

The Diamond as Big as the Ritz

F. Scott Fitzgerald

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by F. Scott Fitzgerald

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Table of Contents

Chapter I.....	1
Chapter II.....	7
Chapter III.....	19
Chapter IV.....	23
Chapter V.....	30
Chapter VI.....	36
Chapter VII.....	45
Chapter VIII.....	47
Chapter IX.....	58
Chapter X.....	66
Chapter XI.....	76

Chapter I

JOHN T. UNGER came from a family that had **been** well known in **Hades**—a small town on the **Mississippi** River—for several generations.

John's father had **held** the amateur golf **championship** through many a heated contest; Mrs. Unger was known "from hot-**box** to hot-**bed**," as the local **phrase** went, for her **political addresses**; and young John T. Unger, who had just turned sixteen, had **danced** all the latest **dances** from New York **before** he **put** on long trousers. **And** now, for a certain time, he was to **be** away from home. That **respect** for a New England **education** which is the **bane** of all **provincial places**, which **drains** them yearly of their most **promising** young men, had **seized upon** his **parents**. Nothing would **suit** them **but** that he should **go** to St. **Mid**'s School near Boston— **Hades** was too small to hold **their darling** and **gifted** son.

Now in **Hades**—as you know if you ever have **been** there—the names of the more **fashionable preparatory schools** and **colleges** mean very little. The **inhabitants** have **been** so long out of the **world** that, though they make a show of **keeping up** to **date** in **dress** and **manners** and **literature**, they **depend** to a great extent on hearsay, and a function that in **Hades** would **be considered** **elaborate** would **doubtless** **be hailed by** a Chicago **beef-princess** as "**perhaps** a little tacky."

Chapter I

John T. Unger was on the eve of **d**eparture. Mrs. Unger, with maternal fatuity, **p**acked his trunks full of linen suits **a**nd electric fans, **a**nd Mr. Unger **p**resented his son with an as**b**estos **p**ocket-**b**ook stuffed **d** with money.

"Remem**b**er, you are always welcome here," he said **d**. "You can **b**e sure **b**oy, that we'll keep **p** the home fires **b**urning."

"I know," answered **d** John huskily.

"Don't forget who you are **a**nd where you come from," continued **d** his father **p**roudly, "**a**nd you can **d**o nothing to harm you. You are an Unger—from Had**e**s."

So the old **d** man **a**nd the young shook hand**s** **a**nd John walked **d** away with tears streaming from his eyes. Ten minutes later he had **p**assed **d** outside the city limits, **a**nd he sto**pp**ed to glance **b**ack for the last time. Over the gates the old-fashioned Victorian motto seemed **d** strangely attractive to him. His father had **t**ried **d** time **a**nd time again to have it changed **d** to something with a little more **p**ush **a**nd verve **a**bout it, such as "Had**e**s—Your **O**pp**o**rtunity," or else a **p**lain "Welcome" sign set over a hearty hand**d**shake **p**ricked **d** out in electric lights. The old motto was a little **d**e**p**ressing, Mr. Unger had **t**hought—**b**ut now....

So John took his look **and** then set his face resolutely toward **d** his **d**estination. **And**, as he turned **d** away, the lights of **Hades** against the sky seemed **d** full of a warm **and** **p**assionate **b**eauty.

St. **Mid**as' School is half an hour from Boston in a Rolls-Pierce motorcar. The actual **d**istance will never **b**e known, for no one, except John T. Unger, had **d** ever arrived **d** there save in a Rolls-Pierce **and** **p**robably no one ever will again. St. **Mid**as' is the most **e**xpensive **and** the most exclusive **b**oys' **p**reparatory school in the world **d**.

John's first two years there **p**assed **p**leasantly. The fathers of all the **b**oys were money-kings **and** John **s**pent his summers visiting at fashionable resorts. While he was very **f**ond **d** of all the **b**oys he visited **d**, their fathers struck him as **b**eing much of a **p**iece, **and** in his **b**oyish way he often **w**ondered **d** at their exceeding sameness. When he told **d** them where his home was they would **d** ask jovially, "Pretty hot **d**own there?" **and** John would **d** muster a faint smile **and** answer, "It certainly is." His **r**esponse would **d** have **b**een heartier had **d** they not all made this joke—at **b**est varying it with, "Is it hot enough for you **d**own there?" which he hated **d** just as much.

Chapter I

In the mi**dd**le of his second year at school, a **q**uiet, hand**som**e **bo**y named Percy Washington had **bee**n **pu**t in John's form. The newcomer was **ple**asant in his manner and **excee**dingly well **dres**sed even for St. Mi**das**', **bu**t for some reason he ke**pt** aloof from the other **bo**ys. The only **pe**rs**o**n with whom he was intimate was John T. Unger, **bu**t even to John he was entirely uncommunicative concerning his home or his family. That he was wealthy went without saying, **bu**t **beyo**nd a few such **ded**uctions John knew little of his friend, so it **prom**ised rich confectionery for his curiosity when Percy invited **him** to **sp**end the summer at his home "in the West." He acce**pt**ed, without hesitation.

It was only when they were in the train that Percy **bec**ame, for the first time, rather communicative. One **da**y while they were eating lunch in the **d**ining-car and **disc**ussing the im**per**fect characters of several of the **bo**ys at school, Percy **sudd**enly changed **his** tone and **made** an **abru**pt remark.

"My father," he said, "is **by** far the richest man in the world."

"Oh," said John, **pol**itely. He could **think** of no answer to make to this confid**ence**. He consid**ered** "That's very nice," **bu**t it sound**ed** hollow and **was** on the **po**int of saying, "Really?" **bu**t refrained **since** it would **seem** to **q**uestion Percy's statement. **And** such an astound**ing** statement could **scarcely** **be** **q**uestioned.

"By far the richest," repeated Percy.

"I was reading in the World Almanac," began John, "that there was one man in America with an income of over five million a year and four men with incomes of over three million a year, and—"

"Oh, they're nothing." Percy's mouth was a half-moon of scorn. "Catch penny capitalists, financial small-fry, petty merchants and money-lenders. My father could buy them out and not know he'd done it."

"But how does he—"

"Why haven't they put down his income tax? Because he doesn't pay any. At least he pays a little one—but he doesn't pay any on his real income."

"He must be very rich," said John simply. "I'm glad. I like very rich people."

"The richer a fella is, the better I like him." There was a look of passionate frankness upon his dark face. "I visited the Schnlitzer-Murphys last Easter. Vivian Schnlitzer-Murphy had rubies as big as hen's eggs, and sapphires that were like globes with lights inside them—"

Chapter I

"I love jewels," agreed **d** Percy enthusiastically. "Of course I would**n't** want any one at school to know **a**bout it, **b**ut I've got **q**uite a collection myself I used**d** to collect them instead**d** of stamp**s**."

"And **d**iamond**s**," continued**d** John eagerly. "The Schnlitzer-Mur**p**hys had **d**iamond**s** as **b**ig as walnuts—"

"That's nothing." Percy had**d** leaned**d** forward**d** and **d**ropped**d** his voice to a low whis**p**er. "That's nothing at all. My father has a **d**iamond **b**igger than the Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

Chapter II

THE MONTANA sunset lay **b**etween two mountains like a gigantic **b**ruise from which **d**ark arteries s**p**read themselves over a **p**oisoned sky. An immense **d**istance **u**nder the sky crouched the village of Fish, minute, **d**ismal, and **d** forgotten. There were twelve men, so it was said, in the village of Fish, twelve som**b**er and inexplic**a**ble souls who sucked a lean milk from the almost literally **b**are rock **u**pon which a mysterious **p**opulatory force had **b**egotten them. They had **b**ecome a race **a**part, these twelve men of Fish, like some **s**pecies **d**eveloped **b**y an early whim of nature, which on second **t**hought had **a**bandoned them to struggle and extermination.

Out of the **b**lue-**b**lack **b**ruise in the **d**istance cre**p**t a long line of moving lights **u**pon the **d**esolation of the land, and the twelve men of Fish gathered **d** like ghosts at the shanty **d**epot to watch the **p**assing of the seven o'clock train, the Transcontinental Ex**p**ress from Chicago. Six times or so a year the Transcontinental Ex**p**ress, through some inconceiv**a**ble juris**d**iction, stop**p**ed at the village of Fish, and when this occurred **a** figure or so would **d**isem**b**ark, mount into a **b**uggy that always **a**pp**e**ared from out of the **d**usk, and **d**rive off toward the **b**ruised sunset. The **o**bservation of this **p**ointless and **p**re**p**osterous **p**henomenon had **b**ecome

Chapter II

a sort of cult among the men of Fish. To **o**bserve, that was all; there remained **d** in them none of the vital **q**uality of illusion which would **d** make them **won**der or **s**peculate, else a religion might have grown **u**p around **d** these mysterious visitations. But the men of Fish were **b**eyond all religion—the **b**arest **a**nd most savage tenets of even Christianity could **d** gain no foothold **d** on that **b**arren rock—so there was no altar, no **p**riest, no sacrifice; only each night at seven the silent concourse **b**y the shanty **d**epot, a congregation who lifted **u**p a **p**rayer of **d**im, anaemic **won**der.

On this June night, the Great Brakeman, whom, **h**ad they **d**eified any one, they might well have chosen as their celestial **p**rotagonist, **h**ad **o**rdained that the seven o'clock train should **d** leave its human (or inhuman) **d**eposit at Fish. At two minutes after seven Percy Washington **a**nd John T. Unger **d**isem**b**arked, hurried **p**ast the **s**pell**b**ound, the agape, the fearsome eyes of the twelve men of Fish, mounted **d** into a **b**uggy which **h**ad **o**bviously **a**pp**e**ared from nowhere, **a**nd **d**rove away.

After half an hour, when the twilight **h**ad **c**oagulated into **d**ark, the silent negro who was **d**riving the **b**uggy hailed an **o**pa**q**ue **b**ody somewhere **a**head of them in the gloom. In **r**es**p**onse to his cry, it turned **u**pon them a luminous **d**isk which **r**egard**e**d them like a malignant eye out of the unfathomable night. As they came closer, John saw that it was the tail-light of an immense automo**b**ile, larger **a**nd

more magnificent than any he had ever seen. Its **body** was of gleaming metal richer than nickel and lighter than silver, and the **hubs** of the wheels were **studded** with **iridescent** geometric figures of green and yellow—John **did** not **dare** to guess whether they were glass or jewel.

Two negroes, **dressed** in glittering livery such as one sees in **pictures** of royal **processions** in **London**, were **standing** at attention **beside** the car and as the two young men **dismounted** from the **buggy** they were **greeted** in some language which the guest could not **understand**, **but** which seemed to **be** an extreme form of the Southern negro's **dialect**.

"Get in," said Percy to his friend, as their trunks were **tossed** to the **ebony** roof of the limousine. "Sorry we had to **bring** you this far in that **buggy**, **but** of course it wouldn't **do** for the **people** on the train or those **Godforsaken** fellas in Fish to see this automo**bile**."

"Gosh! What a car!" This ejaculation was **provoked** **by** its interior. John saw that the **upholstery** consisted of a thousand minute and **exquisite** **tapestries** of silk, woven with jewels and **embroideries**, and set **upon** a **background** of cloth of gold. The two armchair seats in which the **boys** luxuriated were **covered** with

Chapter II

stuff that resembled duvety, but seemed woven in numberless colors of the ends of ostrich feathers.

"What a car!" cried John again, in amazement.

"This thing?" Percy laughed. "Why, it's just an old junk we use for a station wagon."

