forgotten he had left it in the car. He had told her it was his first trip as a driver.

—and second that it might not be real after all.

She settled back in the corner of the cab, pushing at the cloak with her feet to keep it out of sight, and picked up his voice again.

"—I'm probably talking too much, but I haven't talked to anyone in a week except one hard-boiled guy that trains the new drivers. Look at me, the completed product."

"You said something about college."

"Oh, I'll shut up." He was a little hurt—she could see it even from behind in the grim slant of his young cheek.

"I only said I wanted to go to Williams College and I had a teacher who thought I could so I passed three College Boards examinations. But shucks, there's so many fellows trying to work their way through. I thought if I could make something out of this I might try it."

"Williams," she said vaguely.

"Yes, it's one of the best colleges."

He turned his head around rather defiantly. "My teacher went there."

"Stop here," Gwen said suddenly.

"Where? Why?"

"Here. Right in front of this church."

He put on his brakes forcibly as he continued.

"Williams College is—"

"I know what it is," said Gwen, made impatient with her secret. "I know some girls whose brothers go there. But you look at this."

"At what?"

She shook it at him.

"This!"

He got out and standing beside the cab regarded it wonderingly as she turned it here and there.

"It's a fur," he remarked at last.

"A fur? It's a chinchilla, I think. I didn't know at first whether to tell you. I thought you might be a gangster. But when you said you were going to Williams I thought I'd tell you."

"I didn't say I was going to Williams. I said I wanted—"

"Well what about this then? What do you think about it?"

"It's no coonskin," he said appraisingly.

"I mean what is it doing here?" Gwen demanded. "Do you suppose somebody just threw it in?"

He considered.

"I never did look in back. I took over the cab from a fellow named Michaelson—and he said he'd been a dead-head at the Grand Central since three o'clock—"

"Oh, stop talking about dead-heads."

"I explained it to you—"

"I've got to get back to my hotel and we've got to do something about this."

"Don't lose your temper!" he said.

"What?"

"I mean don't let's fight about nothing. Do you think it's really a valuable coat?"

He shook it out in the sunlight and looked at it.

"—maybe it is. Must have been left in the taxi last night. The thing is to go to

the home office and see if there's any inquiry about it. Maybe there's a reward."

He threw the coat back into an ignominious heap at the bottom of the cab.

"Let's go there then," Gwen said, "Honestly, I've got to get back to my hotel. They're probably starting lunch by this time, and they'll think I've been murdered."

"Shall I drive you to your hotel? Let's see, it was—" He fumbled once more for the little red book.

"No, to your garage."

"I'll go to the main one. The dispatcher out at 110th Street is kind of disagreeable."

"What's your name?" asked Gwen as they drove off.

"I think it's Callahan or something."

"Don't you know your own name?"

"Oh, my name—my name's Ethan Allen Kennicott. See, it's on my card here with my picture."

They talked on the way downtown. There was a sort of bitter amusement in him, as if life had flung him about so carelessly that he preferred to stand a little apart and ask "What's next." His family had been comfortably off in a small-town way, until two years ago. In reciprocation of his confidence Gwen told him about how her father could no longer afford to do the things they had once done, and about the disappointment of the black pearl. She realized though that beside his difficulties, her own were trivial.

"Girls have to wait for a break," he said suddenly, "men have to make their own breaks my teacher used to say."

"So do girls," Gwen said.

"Yes, they do," he scoffed. "Catch a girl doing something she isn't told to do—by somebody."

"That isn't true," said Gwen, loyal to her sex, "Girls start lots of things."

"When some man's behind them."

"No, all by themselves."

"Sure, they find a fur—if you call that starting something."

She withdrew disdainfully from the argument. When they reached the garage on Forth-sixth Street he parked outside and went in. Emerging five minutes later he announced:

"It's wanted all right. Who do you suppose it belongs to?"

"Who?"

"Mrs. Peddlar TenBroek."

"Whew!"

"It's probably worth a fortune—I heard the dispatcher saying the TenBroek family own the land the garage is on." He frowned. "Michaelson was in there too."

"Who's Michaelson?"

"He's the man who drove this car last night. The notice says where the coat was lost and it's got him thinking maybe he drove the party that lost it. He asked me if I found it and I told him no."

"Why did you tell him that?"

