

The Beautiful and Damned



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Born in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1896, Fitzgerald grew up in Buffalo, New York. His family had recently gained a position in high society through his maternal grandfather's work in the grocery industry. Fitzgerald's father was a less successful businessman, though, and the family struggled to maintain their social status through his bouts of unemployment. Fitzgerald earned admission to Princeton in 1913 despite a mediocre academic record that did not improve once he was enrolled. He dropped out of Princeton in 1917 to join the army. He was never deployed, nor did he find himself especially suited to the disciplined life of an officer. Fitzgerald left the army in 1919 and the following year marked the instantly successful publication of his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, as well as his wedding to Zelda Sayre. He went on to write *The Beautiful and Damned* during Zelda's pregnancy with their daughter, Scottie in 1921-22. He had published four novels by 1925, including [The Great Gatsby](#). Despite their acclaim, most of the novels sold poorly. Fitzgerald eventually tried his hand at Hollywood writing, but earned most of his income by publishing short stories, a practice that his contemporary Ernest Hemingway thought ill-befitting a literary artist. The Fitzgeralds split their time between New York and Paris, attempting through extravagant spending and extra-marital affairs to combat the lifelong depression they each experienced. Zelda spent her later years in a mental institution while Fitzgerald sank deeper into alcoholism. He died of a heart attack in 1940, at age 44.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The action of the novel occurs between 1914 and 1918, which encompasses World War I, a cataclysmic and unprecedented global conflict. The characters are aware on a surface level that the war is happening, but they never deeply engage with the meaning or proportion of the war, which shows their detachment from reality. The novel also occurs during the lead-up to the Prohibition era in the United States, which began in 1920 when the Eighteenth Amendment banned the trade of alcoholic beverages. During the time of the story, the temperance movement—which advocated for Prohibition—was strongly influential.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Fitzgerald's later novel [The Great Gatsby](#) shares many themes with *The Beautiful and Damned*. Both novels condemn society's normalization of alcoholism, extravagant spending, and instant

gratification, and both novels address the performativity of high society. *The Beautiful and Damned* foregrounds the characters' physical beauty not only through its title but also through overt references to a classical text about beauty and love: Plato's *Symposium*. Perhaps Fitzgerald's closest contemporary author was Ernest Hemingway, who made similar literary indictments of society during the World War I era. Although both authors were writing against a culture that allowed and even encouraged young people to drink and socialize to excess, Hemingway's military service meant that many of his works, such as [A Farewell to Arms](#) and [The Sun Also Rises](#), dealt directly with veterans' experience during and after the war. Fitzgerald was notoriously jealous that he did not have active military experience upon which to draw in his own work. Indeed, one of Anthony Patch's many failings is his incompetence at the army training camp where he lives for a time. Anthony's failure as a soldier and his discharge before ever seeing combat echoes Fitzgerald's own fleeting attempt to join the army.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Beautiful and Damned*
- **When Written:** 1921-1922
- **Where Written:** New York
- **When Published:** 1922
- **Literary Period:** Modernism
- **Genre:** Novel
- **Setting:** New York City, 1913-1921
- **Climax:** Anthony's encounter with Dorothy in his apartment the day of the lawsuit's verdict
- **Antagonist:** There is no distinct antagonist. Rather, Anthony and Gloria are their own antagonists, ruining their chances of happiness through their poor decisions.
- **Point of View:** Third person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

The Great American Author. Fitzgerald's full name, Frances Scott Key Fitzgerald, should sound familiar. He was named for Frances Scott Key, the lawyer and poet who wrote the lyrics to "The Star-Spangled Banner"—and a distant relative on Fitzgerald's father's side.

Hip-Hop Renaissance. In addition to two film adaptations (1922 and 2010), *The Beautiful and Damned* has made its way into pop culture through the 2017 G-Eazy album of the same name. G-Eazy, an American rapper also known as Gerald Earl

Gillum, has stated in interviews that the overindulgence of Anthony and Gloria reminds him of his own life. G-Eazy parties to excess, he says, and Gerald must deal with the consequences.



PLOT SUMMARY

In 1913, Anthony Patch has accomplished very little besides graduating from Harvard. His grandfather, who raised him and who ensures Anthony's place in high society, has pressured Anthony into working on a book – or rather, into saying that he is working on a book. Anthony spends far more time dreading the writing process than actually writing. Much of this dread takes place in the tub of his luxurious **bathroom**, which he considers the “pride” of his apartment. Having lost both his parents at a young age, Anthony worries about death and the dangers of the outside world. The bathroom is a safe haven to which he often retreats.

Anthony's former Harvard classmate Dick Caramel introduces Anthony to his cousin, Gloria Gilbert. Gloria is a society girl, spending her evenings out on the town and using her beauty to convince men to pay her way. Anthony is fascinated by her seeming ability to get by on nothing but her looks. Although it seems that a movie producer, Joseph Bloeckman, might be wooing her, Anthony strikes up a relationship with Gloria and soon discovers that she, like him, worries about her fleeting youth. He becomes obsessed with her. After a failed attempt to stay away from her, Anthony finally gives in to his desire and proposes to Gloria. She accepts immediately, rebuffing Bloeckman.

Anthony begins to have second thoughts before he and Gloria even go through with the marriage. He realizes that his fixed income is already stretched thin financing his own extravagant lifestyle, and now he will need to fund Gloria's social exploits as well. He will also have to share his apartment, which he has come to consider his sanctuary. He pushes aside the anxiety, convincing himself that everything will work out somehow. One day, he expects, he is bound to stumble into riches and success, regardless of his work ethic or budgeting capabilities. Like the alcohol or expensive clothing Anthony is always buying, Gloria is a thing he wants and therefore takes.