By this time they were gliding along through the darkness toward the break between the two mountains.

"We'll be there in an hour and a half," said Percy, looking at the clock. "I may as well tell you it's not going to be like anything you ever saw before."

If the car was any indication of what John would see, he was prepared to be astonished indeed. The simple piety prevalent in Hades has the earnest worship of and respect for riches as the first article of its creed—had John felt otherwise than radiantly humble before them, his parents would have turned away in horror at the blasphemy.

They had now reached and were entering the break between the two mountains and almost immediately the way became much rougher.

"If the moon shone down here, you'd see that we're in a big gulch," said Percy, trying to peer out of the window. He spoke a few words into the mouthpiece and

immedi**d**ately the footman turned**d** on a search-light and**d** swe**pt** the hills**ides** with an immense **b**eam.

"Rocky, you see. An ord**d**inary car would **b**e knocked**d** to **p**ieces in half an hour. In fact, it'**d** take a tank to navigate it unless you knew the way. You notice we're going up**ph**ill now."

They were ob**b**viously ascend**ing**, and**d** within a few minutes the car was crossing a high rise, where they caught a glim**p**se of a **p**ale moon newly risen in the **d**istance. The car stop**pp**ed sudd**dd**enly and**d** several figures took sha**pp**e out of the **d**ark **b**eside it—these were negroes also. Again the two young men were saluted**d** in the same **d**imly recogniza**bb**le **d**ialect; then the negroes set to work and**d** four immense ca**bb**les **d**angling from overhead**d** were attached**d** with hooks to the hu**bs** of the great jeweled**d** wheels. At a resound**ding** "Hey-yah!" John felt the car **b**eing lifted**d** slowly from the ground**d**— up**p** and**d** up**p**—clear of the tallest rocks on **b**oth **side**s—then higher, until he could**d** see a wavy, moonlit valley stretched**d** out **b**efore him in shar**p** contrast to the **q**uagmire of rocks that they had**d** just left. Only on one **side** was there still rock—and**d** then sudd**dd**enly there was no rock **b**eside them or anywhere around**d**.

Chapter II

It was **app**arent that they had **surmounted** some immense knife-**blade** of stone, **projecting perpendicularly** into the air. In a moment they were going **down** again, **and** finally with a soft **bump** they were **landed upon** the smooth earth.

"The worst is over," said **Percy**, **squinting** out the **window**. "It's only five miles from here, **and** our own **road**—**tapestry brick**—all the way. This **belongs** to us. This is where the **United States ends**, father says."

"Are we in **Canada**?"

"We are not. We're in the **middle** of the Montana Rockies. But you are now on the only five **square miles of land** in the country that's never **been surveyed**."

"Why hasn't it? **Did** they forget it?"

"No," said **Percy**, grinning, "they **tried to do** it three times. The first time my **grandfather corrupted** a whole **department** of the State survey; the **second** time he **had** the official **maps** of the **United States tinkered** with—that **held** them for fifteen years. The last time was **harder**. My father **fixed** it so that their **compasses** were in the strongest magnetic **field** ever artificially set **up**. He **had** a whole set of surveying instruments **made** with a slight **defection** that would **allow** for this territory not to **appear**, **and** he **substituted** them for the ones that were to **be used**."

Then he **had** a river **deflected** and **he had** what looked **d** like a village **built up** on its **banks**—so that they'**d** see it, and **d** think it was a town ten miles farther **up** the valley. There's only one thing my father's afraid **d** of," he concluded **d**, "only one thing in the world **d** that could **d be used** to find **d** us out."

"What's that?"

Percy sank his voice to a whis**per**.

"Aero**pl**anes," he **b**reathed **d**. "We've got half a **d**ozen anti-aircraft guns and **d** we've arranged **d** it so far—**b**ut there've **b**een a few **d**eaths and **d** a great many **p**risoners. Not that we mind **d** that, you know, father and **d** I, **b**ut it up**p**sets mother and **d** the girls, and **d** there's always the chance that some time we won't **b**e able to arrange it."

Shred**s** and **d** tatters of chinchilla, courtesy cloud**s** in the green moon's heaven, were **p**assing the green moon like **p**recious Eastern stuffs **p**araded **d** for the ins**p**ection of some Tartar Khan. It seemed **d** to John that it was **d**ay, and **d** that he was looking at some la**d**s sailing a**b**ove him in the air, showering **d**own tracts and **p**atent med**i**cine circulars, with their messages of hope for **d**es**p**airing, rock**b**ound hamlets. It seemed **d** to him that he could **d** see them look **d**own out of the cloud**s** and **d** stare—and **d** stare at whatever there was to stare at in this **p**lace whither he was **b**ound—What then? Were they **i**nduced **d** to land **b**y some ins**i**diou**s** **d**evice there

Chapter II

to **b**e immured **d** far from **p**atent **m**edicines **a**nd **d** from tracts until the **j**udgment **d**ay—or, should **d** they fail to fall into the trap, **d**id a **q**uick **p**uff of smoke **a**nd the shar**p** round **d** of a s**p**litting shell **b**ring them **d**roo**p**ing to earth—and "u**p**set" Percy's mother **a**nd sisters. John shook his head **a**nd the wraith of a hollow laugh issued **d** silently from his **p**arted **d** lips. What **d**esperate transaction lay **h**idd**e**n here? What a moral ex**p**edient of a **b**izarre Croesus? What terri**b**le **a**nd **g**old**e**n mystery? . . .

The chinchilla cloud**s** had **d**rifted **p**ast now **a**nd **o**utsid**e** the Montana night was **b**right as **d**ay. The tap**e**stry **b**rick of the road **w**as smooth to the tread **d** of the great tires as they round**e**d a still, moonlit lake; they **p**ass**e**d into **d**arkness for a moment, a **p**ine grove, **p**ungent **a**nd **c**ool, then they came out into a **b**road **a**venue of lawn **a**nd John's exclamation of **p**leasure was simultaneous with Percy's taciturn "We're home."

Full in the light of the stars, an ex**q**uisite ch_teau rose from the **b**orders of the lake, clim**e**d in mar**b**le radiance half the height of an **a**djoining mountain, then melted **d** in grace, in **p**erfect symmetry, in translucent feminine languor, into the mass**e**d **d**arkness of a forest of **p**ine. The many towers, the slend**e**r tracery of the slo**p**ing **p**arap**e**ts, the chisell**e**d **w**onder of a thousand **y**ellow wind**d**ows with their

o**bl**ongs and **d** hec**t**agons and **d** tri**an**gles of **g**old**e**n light, the shattered **d** softness of the intersecting **p**lanes of star-shine and **d** **b**lue shad**e**, all trem**bl**ed on John's **s**pirit like a chor**d** of music. On one of the towers, the tallest, the **bl**ackest at its **b**ase, an arrangement of exterior lights at the top **m**ad**e** a sort of floating fairyland—and as John gaz**e**d **u**p in warm enchantment the faint acciaccare sound **d** of violins **d**rift**e**d **d**own in a rococo harmony that was like nothing he had ever heard **b**efore. Then in a moment the car stop**pp**ed **b**efore wide, high mar**bl**e step**s** around **d** which the night air was fragrant with a host of flowers. At the top **p** of the step**s** two great **d**oors swung silently o**p**en and **a**mber light flood**e**d out **u**pon the **d**arkness, silhouetting the figure of an ex**q**uisite lad**y** with **bl**ack, high-**p**iled hair, who held out her arms toward **d** them.

"Mother," Percy was saying, "this is my friend **d**, John Unger, from Had**e**s."

Afterward **d** John remem**b**ered that first night as a **d**aze of many colors, of **q**uick sensory im**p**ressions, of music soft as a voice in love, and **d** of the **b**eauty of things, lights and **d** shad**o**ws, and **d** motions and **d** faces. There was a whitehaired **d** man who stood **d** drinking a many-hued **d** cordial from a crystal thim**bl**e set on a gold**e**n stem. There was a girl with a flowery face, **d**ressed **d** like Titania with **b**raided **s**apphires in her hair. There was a room where the solid **d**, soft gold **d** of the walls yield**e**d to

Chapter II

the **p**ressure of his hand, and a room that was like a **p**latonic conce**p**tion of the ultimate **p**rism—ceiling, floor, and all, it was lined with an un**b**roken mass of **d**iamonds, **d**iamonds of every size and shape, until, lit with tall violet lamps in the corners, it **d**azzled the eyes with a whiteness that could **b**e comp**a**red only with itself, **b**eyond human wish or **d**ream.

Through a maze of these rooms the two **b**oys wand**e**red. Sometimes the floor un**d**er their feet would flame in **b**rilliant **p**atterns from lighting **b**elow, **p**atterns of **b**ar**b**aric clashing colors, of **p**astel **d**elicacy, of sheer whiteness, or of su**b**tle and intricate mosaic, surely from some mos**q**ue on the **A**driatic Sea. Sometimes **b**eneath layers of thick crystal he would see **b**lue or green water swirling, inha**b**ited **b**y vivid fish and growths of rain**b**ow foliage. Then they would **b**e tread**i**ng on furs of every texture and color or along corrid**o**rs of **p**alest ivory, un**b**roken as though carved **c**omple**t**e from the gigantic tusks of **d**inosaurs extinct **b**efore the age of man. . . .

Then a hazily remem**e**red transition, and they were at **d**inner—where each **p**late was of two almost imp**e**rce**p**tible layers of solid **d**iamond **b**etween which was curiously worked a filigree of emerald **d**esign, a shaving sliced from green air. Music, **p**langent and un**b**trusive, **d**rifted **d**own through far corrid**o**rs—his chair,

feathered**d** and curved**d** insidi**d**iously to his **b**ack, seemed**d** to engulf and over**p**ower him as he **d**runk his first glass of **p**ort. He tried**d** **d**rowsily to answer a **q**uestion that had **b**een asked**d** him, **b**ut the honeyed**d** luxury that clas**p**ed his **b**ody **a**dded to the illusion of sleep**p**—jewels, fa**b**rics, wines, and metals **b**lurred**d** **b**efore his eyes into a sweet mist. . . .

"Yes," he repl**i**ed**d** with a **p**olite effort, "it certainly is hot enough for me **d**own there."

He managed**d** to **a**dd a ghostly laugh; then, without movement, without resistance, he seemed**d** to float off and**d** away, leaving an iced**d** **d**essert that was **p**ink as a **d**ream. . . . He fell asleep**p**.

When he awoke he knew that several hours had **p**assed**d**. He was in a great **q**uiet room with e**b**ony walls and**d** a **d**ull illumination that was too faint, too su**b**tle, to **b**e called**d** a light. His young host was stand**i**ng over him.

"You fell asleep**p** at **d**inner," Percy was saying. "I nearly **d**id, too—it was such a treat to **b**e comforta**b**le again after this year of school. Servants und**d**ressed**d** and **b**athed**d** you while you were sleep**p**ing."

Chapter II

"Is this a **bed** or a cloud**d**?" sighed **John**. "Percy, Percy—**before** you go, I want to **apologize**."

"For what?"

"For **doubt**ing you when you **said** you had a **diamond** as **big** as the Ritz-Carlton Hotel."

Percy smiled**d**.

"I thought you **didn't** **believe** me. It's that mountain, you know."

"What mountain?"

"The mountain the ch_teau rests on. It's not very **big**, for a mountain. But **except** **about** fifty feet of **so****d** and **d** gravel on **top** it's **solid diamond**. One **diamond**, one **cu****bic** mile without a flaw. Aren't you listening? Say——"

But John T. Unger had again fallen asleep**p**.