"Well, you found it, didn't you? Anyway he's a tough guy and he might make trouble. He might claim the reward."

"Well, he certainly didn't find it," said Gwen, "But I don't want any reward."

But while he was in a drugstore looking up Mrs. TenBroek's address she realized she wouldn't mind a reward one single bit.

"Anyway it'll be half yours if we get one," she said when he came out, "Maybe it would help you go to Williams College."

Ten minutes later they waited impressed at the door of a Fifth Avenue Chateau. A very old butler glided out between great white pillars and when he heard Gwen's story quavered:

"You may leave the fur with me."

"No, I want to see Mrs. TenBroek."

"You'd far better leave it with me," the butler wheezed—he put out his hand for the garment, whereupon Ethan Kennicott reached forward gently and separated his fingers from it.

"Where is Mrs. TenBroek?" Gwen demanded.

"She is not at home. I'm not permitted to give out any information to strangers."

Gwen considered. It was after two—in a few minutes Mrs. Tulliver and her charges would be watching the curtain rise on the first act of "Oh, Mr. Heaven." In a minute she made her decision.

"We'll sit right out here in the taxi till she gets home. She'll have to pay the taxi fare, though."

As they went down the steps there was a sudden commotion behind the butler—the hall seemed suddenly full of boys, and one of them put his head over the butler's shoulder and called to her in a decidedly English voice:

"I say—what have you got to sell?"

She turned back.

"Do you live here?" she asked.

"Most of the time. I say, is that the cape Alicia Rytina lost?"

"It belongs to Mrs. Peddlar TenBroek." Gwen said

"That's right—but she lent it to Alicia Rytina, the opera singer. My mother had most of the Metropolitan here last night and Alicia Rytina thought she had tonsillitis—I don't mean my mother—I mean Rytina. And she left it in a taxi."

There were now three other boys beside him on the steps.

"Where is Mrs. TenBroek?" said Gwen.

"To tell you the truth she's on a boat."

"Oh."

"But it hasn't sailed yet—she likes to get on board four hours ahead of time and get used to the motion. In fact we're going down presently to see her off."

"I'd like to give her the cape personally," said Gwen.

"Good enough. It's the Dacia, Pier 31, North River. Can we drive you down?"

"Thanks, I've got a taxi."

The other three boys—they were aged about sixteen or seventeen—had begun to dance in unison on the steps. It was American dancing but it had an odd jerky English enthusiasm about it.

"These are the three mad Rhumba dancers of Eton," explained Peddlar TenBroek. "I brought them over for the spring vacation."

Still dancing they bowed together and Gwen laughed.

"Do you dance the rhumba?" TenBroek inquired.

"I used to," she said tolerantly.

The three dancers looked somewhat offended. Gwen went down the steps.

"Tell mother we'll be there soon," said TenBroek.

As Ethan Kennicott drove off she said:

"They were attractive, but I wonder what made them think they were doing a modern dance."

He was silent on the way to the pier. Even when they were held up by a long line of strawberry trucks he said nothing and she wondered if he was envying those other boys who had no worries at all.

She found out presently. When he had parked the car and they had started toward the pier entrance, he stopped suddenly.

"This is foolishness," he said in an odd strained voice.

"What is?"

"Returning this fur. She shouldn't have left it around." He talked faster and faster as if he did not quite want to hear his own words. "She has dozens of furs and this is probably insured anyhow. It ought to be finders keepers—it's really as

much ours as the pearl your father found in the restaurant."

"Oh, no it isn't," she exclaimed, "Because father had paid for the oysters."

"We could probably get thousands for it. I could find out where to take it—"

Shocked, she cut him off.

"I wouldn't think of such a thing—when we know exactly who owns it."

"Nobody knows we've got it except those boys, and you don't live in New York and they don't know your name—"

"Stop it!" Gwen cried. "I never heard anything so terrible in my life. You know you wouldn't do that. Come along right away—we'll ride up on this thing."

Taking his arm she drew him toward the moving belt that was carrying baggage up to the pier. She plopped down on it thinking he would sit beside her but at the last moment he shook himself free; and as she was borne slowly aloft surrounded by bags and golf clubs he stood looking after her—with the cape over his arm.

"Hey, what do you think you're doing?" a guard called to Gwen. "That's for baggage."