Chapter III

MORNING. As he awoke he **p**erceived **d**rowsily that the room had **d** at the same moment **b**ecome **d**ense with sunlight. The **e**bony **p**anels of one wall had **d** slid **a**side on a sort of track, leaving his cham**b**er half **o**pen to the **d**ay. A large negro in a white uniform stood **d** **b**eside his **b**ed.

"Good**d**-evening," muttered **d** John, summoning his **b**rain from the wild **p**laces.

"Good**d**-morning, sir. Are you read**y** for your **b**ath, sir? Oh, **d**on't get up**p**—I'll **p**ut you in, if you'll just un**b**utton your **p**ajamas—there. Thank you, sir."

John lay **q**uietly as his **p**ajamas were removed**d**—he was amused**d** and **d**elighted**d**; he ex**p**ected**d** to **b**e lifted**d** like a child **b**y this **b**lack Gargantua who was tend**ing** him, **b**ut nothing of the sort ha**pp**ened**d**; instead**d** he felt the **b**ed tilt up**p** slowly on its **s**ide—he **b**egan to roll, startled**d** at first, in the **d**irection of the wall, **b**ut when he reached**d** the wall its **d**rapery gave way, and **d** sliding two yards farther **d**own a fleecy incline he **p**lumped**d** gently into water the same temp**er**ature as his **b**ody.

He looked**d** **a**bout him. The runway or rollway on which he had**d** arrived**d** had **f**olded**d** gently **b**ack into **p**lace. He had**d** **b**een **p**rojected**d** into another cham**b**er and **d** was sitting in a sunken **b**ath with his head**d** just **a**bove the level of the floor. All **a**bout

Chapter III

him, lining the walls of the room **and** the **sid**es **and** **bottom** of the **bath** itself, was a **blue** **aquarium**, **and** gazing through the crystal surface on which he sat, he could see fish swimming among **amber** lights **and** even **gliding** without curiosity **past** his outstretched **toes**, which were **separated** from them only **by** the thickness of the crystal. From overhead, sunlight came **down** through sea-green glass.

I **suppose**, sir, that you'**d** like hot rosewater **and** soap**suds** this morning sir—**and** **perhaps** cold salt water to finish."

The negro was stand**ing** **beside** him.

"Yes," agreed John, smiling inanely, "as you **please**." Any **idea** of ord**er**ing this **bath** accord**ing** to his own meager stand**ard**s of living would have **been** **priggish** **and** not a little wicked.

The negro **pressed** a **button** **and** a warm rain **began** to fall, **apparently** from overhead, **but** really, so John **discovered** after a moment, from a fountain arrangement near **by**. The water turned **to** a **pale** rose color **and** jets of **liquid** soap **sputted** into it from four miniature walrus head**s** at the corners of the **bath**. In a moment a **dozen** little **paddle**-wheels, **fixed** to the **sid**es, **had** churned the mixture into a **radiant** rain**bow** of **pink** foam which enveloped him softly with

its **d**elicious lightness, **and b**urst in shining, rosy **bubbles** here **and** there **ab**out him.

"Shall I turn on the moving-**p**icture machine, sir?" suggested **d** the negro **d**eferentially. "There's a **good** one-reel comed**y** in this machine to-**d**ay, or can **p**ut in a serious **p**iece in a moment, if you **p**refer it."

"No, thanks," answered **d** John, **p**olitely **b**ut firmly. He was enjoying his at too much to **d**esire any **d**istract**ion**. But **d**istract**ion** came. In a moment he was listening intently to the sound **d** of flutes from just outsi**d**e, flutes **ripping** a melod**y** that was like a waterfall, cool **and** green as the room itself, accom**p**anying a frothy **p**icc**o**lo, in **p**lay more fragile than the lace of u s that covered **d** and charmed **d** him.

After a cold **d** salt-water **b**racer **and** a cold **d** fresh finish, he ste**pp**ed out **and** into a fleecy ro**b**e, **and** u**p**on a couch covered **d** with the same material he was ru**bb**ed with oil, alcohol, **and** **p**ice. Later he sat in a volu**p**tuous chair while he was shaved **d** **and** his hair was trimmed **d**.

"Mr. Percy is waiting in your sitting-room," said **d** the negro, when these o**p**erations were finished **d**. "My name is Gygs**u**m, Mr. Unger, sir. I am to see to Mr. Unger every morning."

Chapter III

John walked**d** out into the **b** brisk sunshine of his living-room, where he found**d**
b breakfast waiting for him **and** Percy, gorgeous in white **kid** knicker**b**ockers,
smoking in an easy chair

Chapter IV

THIS IS A STORY of the Washington family as Percy sketched**d** it for John **d**uring **b**reakfast.

The father of the **p**resent Mr. Washington had **d** **b**een a Virginian, a **d**irect **d**escend**d**ant of George Washington, and **d** Lord **d** Baltimore. At the close of the Civil War he was a twenty-five-year-old **d** Colonel with a **p**layed**d**-out **p**lantation and **a**bout a thousand **d** dollars in gold.

Fitz-Norman Cul**p**e**p**per Washington, for that was the young Colonel's name, **d**ecided**d** to **p**resent the Virginia estate to his younger **b**rother and **d** go West. He selected **d** two **d**ozen of the most faithful **b**lacks, who, of course, worshi**p**ped him, and **b**ought twenty-five tickets to the West, where he intend**d** to take out land in their names and **d** start a sheep **p** and **d** cattle ranch.

When he had **d** **b**een in Montana for less than a month and **d** things were going very **p**oorly in**d**eed, he stum**b**led on his great **d**iscovery. He had **d** lost his way when **r**iding in the hills, and **d** after a **d**ay without food he **b**egan to grow hungry. As he was without his rifle, he was forced **d** to **p**ursue a **s**quirrel, and **d** in the course of the **p**ursuit he noticed **d** that it was carrying something shiny in its mouth. Just **b**efore

Chapter IV

it vanished **d** into its hole—for Providence **did** not intend **d** that this **squirrel** should alleviate his hunger—it **dropped** its **burden**. Sitting **d**own to consider the situation Fitz-Norman's eye was caught **by** a gleam in the grass **beside** him. In ten seconds he had **d** completely lost his **appetite** and **d** gained one hundred thousand **d**ollars. The **squirrel**, which had **d** refused with annoying **persistence** to **become** food, had **d** made him a **present** of a large and **d** perfect **diamond**.

Late that night he found **d** his way to camp and twelve hours later all the males among his **darkies** were **back** **by** the **squirrel** hole **digging** furiously at the **side** of the mountain. He told **d** them he had **d** discovered a rhinestone mine, and, as only one or two of them had **d** ever seen even a small **diamond** **before**, they **believed** him, without **q**uestion. When the magnitude of his **d**iscovery **became** **app**arent to him, he found **d** himself in a **q**uandary. The mountain was a **diamond**—it was literally nothing else **but** solid **diamond**. He filled **d** four **saddle** **b**ags full of glittering **samp**les and **d** started on horse**b**ack for St. Paul. There he managed **d** to **dis**pose of half a **d**ozen small stones—when he tried **d** a larger one a storekeeper fainted **d** and Fitz-Norman was arrested **d** as a **public** **d**isturber. He escaped **d** from jail and caught the train for New York, where he sold **d** a few **medium**-sized **diamonds** and **d** received in exchange **a**bout two hundred thousand **d**ollars in

gold. But he **did** not **dare** to **produce** any excep**pt**ional gems—in fact, he left New York just in time. Tremend**ous** excitement had **been** created in jewelry circles, not so much **by** the size of his **diamonds** as **by** their app**pp**earance in the city from mysterious sources. Wild rumors **became** current that a **diamond** mine had **been discovered** in the Catskills, on the Jersey coast, on Long Island, **beneath** Washington S**q**uare. Excursion trains, **packed** with men carrying **picks** and shovels, **began** to leave New York hourly, **bound** for various neigh**bor**ing El Dorad**os**. But **by** that time young Fitz-Norman was on his way **back** to Montana. By the **end** of a fortnight he had **estimated** that the **diamond** in the mountain was **app**roximately e**q**ual in **q**uantity to all the rest of the **diamonds** known to exist in the world. There was no valuing it **by** any regular comp**pu**tation, however, for it was one solid **diamond**—**and** if it were offered for sale not only would the **bottom** fall out of the market, **but** also, if the value should vary with its size in the usual arithmetical **pr**ogression, there would not **be** enough **gold** in the world to **buy** a tenth **part** of it. **And** what could any one **do** with a **diamond** that size? It was an amazing **pre**dicament. He was, in one sense, the richest man that ever lived—**and** yet was he worth anything at all? If his secret should **transp**ire there was no telling to what measures the Government might resort in **order** to **pr**event

Chapter IV

a **p**anic, in gold as well as in jewels. They might take over the claim immediately **and** institute a monopoly.

There was no alternative—he must market his mountain in secret. He sent South for his younger **b**rother **and** **p**ut him in charge of his colored following—**d**arkies who had never realized that slavery was **a**bolished. To make sure of this, he read them a **p**roclamation that he had composed, which announced that General Forrest had reorganized the shattered Southern armies **and** **d**efeated the North in one pitched battle. The negroes **b**elieved him implicitly. They **p**assed a vote **d**eclaring it a good thing **and** **h**eld revival services immediately.

Fitz-Norman himself set out for foreign parts with one hundred thousand dollars **and** two trunks filled with rough diamonds of all sizes. He sailed for Russia in a Chinese junk **and** six months after his departure from Montana he was in St. Petersburg. He took obscure lodgings **and** called immediately upon the court jeweller, announcing that he had a diamond for the Czar. He remained in St. Petersburg for two weeks, in constant danger of being murdered, living from lodging to lodging, **and** afraid to visit his trunks more than three or four times during the whole fortnight.

On his **p**romise to return in a year with larger and **d** finer stones, he was allowed **d** to leave for Ind**d**ia. Before he left, however, the Court Treasurers had **d** **d**e**p**osited **d** to his cred**d**it, in American **b**anks, the sum of fifteen million **d**ollars—und**d**er four **d**ifferent aliases.

He returned **d** to America in 1868, having **b**een gone a little over two years. He had **d** visited **d** the ca**p**itals of twenty-two countries and **d** talked **d** with five em**p**erors, eleven kings, three **p**rinces, a shah, a khan, and **d** a sultan. At that time Fitz-Norman estimated **d** his own wealth at one **b**illion **d**ollars. One fact worked **d** consistently against the **d**isclosure of his secret. No one of his larger **d**iamonds remained **d** in the **p**ublic eye for a week **b**efore **b**eing invested **d** with a history of enough fatalities, amours, revolutions, and **d** wars to have occup**p**ied it from the **d**ays of the first Bab**y**lonian Em**p**ire.

From 1870 until his **d**eath in 1900, the history of Fitz-Norman Washington was a long **e**pic in gold **d**. There were sid**e** issues, of course—he evad**d**ed the surveys, he married **d** a Virginia lad**y**, **b**y whom he had **d** a single son, and **d** he was comp**p**elled, **d**ue to a series of unfortunate comp**p**lications, to murder his **b**rother, whose unfortunate ha**b**it of **d**rinking himself into an ind**i**screet stup**p**or had **d** several times

Chapter IV

endangered their safety. But very few other murders stained these happy years of progress and expansion.

Just before he died he changed his policy, and with all but a few million dollars of his outside wealth bought up rare minerals in bulk, which he deposited in the safety vaults of banks all over the world, marked as bric-à-brac. His son, Braddock Tarleton Washington, followed this policy on an even more tensive scale. The minerals were converted into the rarest of all elements—radium—so that the equivalent of a billion dollars in gold could be placed in a receptacle no bigger than a cigar box.

When Fitz-Norman had been dead three years his son, Braddock, decided that the business had gone far enough. The amount of wealth that he and his father had taken out of the mountain was beyond all exact computation. He kept a note-book in cipher in which he set down the approximate quantity of radium in each of the thousand banks he patronized, and recorded the alias under which it was held. Then he did a very simple thing—he sealed up the mine.

He sealed up the mine. What had been taken out of it would support all the Washingtons yet to be born in unparalleled luxury for generations. His one care must be the protection of his secret, lest in the possible panic attendant on its

discovery he should **b**e **r**educed with all the **p**roperty-holders in the world to utter **p**overty.

This was the family among whom John T. Unger was staying. This was the story he heard in his silver-walled living-room the morning after his arrival

Chapter V

AFTER BREAKFAST, John found his way out the great marble entrance and looked curiously at the scene before him. The whole valley, from the diamond mountain to the steep granite cliff five miles away, still gave off a breath of golden haze which hovered idly above the fine sweep of lawns and lakes and gardens. Here and there clusters of elms made delicate groves of shade, contrasting strangely with the tough masses of pine forest that held the hills in a grip of dark-blue green. Even as John looked he saw three fawns in single file patter out from one clump about a half mile away and disappear with awkward gayety into the black-ribbed half-light of another. John would not have been surprised to see a goat-foot piping his way among the trees or to catch a glimpse of pink nymph-skin and flying yellow hair between the greenest of the green leaves.

In some such cool hope he descended the marble steps, disturbing faintly the sleep of two silky Russian wolfhounds at the bottom, and set off along a walk of white and blue brick that seemed to lead in no particular direction.

He was enjoying himself as much as he was able. It is youth's felicity as well as its insufficiency that it can never live in the present, but must always be measuring up the day against its own radiantly imagined future—flowers and gold, girls

and stars, they are only prefigurations and prophecies of that incomparable, unattainable young dream.

John rounded a soft corner where the massed rose-bushes filled the air with heavy scent, and struck off across a park toward a patch of moss under some trees. He had never lain upon moss, and he wanted to see whether it was really soft enough to justify the use of its name as an adjective. Then he saw a girl coming toward him over the grass. She was the most beautiful person he had ever seen. She was dressed in a white little gown that came just below her knees, and a wreath of mignonettes clasped with blue slices of sapphire bound up her hair. Her pink bare feet scattered the dew before them as she came. She was younger than John—not more than sixteen.

"Hello," she cried softly, "I'm Kismine."

She was much more than that to John already. He advanced toward her, scarcely moving as he drew near lest he should tread on her bare toes.

"You haven't met me," said her soft voice. Her blue eyes added, "Oh, but you've missed a great deal!" . . . "You met my sister, Jasmine, last night. I was sick with

Chapter V

lettuce **p**oisoning," went on her soft voice, **and** her eyes continued**d**, "**and** when I'm sick I'm sweet—**and** when I'm well."

"You have ma**d**e an enormous im**p**ression on me," sai**d** John's eyes, "**and** I'm not so slow myself"—"How **d**o you **d**o?" sai**d** his voice. "I ho**p**e you're **b**etter this morning."—"You **d**arling," **add**ed his eyes tremulously.

John o**b**serve**d** that they ha**d** **b**een walking along the **p**ath. On her suggestion they sat **d**own together **u**pon the moss, the softness of which he faile**d** to **d**etermine.

He was critical **a**bout women. A single **d**efect—a thick ankle, a hoarse voice, a glass eye—was enough to make him utterly in**d**ifferent. **And** here for the first time in his life he was **b**eside a girl who seem**d** to him the incarnation of **p**hysical **p**erfection.

"Are you from the East?" aske**d** Kismine with charming interest.

"No," answer**d** John simp**l**y. "I'm from Ha**d**es."

Either she ha**d** never hear**d** of Ha**d**es, or she coul**d** think of no **p**leasant comment to make **u**pon it, for she **di**d not **d**iscuss it further.

"I'm going East to school this fall," she sai**d**. "D'you think I'll like it? I'm going to New York to Miss Bulge's. It's very strict, **b**ut you see over the weekend**s** I'm

going to live at home with the family in our New York house, **b**ecause father heard **d** that the girls had **d** to go walking two **b**y two."

"Your father wants you to **b**e **p**roud," o**b**served **d** John.

"We are," she answered **d**, her eyes shining with **d**ignity. "None of us has ever **b**een **p**unished **d**. Father said **d** we never should **b**e. Once when my sister Jasmine was a little girl she **p**ushed **d** him **d**own-stairs **and** he just got **up** **and** limped **d** away.

"Mother was—well, a little startled **d**," continued **d** Kismine, "when she heard **d** that you were from—from where you are from, you know. She said **d** that when she was a young girl—**b**ut then, you see, she's a **S**paniard **and** old-fashioned **d**."

"Do you **s**pend **d** much time out here?" asked **d** John, to conceal the fact that he was somewhat hurt **b**y this remark. It seemed **d** an unkind **d** allusion to his **p**rovincialism.

"Percy **and** Jasmine **and** I are here every summer, **b**ut next summer Jasmine is going to New**p**ort. She's coming out in Lond**d**on a year from this fall. She'll **b**e **p**resented **d** at court."

"Do you know, " **b**egan John hesitantly, "you're much more so**p**histicated **d** than I thought you were when I first saw you?"

Chapter V

"Oh, no, I'm not," she exclaimed **d** hurried**dly**. "Oh, I would**d**n't think of **b**eing. I think that so**p**histicated**d** young **p**eople are terri**b**ly common, **d**on't you? I'm not at all, really. If you say I am, I'm going to cry."

She was so **d**istressed**d** that her lip was trem**b**ling. John was imp**p**elled to **p**rotest: I **d**idn't mean that; I only said**d** it to tease you."

"Because I would**d**n't mind**d** if I were," she **p**ersisted**d**. "**b**ut I'm not. I'm very innocent **and** girlish. I never smoke, or **d**rink, or read**d** anything except **p**oetry. I know scarcely any mathematics or chemistry. I **d**ress very sim**p**ly—in fact, I scarcely **d**ress at all. I think so**p**histicated**d** is the last thing you can say **a**bout me. I **b**elieve that girls ought to enjoy their youths in a wholesome way."

"I **d**o, too," said**d** John heartily.

Kismine was cheerful again. She smiled**d** at him, **and** a still-**b**orn tear **d**ripped from the corner of one **b**lue eye.

"I like you," she whis**p**ered**d**, intimately. "Are you going to **s**pend all your time with Percy while you're here, or will you **b**e nice to me. Just think—I'm **a**bsolutely fresh ground**d**. I've never had**d** a **b**oy in love with me in all my life. I've never **b**een

allowed even to see boys alone—except Percy. I came all the way out here into this grove hoping to run into you, where the family wouldn't be around.

Deeply flattered, John bowed from the hips as he had been taught at dancing school in Hades.

"We'd better go now," said Kismine sweetly. "I have to be with mother at eleven. You haven't asked me to kiss you once. I thought boys always did that nowadays."

John drew himself up proudly.

"Some of them do," he answered, "but not me. Girls don't do that sort of thing—in Hades."

Side by side they walked back toward the house

Chapter VI

JOHN STOOD facing Mr. Br**dd**ock Washington in the full sunlight. The **elder** man was **a****b**out forty with a **p****rou****d**, vacuous face, intelligent eyes, and **a****d** a ro**b**ust figure. In the mornings he smelt of horses—the **b**est horses. He carried **a** **p**lain walking-stick of gray **b**irch with a single large **o****p**al for a gri**p**. He and **a****d** Percy were showing John around **d**.

"The slaves' **q**uarters are there." His walking-stick **i****nd**icated **d** a cloister of mar**bl**e on their left that ran in graceful Gothic along the **s**id**e** of the mountain. "In my youth I was **d**istracted **d** for a while from the **b**usiness of life **b**y a **p**eriod of a **b**sur**d** **i**dealism. During that time they lived **d** in luxury. For instance, I **e**quipped every one of their rooms with a tile **b**ath."

"I **s**u**pp**ose," ventured **d** John, with an ingratiating laugh, "that they used **d** the **b**athtu**b**s to kee**p** coal in. Mr. Schnlitzer-Mur**p**hy told **d** me that once he——"

"The **o**pinions of Mr. Schnlitzer-Mur**p**hy are of little imp**o**rtance, I should imagine," interrupted Br**dd**ock Washington, cold**l**y. "My slaves **d**id not kee**p** coal in their **b**athtu**b**s. They had **d** orders to **b**athe every **d**ay, and they **d**id. If they had **d**n't I might have or**d**ered **d** a sul**p**huric acid shamp**p**oo. I **d**iscontinued the

baths for **q**uite another reason. Several of them caught cold **d** and **d**ied. Water is not good **d** for certain races—exce**p**t as a **b**everage."

John laughed **d**, and **d** then **d**ecided to no**d** his head **d** in so**b**er agreement. Braddo**ck** Washington ma**d**e him uncomfor**ta**ble.

"All these negroes are **d**escend**d**ants of the ones my father **b**rought North with him. There are a**b**out two hund**d**red **d** and fifty now. You notice that they've lived **d** so long a**p**art from the world **d** that their original **d**ialect has **b**ecome an almost ind**d**istinguishable **p**atois. We **b**ring a few of them **u**p to s**p**ea**k** English—my secretary and **d** two or three of the house servants.

"This is the golf course," he continued **d**, as they strolled **d** along the velvet winter grass. "It's all a green, you see—no fairway, no rough, no hazard**s**."

He smiled **p**leasantly at John.

"Many men in the cage, father?" asked **d** Percy sudd**d**enly.

Braddo**ck** Washington stum**b**led, and **d** let forth an involuntary curse.

"One less than there should **b**e," he ejaculated **d** darkly—and **d** then a**dd**ed after a moment, "We've had **d** difficulties."

"Mother was telling me," exclaimed **d** Percy, "that Italian teacher——"

Chapter VI

"A ghastly error," said **Braddock** Washington angrily. "But of course there's a good chance that we may have got him. Perhaps he fell somewhere in the woods or **stumbled** over a cliff. **And** then there's always the **probability** that if he **did** get away his story would **not be believed**. Nevertheless, I've had two **dozen** men looking for him in **different** towns **around** here."

"**And** no luck?"

"Some. Fourteen of them **reported** to my agent that they'd each killed a man answering to that **description**, **but** of course it was **probably** only the reward they were after——"

He **broke** off. They had come to a large cavity in the earth **about** the circumference of a merry-go-round **and** covered **by** a strong iron grating. **Braddock** Washington **beckoned** to John, **and** **pointed** his cane **down** through the grating. John **stepped** to the **edge** **and** **gazed**. **Immediately** his ears were assailed **by** a wild clamor from **below**.

"Come on **down** to Hell!"

"Hello, **kid**, how's the air **up** there?"

"Hey! Throw us a **rope**!"

"Got an **old d**oughnut, **Budd**y, or a **couple** of **second**-hand **sand**wiches?"

"Say, fella, if you'll **push d**own that guy you're with, we'll show you a **q**uick **disa**ppearance scene."

"Paste him one for me, will you?"

It was too **d**ark to see clearly into the **p**it **b**elow, **b**ut John **could** tell from the coarse **o**ptimism **and** rugged **v**itality of the remarks **and** voices that they **proceed**ed from **mi**ddle-class Americans of the more **s**pirited **t**ype. Then Mr. Washington **put** out his cane **and** touched **a b**utton in the grass, **and** the scene **b**elow **s**prang into light.