But Gwen's impassioned voice cut across him.

"Come right up here with that cape!"

Ethan shook his head slowly, and called back:

"You come down here—I want to talk to you first."

An English voice behind him said suddenly:

"What's all the trouble?"

Confused, Ethan turned around to confront Peddlar TenBroek and his three friends.

"The young lady went up on the moving belt," he said, flushing.

"So she did. Well, we will too."

The three English youths were in fact already on it, following in Gwen's wake to the audible fury of the guard.

"We'd better go up the stairs," said Peddlar throwing a curious look at Ethan. But when they joined the others above Gwen said nothing—only she averted her eyes from Ethan Kennicott.

The three Englishmen led the way clogging out the pier.

For a moment the wild activity about the gang-plank, hurrying stewards, the rumbling iron wheels of a hundred hand trucks, the swift smell of the harbour—momentarily drove the episode from Gwen's mind. On the boat they went along many corridors lined by stewardesses with correctly folded arms. A huge bouquet preceded them, a bouquet sheathed in night jasmine, made of rare iris, delphinium, heliotrope and larkspur, with St. Joseph lilies, fresh from New Orleans. They followed in its fragrant path. When it had been crowded through a door the steward guiding them said:

"Here is Mrs. TenBroek's salon."

A blond flower of a woman, chic by Gwen's most exacting standards, stood up to receive them and one of the English boys said:

"You can't get away from the mad rhumba dancers, Mrs. TenBroek—even by going to the West Indies."

The words thrilled Gwen; this was the trip of the bright catalogues—of tropical moons and flashing swimming pools and soft music on enchanted beaches.

Mrs. TenBroek saw the cape suddenly and exclaimed:

"Oh, so it's been found!" She took it and looked it over eagerly. "Tell me, where was it found?"

"It may be a little dusty," said Gwen, "It was out at 216th Street."

"But what was it doing out there? I lent it to Madame Rytina, the singer, and surely she doesn't live out there."

"It was in this driver's car," said Gwen. "We both found it."

"Well, you must sit down and tell me about it. I'm so relieved because it's such a nice little cape."

In a minute Gwen found herself telling what had taken her to 216th Street. When she had done Mrs. TenBroek said:

"And now you've missed your matinee—what a shame!" She looked at Gwen tentatively, not quite certain how to proceed. "I mentioned a reward in the afternoon paper—"

"Really this driver found it as much as I did," Gwen interrupted quickly.

They all looked at Ethan Kennicott and Peddlar TenBroek said suddenly:

"That's all very well—but I'd like to know what he was doing with the cloak down at the foot of the pier saying he wouldn't bring it up to you."

Ethan flushed.

"I didn't say that."

"You said something like that. Mother, she found the cape—he didn't really have anything to do with it."

"I never claimed I did," said Ethan.

"Well, what about it?" inquired Mrs. TenBroek, "Who did find it?"

She broke off as the bell rang and the door opened emitting a rancid breeze from another world. The arch type of all the taxi drivers of legend stood there—soiled, sinister and tough as pig-skin.

"Anybody here lose a cape?" he demanded in no uncertain voice.

"What's all this, steward?" asked Mrs. TenBroek sharply.

"He claims he found a cape, Madame."

"Not ezatly found it," Mr. Michaelson corrected him, "But I was driving the car when it was left in it. Then I turn the car over to this mug—" He indicated Ethan—"and he finds it and doesn't tell me about it. I thought there was something funny when he came to the garage this morning and the old guy at your house tipped me off."

Mrs. TenBroek looked impatiently from one driver to the other.

"I ought to get a split of that reward," Michaelson said, "After I dropped them parties last night I went to the Grand Central and slep three hours without movin the car, just as if I was taking care of it."

"But you didn't know it was there."

"Not exatly. This young guy comes along this morning and drives the car away before I can look in it. Here I been with the company nine years and this is the first day he was ever out and he finds it and don't say nothing. And me with a wife—"

"I've had enough of this," Mrs. TenBroek interrupted. "It's quite plain that the young lady found the cape, and neither of you have the faintest claim to any reward."

"What young lady?" demanded Mr. Michaelson. "Oh, her."

"If you looked in the afternoon papers," continued Mrs. TenBroek, "--You'd see I didn't mention any sum so I'll call it three dollars for each of you to pay for your time."