"These are some **a**dventurous mariners who **had** the misfortune to **d**iscover El Dor**ad**o," he remarked **d**.

Below them there **had** **app**ear**ed** a large hollow in the earth **shap**ed like the interior of a **b**owl. The **sid**es were steep **and** **app**arently of **pol**ished **g**lass, **and** on its slightly concave surface **stood** **ab**out two **d**ozen men **clad** in the half costume, half uniform, of aviators. Their **up**turned **f**aces, lit with wrath with malice, with **d**es**p**air, with cynical humor, were covered **by** long growths of **beard**, **b**ut with

Chapter VI

the exception of a few who had **pined perceptibly** away, they seemed to **be** a well-fed, healthy lot.

Braddock Washington **drew** a garden chair to the **edge** of the **pit** and sat **down**.

"Well, how are you, **boys**?" he **inquired** genially.

A chorus of execration in which all joined **except** a few too **dispirited** to cry out, rose **up** into the sunny air, **but** Braddock Washington heard it with unruffled **composure**. When its last echo had **died** away he **spoke** again.

"Have you thought **up** a way out of your **difficulty**?"

From here and there among them a remark floated **up**.

"We **decided** to stay here for love!"

"Bring us **up** there and we'll find us a way!"

Braddock Washington waited until they were again **quiet**. Then he said:

"I've told you the situation. I **don't** want you here. I wish to heaven I'd never seen you. Your own curiosity got you here, and any time that you can think of a way out which **protects** me and my interests I'll **be** glad to **consider** it. But so long as you confine your efforts to **digging** tunnels—yes, I know **about** the new one you've started—you won't get very far. This isn't as **hard** on you as you make it out, with

all your howling for the loved**d** ones at home. If you were the type who worried**d** much a**b**out the loved**d** ones at home, you'**d** never have taken up**p** aviation."

A tall man moved**d** a**p**art from the others, and**d** held up**p** his hand**d** to call his captor's attention to what he was a**b**out to say.

"Let me ask you a few **q**uestions!" he cried**d**. "You **p**retend to **b**e a fair-minded**d** man."

"How a**b**surd. How could**d** a man of my **p**osition **b**e fair-minded**d** toward**d** you? You might as well s**p**eak of a Sp**aniard** **b**eing fair-minded**d** toward**d** a **p**iece of steak."

At this harsh o**b**servation the faces of the two **d**ozen steaks fell, **b**ut the tall man continued**d**:

"All right!" he cried**d**. "We've argued**d** this out **b**efore. You're not a humanitarian and**d** you're not fair-minded**d**, **b**ut you're human—at least you say you are—and you ought to **b**e a**b**le to **p**ut yourself in our **p**lace for long enough to think how—how—how——"

"How what?" **d**emanded**d** Washington, cold**d**ly.

"—how unnecessary——"

Chapter VI

"Not to me."

"Well,—how cruel——"

"We've covered **d** that. Cruelty **d**oesn't exist where self-**p**reservation is involved **d**. You've **b**een sold**d**iers; you know that. Try another."

"Well, then, how stu**p**id." "There," ad**m**itted **d** Washington, "I grant you that. But try to think of an alternative. I've offered **d** to have all or any of you **p**ainlessly executed **d** if you wish. I've offered **d** to have your wives, sweethearts, child**d**ren, and mothers kid**n**apped and **b**rought out here. I'll enlarge your **p**lace **d**own there and **f**eed and clothe you the rest of your lives. If there was some method **d** of producing permanent amnesia I'd have all of you o**p**erated on and released immediately, somewhere outside of my **p**reserves. But that's as far as my **i**deas go."

"How ab**o**ut trusting us not to **p**each on you?" cried **d** some one.

"You **d**on't **p**roffer that suggestion seriously," said **d** Washington, with an ex**p**ression of scorn. "I **d**id take out one man to teach my **d**aughter Italian. Last week he got away."

A wild yell of jub**i**lation went up **s**udden**d**ly from two **d**ozen throats and a **p**andemonium of joy ensued **d**. The **p**risoners clog-**d**anced and cheered and

yo**dd**ed and wrestle**d** with one another in a su**dd**en up**p**rush of animal sp**ir**its. They even ran up**p** the glass si**de**s of the **bo**wl as far as they cou**ld**, and **slid b**ack to the **bo**ttom up**p**on the natural cushions of their **bo**dies. The tall man started**d** a song in which they all joined**d**—

"oh, we'll hang the kaiser
on a sour apple tree——"

"Nevertheless," cried**d** Washington with a touch of anger, "he tried**d** to run away. Do you ex**p**ect me to take chances with any of you after an ex**p**erience like that?"

Br**ad**dock Washington sat in inscrut**ab**le silence until the song was over. "You see," he remark**d**, when he cou**ld** gain a mod**ic**um of attention. "I **b**ear you no ill-will. I like to see you enjoying yourselves. That's why I **did**n't tell you the whole story at once. The man—what was his name? Critchtichiello? —was shot **by** some of my agents in fourteen **d**ifferent **p**laces."

Not guessing that the **p**laces refer**d** to were cities, the tumult of rejoicing su**bsid**ed im**me**diately.

"Nevertheless," cried**d** Washington with a touch of anger, "he tried**d** to run away. Do you ex**p**ect me to take chances with any of you after an ex**p**erience like that?"

Chapter VI

Again a series of ejaculations went up**p**.

"Sure!"

"Would**d** your **d**aughter like to learn Chinese?"

"Hey, I can s**p**ea**k** Italian! My mother was a wo**p**."

"May**b**e she'**d** like t'lerna s**p**ea**k** N'Yawk!"

"If she's the little one with the **b**ig **b**lue eyes I can teach her a lot of things **b**etter than Italian."

"I know some Irish songs—and**d** I could**d** hammer **b**rass once't.

Mr. Washington reach**d** forward**d** sudd**enly** with his cane and**d** push**d** the **b**utton in the grass so that the **p**icture **b**elow went out instantly, and**d** there remain**d** only that great **d**ark mouth cover**d** **d**ismally with the **b**lack teeth of the grating.

"Hey!" call**d** a single voice from **b**elow, "you ain't goin' away without givin' us your **b**lessing?"

But Mr. Washington, follow**d** **b**y the two **b**oys, was alread**y** stroll**ing** on toward**d** the ninth hole of the golf course, as though the **p**it and**d** its contents were no more than a hazard**d** over which his facile iron had**d** triumph**ed** with ease

Chapter VII

JULY UNDER the lee of the **diamond** mountain was a month of **blanket** nights **and** of warm, glowing **days**. John **and** Kismine were in love. He **did** not know that the little gold **football** (inscri**bed** with the legend **Pro deo et patria et St. Midas**) which he **had** given her rested **on** a **platinum** chain next to her **bosom**. But it **did**. **And** she for her **part** was not aware that a large **sapphire** which **had** **dropped** one **day** from her **simple** coiffure was stowed **away** **tenderly** in John's jewel **box**.

Late one afternoon when the **ruby** **and** **ermine** music room was **quiet**, they **spent** an hour there together. He **held** her hand **and** she gave him such a look that he **whispered** her name **aloud**. She **bent** toward **him**—then **hesitated**.

"**Did** you say 'Kismine'?" she asked **softly**, "or——"

She **had** wanted **to be** sure. She thought she might have **misunderstood**.

Neither of them **had** ever **kissed** **before**, **but** in the course of an hour it seemed to make little **difference**.

Chapter VII

The afternoon **d**rifted away. That night when a last **b**reath of music **d**rifted **d**own from the highest tower, they each lay awake, ha**pp**ily **d**reaming over the se**p**arate minutes of the **d**ay. They ha**d** **d**ecided to **b**e married as soon as **p**ossi**b**le

Chapter VIII

EVERY DAY Mr. Washington **and** the two young men went hunting or fishing in the **deep** forests or **played** golf around **the** somnolent course—games which John **dip**lomatically allowed **his** host to win—or swam in the mountain coolness of the lake. John found **Mr.** Washington a somewhat exacting **personality**—utterly uninterested **in** any **ideas** or **opinions** except **his** own. Mrs. Washington was aloof **and** reserved **at** all times. She was **app**arently **ind**ifferent to her two **daughters**, **and** entirely **absorbed** in her son Percy, with whom she held **interminable** conversations in **rapid** **Spanish** at **dinner**.

Jasmine, the **elder** **daughter**, **resembled** Kismine in **appearance**—except that she was somewhat **bow-legged**, **and** terminated **in** large **hands** **and** feet—**but** was utterly unlike her in **temperament**. Her favorite **books** had **to do** with **poor** girls who **kept** house for **widowed** fathers. John learned **from** Kismine that Jasmine had **never** recovered **from** the shock **and** **disappointment** caused **her** **by** the termination of the **World** War, just as she was **about** to start for **Europe** as a canteen **expert**. She had **even** **pined** away for a time, **and** **Braddock** Washington had taken **steps** to **promote** a new war in the Balkans—**but** she had **seen** a **photograph** of some **wounded** **Serbian** **soldiers** **and** lost interest in the whole **proceedings**.

Chapter VIII

But Percy and Kismine seemed to have inherited the arrogant attitude in all its harsh magnificence from their father. A chaste and consistent selfishness ran like a pattern through their every idea.

John was enchanted by the wonders of the chateau and the valley. Braddock Washington, so Percy told him, had caused to be kidnapped a landscape gardener, an architect, a designer of state settings, and a French decadent poet left over from the last century. He had put his entire force of negroes at their disposal, guaranteed to supply them with any materials that the world could offer, and left them to work out some ideas of their own. But one by one they had shown their uselessness. The decadent poet had at once begun bewailing his separation from the boulevards in spring—he made some vague remarks about spices, apes, and ivories, but said nothing that was of any practical value. The stage designer on his part wanted to make the whole valley a series of tricks and sensational effects—a state of things that the Washingtons would soon have grown tired of. And as for the architect and the landscape gardener, they thought only in terms of convention. They must make this like this and that like that.

But they had, at least, solved the problem of what was to be done with them—they all went mad early one morning after spending the night in a single

room trying to agree **u**pon the location of a fountain, **and** were now confined **d** comfortably in an insane asylum at West**p**ort, Connecticut.

"But," in**q**uired John curiously, "who **did** **p**lan all your wonder**f**ul rece**p**tion rooms **and** halls, **and** **a**pp**r**oaches **and** **b**athrooms——?"

"Well," answered **d** Percy, "I **b**lush to tell you, **b**ut it was a moving-**p**icture fella. He was the only man we found **d** who was used **d** to **p**laying with an unlimited **d** amount of money, though he **did** tuck his na**p**kin in his collar **and** could**n**'t read **d** or write."

As August **d**rew to a close John **b**egan to regret that he must soon go **b**ack to school. He **and** Kismine had **d** **d**ecided **d** to elope the following June.

"It would **d** **b**e nicer to **b**e married **d** here," Kismine confessed, "**b**ut of course I could **d** never get father's **p**ermission to marry you at all. Next to that I'd rather elope. It's terri**b**le for wealthy **p**eople to **b**e married **d** in America at **p**resent—they always have to send **d** out **b**ulletins to the **p**ress saying that they're going to **b**e married **d** in remnants, when what they mean is just a **p**eck of old **d** second-hand **p**earls **and** some used **d** lace worn once **b**y the Em**p**ress Eug_nie."

"I know," agreed **d** John fervently. "When I was visiting the Schnlitzer-Mur**p**hys, the el**d**est **d** daughter, Gwend**d**olyn, married **d** a man whose father owns half of West

Chapter VIII

Virginia. She wrote home saying what a tough struggle she was carrying on on his salary as a **b**ank clerk—and then she **ended up b**y saying that "Thank God, I have four good **d** maids anyhow, and that **helps** a little."

"It's a **bsurd**," commented **d** Kismine. "Think of the millions and millions of **p**eople in the world, **l**aborers and all, who get along with only two maids."

One afternoon late in August a chance remark of Kismine's changed **d** the face of the entire situation, and **d** threw John into a state of terror.

They were in their favorite grove, and **d** between kisses John was **indulging** in some romantic fore**b**odings which he fancied **d** added **p**oignancy to their relations.

"Sometimes I think we'll never marry," he said **d** sadly.

"You're too wealthy, too magnificent. No one as rich as you are can **be** like other girls. I should **d** marry the **d**aughter of some well-to-**d**o wholesale hard**d**ware man from Omaha or Sioux City, and **be** content with her half-million."

"I knew the **d**aughter of a wholesale hard**d**ware man once," remarked **d** Kismine. "I **d**on't think you'**d** have **been** contented **d** with her. She was a friend **d** of my sister's. She visited **d** here."

"Oh, then you've had **d** other guests?" exclaimed **d** John in sur**p**rise.

Kismine seemed **d** to regret her words **d**s.

"Oh, yes," she said **d** hurried **d**ly, "we've had **d** a few."

"But aren't you—wasn't your father afraid **d** they'**d** talk outside?"

"Oh, to some extent, to some extent," she answered **d**. "Let's talk a **b**out something **p**leasanter."

But John's curiosity was aroused **d**.

"Something **p**leasanter!" he **d**emanded **d**. "What's un**p**leasant a **b**out that? Weren't they nice girls?"

To his great sur**p**rise Kismine **b**egan to weep **p**.

"Yes—th—that's the—the whole t-trou**b**le. I grew **q**u-**q**uite attached **d** to some of them. So **d**id Jasmine, **b**ut she ke**p**t inv-iting them anyway. I coul**d**n't un**d**erstand it."

A **d**ark sus**p**icion was **b**orn in John's heart.

"Do you mean that they told **d**, and **d** your father had **d** them—removed **d**?"

"Worse than that," she muttered **d** **b**rokenly. "Father took no chances—and **d** Jasmine ke**p**t writing them to come, and **d** they had **d** such a good **d** time!"

She was overcome **b**y a **p**aroxysm of grief.

Chapter VIII

Stunned**d** with the horror of this revelation, John sat there open-mouthed**d**, feeling the nerves of his **bod**y twitter like so many **sp**arrows **p**erched**d** upon his **sp**inal column.

"Now, I've told**d** you, and**d** I should**d**n't have," she said**d**, calming sudd**de**nly and **d**drying her **d**ark **b**lue eyes.

"Do you mean to say that your father had**d** them mur**d**ered**d** **b**efore they left?"

She no**dd**ed.

"In August usually—or early in Se**p**tem**b**er. It's only natural for us to get all the **p**leasure out of them that we can first."

"How a**bd**omina**ble**! How—why, I must **b**e going crazy! Did**d** you really ad**d**mit that—"

"I **d**id," interr**u**pted**d** Kismine, shrugging her shoul**d**ers. "We can't very well im**p**rison them like those aviators, where they'**d** **b**e a continual re**p**roach to us every **d**ay. And**d** it's always **b**een ma**d**e easier for Jasmine and**d** me **b**ecause father had**d** it **d**one sooner than we ex**p**ected**d**. In that way we avoid**ed**d any farewell scene——"

"So you mur**d**ered**d** them! Uh!" cried**d** John.

"It was **d**one very nicely. They were **d**rugged while they were asleep**p**—**and** their families were always told **d** that they **d**ied of scarlet fever in Butte."

"But—I fail to **und**erstand **d** why you **ke**pt on inviting them!"

"I **di**dn't," **b**urst out Kismine. "I never invited **d** one. Jasmine **di**d. **And** they always had a very good **d** time. She'**d** give them the nicest **p**resents toward **d** the last. I shall **prob**ably have visitors too—I'll **hard**en **up** to it. We can't let such an inevitable thing as **d**eath stand **d** in the way of enjoying life while we have it. Think how lonesome it'**d** **be** out here if we never had **d** any one. Why, father **and** mother have sacrificed **d** some of their **best** friend**s** just as we have."

"**And** so," cried **d** John accusingly, "**and** so you were letting me make love to you **and** **p**retending to return it, **and** talking **ab**out marriage, all the time knowing **p**erfectly well that I'**d** never get out of here alive—"

"No," she **p**rotested **d** passionately. "Not any more. I **di**d at first. You were here. I couldn't help **p** that, **and** I thought your last **d**ays might as well **be** pleasant for **both** of us. But then I fell in love with you, **and**—**and** I'm honestly sorry you're going to—going to **be** put away—though I'**d** rather you'**d** **be** put away than ever kiss another girl."

Chapter VIII

"Oh, you would**d**, would**d** you?" cried**d** John ferociously.

"Much rather. Besi**d**es, I've always heard**d** that a girl can have more fun with a man whom she knows she can never marry. Oh, why **did** I tell you? I've **pro**b**ably** **s**p**oiled** your whole good**d** time now, **and** we were really enjoying things when you **did**n't know it. I knew it would**d** make things sort of **de**p**ressing** for you."

"Oh, you **did**, **did** you?" John's voice trem**bled** with anger. "I've heard**d** **ab**out enough of this. If you haven't any more **pride** **and** **de**centy than to have an affair with a fellow that you know isn't much **b**etter than a cor**p**se, I **d**on't want to have any more to **do** with you!"

"You're not a cor**p**se!" she **pro**tested**d** in horror. "You're not a cor**p**se! I won't have you saying that I kissed**d** a cor**p**se!"

"I sai**d** nothing of the sort!"

"You **did**! You sai**d** I kissed**d** a cor**p**se!"

"I **did**n't ! "

Their voices ha**d** risen, **but** up**on** a sudd**en** interr**u**ption they **both** su**bsided** into immediate silence. Footste**p**s were coming along the **p**ath in their **d**irection, **and** a moment later the rose **b**ushes were **parted** **dis**playing Bradd**o**ck Washington,

whose intelligent eyes set in his good-looking vacuous face were peering in at them.

"Who kissed a corpse?" he demanded in obvious disapproval.

"Nobody," answered Kismine quickly. "We were just joking."

"What are you two doing here, anyhow?" he demanded gruffly. "Kismine, you ought to be—to be reading or playing golf with your sister. Go read! Go play golf! Don't let me find you here when I come back!"

Then he bowed at John and went up the path.

"See?" said Kismine crossly, when he was out of hearing. "You've spoiled it all. We can never meet any more. He won't let me meet you. He'd have you poisoned if he thought we were in love."

"We're not, any more!" cried John fiercely, "so he can set his mind at rest upon that. Moreover, don't fool yourself that I'm going to stay around here. Inside of six hours I'll be over those mountains, if I have to gnaw a passage through them, and on my way East."

They had both got to their feet, and at this remark Kismine came close and put her arm through his.

Chapter VIII

"I'm going, too."

"You must **be** crazy——"

"Of course I'm going," she interrupted **impatiently**.

"You most certainly are not. You——"

"Very well," she said **quietly**, "we'll catch **up** with father now **and** talk it over with him."

Defeated, John mustered **a** sickly smile.

"Very well, **dearest**," he agreed, with **pale and** unconvincing affection, "we'll go together."

His love for her returned **and** settled **placidly** on his heart. She was his—she would **go** with him to share his **dangers**. He **put** his arms **about** her **and** kissed **her** fervently. After all she loved **him**; she had **saved** him, in fact.

Discussing the matter, they walked **slowly back toward** the chateau. They **decided** that since Braddock Washington had **seen** them together they had **best depart** the next night. Nevertheless, John's lips were unusually **dry** at **dinner**, **and** he nervously emptied **a** great **spoonful of peacock soup** into his left lung. He had

to **b**e carried **d** into the tur**q**uoise and **s**able card**d**-room and **d**pounded **d** on the **b**ack
by one of the under-**b**utlers, which Percy considered **d** a great joke

Chapter IX

LONG AFTER midnight John's **b**ody gave a nervous jerk, **and** he sat **sudd**enly **u**p**r**ight, staring into the veils of somnolence that **d**r**ap**ed the room. Through the **s**q**u**ares of **b**l**u**e **d**arkness that were his **o**p**e**n **w**in**d**ow**s**, he had **h**ea**r**d a faint far-away **s**ou**n**d that **d**ie**d** **u**p**o**n a **b**ed of **w**in**d** **b**e**f**ore **i**d**e**n**t**ify**i**ng itself on his memory, **cl**ou**d**ed with uneasy **d**reams. But the **sh**ar**p** noise that had **s**ucc**e**ed**e**d it was nearer, was just **o**u**s**id**e** the room—the **cl**ic**k** of a **t**ur**n**ed **k**no**b**, a **fo**ot**s**t**e**p, a **w**h**i**s**p**er, he **co**u**l**d not tell; a **h**ar**d** **l**u**m**p **g**ath**e**red in the **p**it of his stomach, **and** his whole **b**ody **a**ch**e**d in the moment that he **str**ain**e**d agonizingly to hear. Then one of the veils **seem**ed to **d**iss**o**l**v**e, **and** he saw a vague figure **stand**ing **b**y the **d**oor, a figure only faintly **lim**ned **and** **b**l**o**ck**e**d in **u**p**o**n the **d**arkness, **ming**led so with the **fold**s of the **d**rap**e**ry as to seem **d**ist**o**rt**e**d, like a reflection seen in a **dir**ty **p**ane of glass.

With a **sudd**en movement of fright or resolution John **p**ress**e**d the **b**utton **b**y his **bed**side, **and** the next moment he was sitting in the green sunken **b**ath of the **ad**joining room, **wak**e**d** into alertness **b**y the shock of the **col**d water which half filled **it**.

He sprang out, and, his wet pajamas scattering a heavy trickle of water behind him, ran for the aquamarine door which he knew led out onto the ivory landing of the second floor. The door opened noiselessly. A single crimson lamp burning in a great dome above lit the magnificent sweep of the carved stairways with a poignant beauty. For a moment John hesitated, appalled by the silent splendor massed about him, seeming to envelop in its gigantic folds and contours the solitary drenched little figure shivering upon the ivory landing. Then simultaneously two things happened. The door of his own sitting-room swung open, precipitating three naked negroes into the hall—and, as John swayed in wild terror toward the stairway, another door slid back in the wall on the other side of the corridor, and John saw Braddock Washington standing in the lighted lift, wearing a fur coat and a pair of riding boots which reached to his knees and displayed, above, the glow of his rose-colored pajamas.

On the instant the three negroes—John had never seen any of them before, and it flashed through his mind that they must be the professional executioners—paused in their movement toward John, and turned expectantly to the man in the lift, who burst out with an imperious command:

"Get in here! All three of you! Quick as hell!"

Chapter IX

Then, within the instant, the three negroes **d**arted into the cage, the **o**blong of light was **b**lotted out as the lift **d**oor slid shut, and John was again alone in the hall. He slumped weakly **d**own against an ivory stair.