She opened her purse and took the elastic from a row of bills.

"Three dollars for a chinchilly coat! Well, if that ain't—"

"Be careful now," interrupted Peddlar TenBroek.

"I got this guy to thank for it," said Michaelson, "The rat never told me."

He took a sudden step toward Ethan Kennicott and hit him a smashing left on the jaw, knocking him back over a low trunk and up with a smack against the wall. Then snarling "Keep your small change, lady," he left the room.

"I say, he can't get away with that!" exclaimed Peddlar TenBroek, and started after him.

"Let him go!" his mother ordered. "I can't endure such scenes."

One of the English boys had helped Ethan to his feet; he leaned rockily against the wall, his hand over his eyes.

Fumbling in her purse Mrs. TenBroek found a bill.

"Give this one ten dollars and tell him he can go too."

Ethan stared at the bill and shook his head.

"Never mind," he said.

"Put it in his pocket," she insisted, "And make him go."

"Somebody ought to help him off," said Gwen, agonized, "He's hurt."

"I'll help him off," said the English boy. He asked one of the others to give him a hand.

As Gwen, shaken and confused, started to follow, Mrs. TenBroek stopped her.

"Do wait a minute till I get my breath? I want to talk to you."

"He shouldn't have hit him like that," Gwen said.

"It was terrible—you shouldn't ever get mixed up with such people." She turned to her son. "Order me a glass of sherry, Peddlar, and some tea for this young lady."

"No, thanks, I've got to go," Gwen said. "I have to telephone my chaperone at the hotel."

"You can phone from the ship. Go with her and find the phone, Peddlar."

Gwen hoped that her party had gone to the matinee as planned, but on the other hand Mrs. Tulliver might be still at the hotel worrying about her.

After a few minutes she was startled to hear Dizzy's voice over the wire.

"Why aren't you at the play?" Gwen demanded.

"I was late—Mrs. Tulliver left two seats and a note for us and I was just going over."

"Well, tell her I'm all right."

"Where are you?"

"I'm on a boat going to the West Indies," said Gwen ambiguously.

"What?" Dizzy exclaimed. "Did you find a real pearl?"

"I mean the boat's going, but I'm not. I wish it would start and I'd get left aboard by accident. Why were you late?"

"I got locked up in the bird house."

"The what?"

"I went to the zoo and the keeper went out to lunch. Oh, it was the dumbest thing—I never want to see a bird again."

When Gwen went back to Mrs. TenBroek's suite, that lady was full of an idea.

"It's hard to offer a reward to someone like you," she said, "But I've thought of something. I'm just making this trip to pick up an old aunt of mine and bring her back to New York and I wonder if you'd like to go along and keep me company—I'm sure I could arrange it with your family by long distance."

The magnificent prospect rushed over Gwen like a champagne cocktail, but after a minute's reflection she shook her head.

"I don't think you could," she said. Adding frankly, "Daddy would know your name,

of course, but he doesn't really know anything about you."

"I know quite a few people down there who might be willing to recommend me," said Mrs. TenBroek.

"I'm so much obliged, but I don't think I'd better."

"Very well, then." She had taken a fancy to Gwen and she was disappointed. "In any case I'm going to insist that you take two hundred dollars and buy yourself a nice evening dress, or whatever you want."

"Two hundred dollars," Gwen exclaimed, "That's ten evening dresses!"

"Is it? Well, use it as you like. Are you quite sure you'd rather have the money than the trip?"

Tight-lipped, Gwen said:

"Yes, I would, Mrs. TenBroek."

—It was too bad the child was mercenary. Mrs. TenBroek had felt that behind those bright blue eyes lay the sort of romance that had haunted her own youth—she was sure she would have chosen the West Indies.

She counted out four new fifty dollar bills.

On the decks the cymbals were crashed and voices were calling "All ashore that's going ashore." When the Dacia had slid out into the harbour to the flutter of handkerchiefs the five young people left the pier. In the street Peddler TenBroek said:

"We thought maybe you could have dinner with us this evening. You said there were four of you, and there's four of us and we haven't a thing to do. We could have dinner and dance up in the Rainbow Room."

"That's be wonderful," said Gwen, "But I don't know whether our chaperone, Mrs. Tulliver—"

"I'll talk to her myself," he said confidently.

"All right," she hesitated, "But would you take me somewhere else first? Or rather two places—I've got to go to the first place to see where the second place is."

"Just tell the chauffeur where you want to go."

Half an hour later Gwen knocked softly at a thin door and at a listless response, went in.

It was a barren room furnished only with table, chair, and iron bed. In the corner was a cardboard suitcase with books piled beside it; a street suit and a hat hung from a hook on the wall. Ethan Kennicott, the side of his face blue and swollen, sat at the table, staring straight ahead of him, through half closed eyes. When he saw her his head jerked up, and with a tense movement he got to his feet.

"What do you want?" he asked harshly.

"I just came for a minute. My father says nobody ever ought to go to bed angry no matter what's happened."

"Tell that to one of those smoothies," he said bitterly. "They can spend all their lives being polite. But it just happens that I lost my job."

"Oh, I'm so sorry."

"What did you expect? Sure, I suppose I deserved it too."

"I sort of think it's my fault."

He shook his head defiantly.

"It's my fault—and I don't care any more. I don't care if I get an education—I don't care about anything."

"You oughtn't to feel that way," she said, shocked. "You've got to get an education."

"Big chance." He gave an unsuccessful little laugh. "I tell you I don't want one. I'm not fit for one, but when you've been half starved for three months—and too proud to take relief and then you see a chance like that. You think I'm a thief, don't you—well, let me tell you I never did a thing like that before in my life. I never even thought a thing like that, any more than you did."

"I thought it," she lied.

"Yes, you did."

"Yes, I did—my family hasn't got much money and more and I thought if we sold the fur I could go on a trip or something."

He looked at her incredulous.

"You did?"

"I didn't think it long," she said hastily. "But I did think it." A memory of the pearl that wasn't a pearl rose in her mind to help her out, "I thought finders keepers losers weepers too."

"But you didn't think like that very long."

"Neither did you."

As she gave him back his self respect moment by moment, his whole posture changed.

"Maybe I wouldn't have," he said meditatively, but with recurrent bitterness he shrugged his shoulders, "It's too late now though—the job's gone. And I don't know when I'll ever get another."

She had come up close to the table, her hand clasped tight around the four fifty dollar bills so that they had become a compact little lump.

"This ought to help," she said and tossed the wad quickly onto the table.

Then before he could move or say a word she ran childishly from the room, slammed the door and hurried downstairs to the waiting car.

It was very wonderful in the Rainbow Room. The floor floated in the sky while two orchestras tore the spectrum into many colors for Gwen's avid eyes. The archaic quality of the English youths' dancing was being dissipated under expert tutelage,

and if the girls had felt that their trip had been wanting up to now, this evening atoned for everything. It was fun crying "Poop-poop!" at Dizzy and pretending to order birdseed for her; and it was fun for Gwen to know that Peddlar TenBroek was completely at her service and that she'd get letters from England all the rest of the spring. It was all fun—

"What are you thinking of?" Peddlar asked her.

"Thinking of?" she came back to reality. "Well, if you have to know, I was thinking about that young taxi driver. He really did want to go to Williams College. And now he has no job and I was just thinking he was probably sitting in his room feeling so blue."

"Let's call him up," said Peddlar promptly, "We'll tell him to come and join us. You say he's a good fellow."

Gwen considered.

"No, it wouldn't be best," she decided with a touch of wisdom beyond her years, "He's sure to have a hard time and this wouldn't help him. Let's skip it."

She was happy, and a little bit older. Like all the children growing up in her generation she accepted life as a sort of accident, a grab bag where you took what you could get and nothing was very certain. The pearl her father had found hadn't been a pearl but this night's pleasure came from the fact that she had stumbled upon the skins of two-score South American rodents.

Months later when Gwen could not have told what tunes the orchestra played, she would still remember the other pearl, the one she had strung upon her personal rosary—though of course she didn't think of it like that, but rather felt a sense of guilty triumph that she had put something over on life. She didn't tell Dizzy about that. She never told anyone at all. Girls never started anything, didn't they? The pearl and the fur they were accidents—but it was no accident when she gave him her voyage to the blessed isles, gave to him out of a pity that was so deep in her that she could never even tell Dizzy about it—never told anyone at all.