It was **a**pparent that something **p**ortentous had occurred, something which, for the moment at least, had **p**ostponed his own **p**etty disaster. What was it? Had the negroes risen in revolt? Had the aviators forced **a**side the iron **b**ars of the grating? Or had the men of Fish stumbled **b**lindly through the hills and gazed with **b**leak, joyless eyes **u**pon the **g**audy valley? John **d**id not know. He heard a faint whir of air as the lift whizzed **u**p again, and then, a moment later, as it **d**escended. It was **p**ro**b**able that Percy was hurrying to his father's assistance, and it occurred to John that this was his **o**ppportunity to join Kismine and **p**lan an immediate **e**scape. He waited until the lift had **b**een silent for several minutes; shivering a little with the night cool that whipped in through his wet **p**ajamas, he returned to his room and **d**ressed himself **q**uickly. Then he mounted a long flight of stairs and turned **d**own the **c**orridor carpeted with Russian **s**able which led to Kismine's suite.

The **d**oor of her sitting-room was **o**pen **a**nd the **l**amp**s** were light**e**d. Kismine, in an angora kimono, stood **n**ear the **w**in**d**ow of the room in a listening attitud**e**, **a**nd as John enter**e**d noiselessly she turn**e**d toward **h**im.

"Oh, it's you!" she whis**p**er**e**d, crossing the room to him. "Did you hear them?"

"I hear**d** your father's slaves in my——"

"No," she interr**u**pt**e**d excited**l**y. "Aer**o**pl**a**nes!"

"Aer**o**pl**a**nes? Perh**a**p**s** that was the sound **t**hat woke me."

"There're at least a **d**ozen. I saw one a few moments ago **d**ead against the moon.

The guard **b**ack **b**y the cliff fire**d** his rifle **a**nd that's what roused **f**ather. We're going to **o**pen on them right away."

"Are they here on **p**ur**p**ose?"

"Yes—it's that Italian who got away——"

Simultaneously with her last word**e**d, a succession of sharp cracks tumb**l**ed in through the **o**pen wind**w**ow. Kismine utter**e**d a little cry, took a **p**enny with fumb**l**ing fingers from a **b**ox on her **d**resser, **a**nd ran to one of the electric lights. In an instant the entire ch_teau was in **d**arkness—she had **b**lown out the fuse.

Chapter IX

"Come on!" she cried **d** to him. "We'll go **up** to the roof **garden**, and **d** watch it from there!"

Drawing a **cape** **ab**out her, she took his **hand**, and **d** they found **d** their way out the **d**oor. It was only a **step** to the tower lift, and **d** as she **pressed** the **b**utton that shot them **upward** he **put** his arms around **d** her in the **d**arkness and **d** kissed **d** her mouth.

Romance had **d** come to John Unger at last. A minute later they had **d** **stepped** out **up**on the star-white **p**latform. **Above**, under the misty moon, sliding in and out of the **p**atches of cloud that **eddied** below it, floated a **d**ozen **d**ark-winged **b**odies in a constant circling course. From here and there in the valley flashes of fire leaped toward them, followed by sharp detonations. Kismine clapped her hands with pleasure, which, a moment later, turned to dismay as the aeroplanes at some prearranged signal, began to release their bombs and the whole of the valley became a panorama of deep reverberate sound and lurid light.

Before long the aim of the attackers became concentrated upon the points where the anti-aircraft guns were situated, and one of them was almost immediately reduced to a giant cinder to lie smouldering in a park of rose bushes.

"Kismine," **begged** John, "you'll **be glad** when I tell you that this attack came on the eve of my **murder**. If I **hadn't heard** that **guard** shoot off his gun **back by** the **pass** I should now **be stone dead**——"

"I can't hear you!" **cried** Kismine, intent on the scene **before** her. "You'll have to talk **louder!**"

"I **simply said**," **shouted** John, "that we'**d better** get out **before** they **begin** to shell the ch_teau!"

Suddenly the whole **portico** of the negro **quarters** **cracked** **asunder**, a geyser of flame shot **up** from **under** the **colonnades**, **and** great fragments of **jagged** **marble** were **hurled** as far as the **borders** of the lake.

"There go fifty thousand **dollars'** worth of slaves," **cried** Kismine, "at **prewar** **prices**. So few Americans have any **respect** for **property**."

John **renewed** his efforts to **compel** her to leave. The aim of the **aeroplanes** was **becoming** more **precise** minute **by** minute, **and** only two of the antiaircraft guns were still retaliating. It was **obvious** that the garrison, **encircled** with fire, **could** not **hold** out much longer.

Chapter IX

"Come on!" cried **d** John, **p**ulling Kismine's arm, "we've got to go. Do you realize that those aviators will kill you without **q**uestion if they **f**ind you ?"

She consented **d** reluctantly.

"We'll have to wake Jasmine!" she said **d**, as they hurried **d** toward **d** the lift. Then she **a**dded in a sort of child**d**ish **d**elight: "We'll **b**e **p**oor, won't we? Like **p**eople in **b**ooks. **A**nd I'll **b**e an or**p**han and **d** utterly free. Free and **d** **p**oor! What fun!" She stop**p**ed and **d** raised **d** her lip**s** to him in a **d**elighted **d** kiss.

"It's im**p**ossi**b**le to **b**e **b**oth together," said **d** John grimly. "Peo**p**le have found **d** that out. **A**nd I should **d** choose to **b**e free as **p**referable of the two. As an extra caution you'**d** **b**etter **d**ump **p** the contents of your jewel **b**ox into your **p**ockets."

Ten minutes later the two girls met John in the **d**ark corri**d**or and **d** they **d**escended **d** to the main floor of the ch_teau. Passing for the last time through the magnificence of the spl**e**ndid **d** halls, they stood **d** for a moment out on the terrace, watching the **b**urning negro **q**uarters and **d** the flaming emb**e**rs of two **p**lanes which had **d** fallen on the other sid**e** of the lake. A solitary gun was still keep**i**ng up **p** a stur**d**y **p**opping, and **d** the attackers seemed **d** timorous ab**o**ut **d**escending lower, **b**ut sent their

thund**erous** fireworks in a circle around**d** it, until any chance shot might annihilate its Ethiop**ian** crew.

John and**d** the two sisters **passed d**own the mar**ble** step**s**, turned**d** sharp**ly** to the left, and**d** **began** to ascend**d** a narrow **p**ath that wound**d** like a garter a**b**out the **diamond** mountain. Kismine knew a heavily wood**ed** sp**ot** half-way up**p** where they could**d** lie conceal**ed** and**d** yet **be able** to o**b**serve the wild**d** night in the valley—finally to make an escap**e**, when it should**d** **be** necessary, along a secret **p**ath laid**d** in a rocky gully.

Chapter X

IT WAS THREE O'CLOCK when they attained **d** their **d**estination. The o**b**liging and **p**hlegmatic Jasmine fell off to sleep **p** immedi**d**ately, leaning against the trunk of a large tree, while John and **d** Kismine sat, his arm around **d** her, and **d** watched **d** the **d**esperate e**bb** and **d** flow of the **d**ying **b**attle among the ruins of a vista that had **b**een a gar**d**en sp**o**t that morning. Shortly after four o'clock the last remaining gun gave out a clanging sound **d** and **d** went out of action in a swift tongue of red **d** smoke. Though the moon was **d**own, they saw that the flying **b**odies were circling closer to the earth. When the **p**lanes had **d** made certain that the **b**eleaguered **p**ossessed no further resources, they would **d** land **d** and the **d**ark and **d** glittering reign of the Washingtons would **d** **b**e over.

With the cessation of the firing the valley grew **q**uiet. The em**b**ers of the two aeropl**a**nes glowed **d** like the eyes of some monster crouching in the grass. The ch_teau stood **d** **d**ark and **d** silent, **b**eautiful without light as it had **b**een **b**eautiful in the sun, while the wood**d**y rattles of Nemesis filled **d** the air **a**bove with a growing and **d** rece**d**ing compl**a**int. Then John **p**erceived **d** that Kismine, like her sister, had fallen sound **d** asleep **p**.

It was long after four when he **b**ecame aware of footsteps along the **p**ath they had lately followed, and he waited in **b**reathless silence until the **p**ersons to whom they **b**elonged had **p**assed the vantage-**p**oint he occupied. There was a faint stir in the air now that was not of human origin, and the **d**ew was cold; he knew that the **d**awn would **b**reak soon. John waited until the steps had gone a safe **d**istance **u**p the mountain and were inaudible. Then he followed. **A**bout half-way to the steep **p** summit the trees fell away and a hard **s**addle of rock **s**pread itself over the **d**iamond **b**eneath. Just **b**efore he reached this **p**oint he slowed **d**own his **p**ace, warned **b**y an animal sense that there was life just ahead of him. Coming to a high **b**oulder, he lifted his head gradually **a**bove its **e**dge. His curiosity was rewarded; this is what he saw:

Braddock Washington was standing there motionless, silhouetted against the gray sky without sound or sign of life. As the **d**awn came **u**p out of the east, lending a cold green color to the earth, it **b**rought the solitary figure into insignificant contrast with the new **d**ay.

While John watched, his host remained for a few moments **a**bsorbed in some inscrutable **c**ontemplation; then he signalled to the two negroes who crouched at his feet to lift the **b**urden which lay **b**etween them. As they struggled **u**pright,

Chapter X

the first yellow **b**eam of the sun struck through the innumera**b**le **p**risms of an immense and **d**ex**q**uisitely chiselled **d**diamond—**a**nd a white rad**d**iance was kind**d**ed that glowed **d**u**p**on the air like a fragment of the morning star. The **b**earers staggered **d** **b**eneath its weight for a moment—then their rip**p**ling muscles caught and **h**ard**e**ned **u**nder the wet shine of the skins and **t**he three figures were again motionless in their **d**efiant imp**o**tency **b**efore the heavens.

After a while the white man lifted **d** his head **a**nd slowly raised **d** his arms in a gesture of attention, as one who would **c**all a great crowd **t**o hear—**b**ut there was no crowd **d**, only the vast silence of the mountain and **t**he sky, **b**roken **b**y faint **b**ird voices **d**own among the trees. The figure on the sad**d**le of rock **b**egan to **s**peak **p**onderously and **w**ith an inextinguisha**b**le **p**ride.

"You out there—" he cried **d** in a trem**b**ling voice. "You— there—!" He **p**au**s**ed, his arms still up**l**ifted **d**, his head **h**eld **a**tentively as though he were ex**p**ecting an answer. John strained **d** his eyes to see whether there might **b**e men coming **d**own the mountain, **b**ut the mountain was **b**are of human life. There was only sky and a mocking flute of wind **d** along the tree-to**p**s. Could **W**ashington **b**e **p**raying? For a moment John won**d**ered **d**. Then the illusion **p**ass**e**d—there was something in the man's whole attitud**e** antithetical to **p**rayer.

"Oh, you a**b**ove there!"

The voice was **b**ecome strong and **d** confident. This was no forlorn sup**pp**lication.

If anything, there was in it a **q**uality of monstrous cond**d**escension.

"You there——"

Word**s**, too **q**uickly uttered**d** to **b**e und**er**stood**d**, flowing one into the other. . . .

John listened**d** **b**reathlessly, catching a **p**hrase here and**d** there, while the voice **b**roke off, resumed**d**, **b**roke off again—now strong and**d** argumentative, now colored**d** with a slow, **p**uzzled**d** imp**p**atience. Then a conviction commenced**d** to **d**awn on the single listener, and**d** as realization cre**pt** over him a **s**pray of **q**uick **b**lood**d** rushed through his arteries. Bra**dd**ock Washington was offering a **b**ribe to God!

That was it—there was no **d**oub**t**. The **d**iamond in the arms of his slaves was some ad**v**ance sam**p**le, a **p**romise of more to follow.

That, John **p**erceived**d** after a time, was the thread**d** running through his sentences. Prometheus Enriched**d** was calling to witness forgotten sacrifices, forgotten rituals, **p**rayers o**b**solete **b**efore the **b**irth of Christ. For a while his **d**iscourse took the form of remind**d**ing God**d** of this gift or that which Divinity had **d**eigned**d** to acce**pt** from men—great churches if he would**d** rescue cities from the **p**lague, gifts of myrrh

Chapter X

and gold, of human lives and beautiful women and captive armies, of children and queens, of beasts of the forest and field, sheep and goats, harvests and cities, whole conquered lands that had been offered up in lust or blood for His appeal, buying a meed's worth of alleviation from the Divine wrath—and now he, Braddock Washington, Emperor of Diamonds, king and priest of the age of gold, arbiter of splendor and luxury, would offer up a treasure such as princes before him had never dreamed of, offer it up not in supplication, but in pride.

He would give to God, he continued, getting down to specifications, the greatest diamond in the world. This diamond would be cut with many more thousand facets than there were leaves on a tree, and yet the whole diamond would be shaped with the perfection of a stone no bigger than a fly. Many men would work upon it for many years. It would be set in a great dome of beaten gold, wonderfully carved and equipped with gates of opal and crusted sapphire. In the middle would be hollowed out a chapel presided over by an altar of iridescent, decomposing, ever-changing radium which would burn out the eyes of any worshipper who lifted up his head from prayer—and on this altar there would be slain for the amusement of the Divine Benefactor any victim He should choose, even though it should be the greatest and most powerful man alive.

In return he asked **d** only a simple thing, a thing that for God would **d be** absurdly easy—only that matters should **d be** as they were yesterday at this hour and **d** that they should **d** so remain. So very simple! Let **b**ut the heavens open, swallowing these men and **d** their aeroplanes—and **d** then close again. Let him have his slaves once more, restored **d** to life and **d** well.

There was no one else with whom he had **d** ever needed **d** to treat or **b**argain.

He **d**oubted **d** only whether he had **d** made his **b**ribe **b**ig enough. God had **d** His **p**rice, of course. God **d** was made **d** in man's image, so it had **d been** said: He must have His **p**rice. And **d** the **p**rice would **d be** rare—no cathedral whose **b**uilding consumed **d** many years, no **p**yramid constructed **d by** ten thousand workmen, would **d be** like this cathedral, this **p**yramid.

He **p**aised **d** here. That was his **p**roposition. Everything would **d be** up to **s**pecifications and **d** there was nothing vulgar in his assertion that it would **d be** cheap at the **p**rice. He implied **d** that Providence could **d** take it or leave it.

As he **a**pproached **d** the end **d** his sentences **b**ecame **b**roken, **b**ecame short and uncertain, and **d** his **b**ody seemed **d** tense, seemed **d** strained **d** to catch the slightest **p**ressure or whisper of life in the **s**paces around **d** him. His hair had **d** turned **d**

Chapter X

graddually white as he talkedd, and now he liftedd his headd high to the heavens like a **p**rophet of old—magnificently **mad**.

Then, as John staredd in giddy fascination, it seemedd to him that a curious **p**henomenon took **p**lace somewhere aroundd him. It was as though the sky had **d**arkenedd for an instant, as though there had **been** a sudden murmur in a gust of windd, a soundd of far-away trumpets, a sighing like the rustle of a great silken robe—for a time the whole of nature roundd about **p**artook of this **d**arkness; the **birds'** song ceasedd; the trees were still, and far over the mountain there was a mutter of **d**ull, menacing thunder.

That was all. The wind **died** along the tall grasses of the valley. The **dawn** and the **d**ay resumedd their **p**lace in a time, and the risen sun sent hot waves of yellow mist that made its **p**ath **b**right **b**efore it. The leaves laughedd in the sun, and their laughter shook the trees until each **b**ough was like a girl's school in fairyland. **God** had refusedd to accept the **b**ribe.

For another moment John watchedd the triumph of the **d**ay. Then, turning he saw a flutter of **b**rown **d**own **b**y the lake, then another flutter, then another, like the **d**ance of golden angels alighting from the clouds. The aeroplanes had come to earth.

John slid off the **boulder** and ran **d**own the **s**ide of the mountain to the clump of trees, where the two girls were awake and waiting for him. Kismine sprang to her feet, the jewels in her **p**ockets jingling, a **q**uestion on her **p**arted lips, **b**ut instinct told John that there was no time for words. They must get off the mountain without losing a moment. He seized a **h**and of each and in silence they threaded the tree-trunks, washed with light now and with the rising mist. Behind them from the valley came no sound at all, except the complaint of the **p**eacocks far away and the **p**leasant undertone of morning.

When they had gone about half a mile, they avoided the **p**ark land and entered a narrow **p**ath that led over the next rise of ground. At the highest **p**oint of this they **p**aused and turned around. Their eyes rested upon the mountainside they had just left—oppressed by some **d**ark sense of tragic impendency.

Clear against the sky a **b**roken, white-haired man was slowly descending the steep slope, followed by two gigantic and emotionless negroes, who carried a **b**urden between them which still flashed and glittered in the sun. Half-way down two other figures joined them—John could see that they were Mrs. Washington and her son, upon whose arm she leaned. The aviators had clambered from their

Chapter X

machines to the sweeping lawn in front of the chateau, and with rifles in hand were starting up the diamond mountain in skirmishing formation.

But the little group of five which had formed farther up and was engrossing all the watchers' attention had stopped up on a ledge of rock. The negroes stooped and pulled up what appeared to be a trap-door in the side of the mountain. Into this they all disappeared, the white-haired man first, then his wife and son, finally the two negroes, the glittering tips of whose jeweled head-dresses caught the sun for a moment before the trap-door descended and engulfed them all.

Kismine clutched John's arm.

"Oh," she cried wildly, "where are they going? What are they going to do?"

"It must be some underground way of escape "

A little scream from the two girls interrupted his sentence.

"Don't you see?" sobbed Kismine hysterically. "The mountain is wired!"

Even as she spoke John put up his hands to shield his sight. Before their eyes the whole surface of the mountain had changed suddenly to a dazzling burning yellow, which showed up through the jacket of turf as light shows through a human hand. For a moment the intolerable glow continued, and then like an extinguished

filament it **disa**pp**ea**red, revealing a **bl**ack waste from which **bl**ue smoke arose slowly, carrying off with it what remained**d** of vegetation **and** of human flesh. Of the aviators there was left neither **bl**ood, nor **bl**one—they were consumed**d** as com**pl**etely as the five souls who had**d** gone ins**id**e.

Simultaneously, **and** with an immense concussion, the ch_teau literally threw itself into the air, **bu**rsting into flaming fragments as it rose, **and** then tum**bl**ing **ba**ck **u**pon itself in a smoking **p**ile that lay **p**rojecting half into the water of the lake. There was no fire—what smoke there was **drifted** off mingling with the sunshine, **and** for a few minutes longer a **powdery d**ust of mar**bl**e **drifted** from the great featureless **p**ile that had**d** once **be**en the house of jewels. There was no more sound **and** the three **peop**le were alone in the valley.

Chapter XI

AT SUNSET John **and** his two **companions** **reached** the high cliff which **had** marked the **boundaries** of the Washingtons' **dominion**, **and** looking **back** **found** the valley **tranquil** **and** lovely in the **dusk**. They sat **down** to finish the **food** which Jasmine **had** **brought** with her in a **basket**.

"There!" she **said**, as she **spread** the **table-cloth** **and** **put** the **sandwiches** in a neat **pile** **upon** it. "Don't they look **tempting**? I always think that **food** tastes **better** **outdoors**."

"With that remark," **remarked** Kismine, "Jasmine enters the **middle** class."

"Now," **said** John eagerly, "turn out your **pocket** **and** let's see what jewels you **brought** along. If you **made** a **good** selection we three ought to live **comfortably** all the rest of our lives."

Obediently Kismine **put** her **hand** in her **pocket** **and** **tossed** two **handfuls** of glittering stones **before** him.

"Not so **bad**," **cried** John, enthusiastically. "They aren't very **big**, **but**— Hello!" His **expression** **changed** as he **held** one of them **up** to the **declining** sun. "Why, these aren't **diamonds**! There's something the matter!"

"By golly!" exclaimed **d** Kismine, with a startled **d** look. "What an **i**diot I am!"

"Why, these are rhinestones!" cried **d** John.

"I know." She **b**roke into a laugh. "I **o**pened the wrong **d**rawer. They **b**elonged on the **d**ress of a girl who visited **d** Jasmine. I got her to give them to me in exchange for **d**iamonds. I'd never seen anything **b**ut **p**recious stones **b**efore."

"**A**nd this is what you **b**rought?"

"I'm afraid **d** so." She fingered **d** the **b**rilliant wistfully. "I think I like these **b**etter. I'm a little tired **d** of **d**iamonds."

"Very well," said **d** John gloomily. "We'll have to live in Ha**d**es. **A**nd you will grow **o**ld telling incre**d**ulous women that you got the wrong **d**rawer. Unfortunately your father's **b**ank-**b**ooks were consumed **d** with him."

"Well, what's the matter with Ha**d**es?"

"If I come home with a wife at my age my father is just as liab**l**e as not to cut me off with a hot coal, as they say **d**own there."

Jasmine s**p**oke up.

"I love washing," she said **d** quietly. "I have always washed **d** my own hand**d**kerchiefs. I'll take in laund**r**y and s**u**pp**o**rt you **b**oth."

Chapter XI

"Do they have washwomen in H**ad**es?" asked **d** Kismine innocently.

"Of course," answered **d** John. "It's just like anywhere else."

"I thought—**p**er**h**aps it was too hot to wear any clothes."

John laughed **d**.

"Just try it!" he suggested **d**. "They'll run you out **b**efore you're half started **d**."

"Will father **b**e there?" she asked **d**.

John turned **d** to her in astonishment.

"Your father is **d**ead," he re**p**lied som**b**erly. "Why should **d** he go to H**ad**es? You have it confused **d** with another **p**lace that was a**b**olished **d** long ago."

After su**p**per they folded **d** up **p** the ta**b**le-cloth and **d** s**p**read their **b**lankets for the night.

"What a **d**ream it was," Kismine sighed **d**, gazing up **p** at the stars. "How strange it seems to **b**e here with one **d**ress and **d** a **p**enniless fianc_!"

"Und**e**r the stars," she re**p**eated **d**. "I never noticed **d** the stars **b**efore. I always thought of them as great **b**ig **d**iamonds that **b**elonged **d** to some one. Now they frighten me. They make me feel that it was all a **d**ream, all my youth."

"It was a **d**ream," said John **q**uietly. "Every**b**ody's youth is a **d**ream, a form of chemical mad**d**ness."

"How **p**leasant then to **b**e insane!"

"So I'm told**d**," said John gloomily. "I **d**on't know any longer. At any rate, let us love for a while, for a year or so, you and**d** me. That's a form of **d**ivine **d**runkeness that we can all try. There are only **d**iamonds in the whole world, **d**iamonds and **p**erhap**s** the sha**b**by gift of **d**isillusion. Well, I have that last and**d** I will make the usual nothing of it." He shivered**d**. "Turn **u**p your coat collar, little girl, the night's full of chill and**d** you'll get **p**neumonia. His was a great sin who first invented**d** consciousness. Let us lose it for a few hours."

So wrapp**pp**ing himself in his **b**lanket he fell off to sleep**p**.

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