Anthony and Gloria begin to experience marital difficulties before even returning home from their honeymoon. Anthony's anxiety over death results in his overly-cautious driving, which Gloria finds cowardly. Meanwhile, Gloria neglects the domestic duties Anthony expects of her. At moments, they happily discuss their future and the children they might have, but these moments quickly sour. Back in New York, they continue to be disgruntled with one another. When Gloria wants a house in the country, Anthony gives in to renting one not because he wants the house but because he wants Gloria to stop asking for it. Because he does not want to give up his beloved city

apartment, the house rental pushes their finances to the precipice.

The couple's reaction to their financial uncertainty is not to take on work to supplement Anthony's fixed income, nor to downsize to one residence. Rather, they try to distract themselves from their predicament by throwing parties. The parties give the illusion that Anthony and Gloria are part of a thriving social network while in fact a rift is growing between the couple and their friends, many of whom are beginning to settle into careers. Everything comes crashing down when Anthony's grandfather, a strong proponent of prohibition shows up unannounced at the country house during one of the parties. Disgusted by Anthony's indulgence in alcohol, Adam Patch disinherits his grandson. When Adam Patch dies shortly thereafter, it is revealed that his secretary, Shuttleworth, has replaced Anthony as heir.

Anthony and Gloria cannot conceive of a more moderate lifestyle and are soon sustaining themselves on cashed-in bonds. The dynamic of their marriage is frenetic, moving quickly back and forth between commiseration and irritation with one another. When Anthony goes south to an army training camp, they both feel a sense of freedom from one another. Anthony has an affair with Dorothy Raycroft while on the army base. Almost immediately after beginning the affair, however, he can only think of Gloria. The war ends before Anthony can be deployed (though he may never have been deployed anyway due to his poor performance as a soldier), and he returns to Gloria with a passion that soon settles back into its old, unhappy patterns.

Gloria's discovery that she has waited too long to become an actress and is too old to play a leading lady is a devastating blow. Combined with Anthony's inability to hold a steady job or to get any short stories published for money, the sense of creeping age convinces Gloria that though she is only thirty years old, she has no future and may as well resign herself to dying. The only hope that sustains her and Anthony is that after enough appeals, perhaps their lawsuit to have Anthony's inheritance reinstated will eventually succeed. One night, after Gloria has melodramatically suggested that they move to Europe for three years and then “just die,” Anthony begins naming people who might lend them more money. Bloeckman's name comes up, and Gloria tells Anthony that they can't borrow from Bloeckman because he set up the screen test at which she was told she looked too old to play a lead actress.

Later that evening, Anthony gets drunk and pretends to have forgotten his wallet because he does not have the money to pay his bill. Stumbling through the street, he runs into his estranged best friend, Maury Noble. When even Maury does not allow him to ask for a loan, Anthony becomes agitated and decides to confront Bloeckman. He finds him at an elite club and gets in a fistfight with him. Eventually, Bloeckman throws him out on the street. A passerby puts him in a cab, but he is also thrown out of

the cab because he has no money. Anthony stumbles home and reflects that he does not even feel drunk anymore, simply frenzied.

Three weeks later, the final verdict of the lawsuit is to be announced. Gloria goes with Dick to hear it, but Anthony stays behind to await his salvation or total ruination. When the bell rings, he is astonished to see Dorothy, his mistress from the army training base. She has come to New York with the thought of seeing Anthony. Drunk as usual these days, Anthony becomes disoriented and riled up by Dorothy's sudden appearance. He tries to throw a chair at her and instead collapses, passing out. When Gloria and Dick return home with the exciting news that they have won the lawsuit and no longer have to worry about destitution, Anthony is lying incommunicative on the **bathroom** floor, poring over his childhood **stamp collection**.

The final scene of the novel unfolds through the eyes of two onlookers who see Anthony alone on the dock of a ship. As they have heard it, Anthony's mind and body deteriorated following the suicide of Shuttleworth when the inheritance money was revoked from him. Anthony gets the last line, an exclamation that after a long fight with an adversary he names only as "they," he has finally been victorious.

Anthony copes with his distress by drinking to the point of dangerous alcohol dependency. Although the inheritance is finally reinstated, by the tragically young age of 33 Anthony has irreparably damaged his body and mind through his poor decisions, alcoholism, and unwillingness to exercise his talents.

Gloria Gilbert – Gloria meets Anthony Patch while she and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert, are wintering at The Plaza in New York. The pair shortly begin dating, and within a few months they decide to marry one another. This marriage takes place much to the chagrin of Gloria's other suitors, especially the movie producer Joseph Bloeckman. Anthony initially finds himself attracted to Gloria because of the way she spends her days and nights out on the town on the dime of all these suitors. He admires that, in a sense, she is a professional beauty. In fact, Fitzgerald introduces Gloria to the novel shortly after interrupting the narrative with a dramatic scene that sets up the reincarnation of Beauty personified as a Jazz Age society girl like Gloria. Even if Gloria is not this specific society girl, she is at least an iteration of her, making her a copy of Beauty herself. Because Gloria's identity is so bound up with beauty, which is by nature ephemeral, she finds herself growing ever more anxious about her age. As opposed to Anthony, who worries about death, Gloria worries more about living without the bloom of youth. In addition to wanting her body to remain beautiful, she also insists on buying a country house and other objects to craft a beautiful image of her life with Anthony. No matter how much she buys, she is never satisfied. At 29, upon finally realizing that she is too old to be a starring actress and that she and Anthony have spent themselves into a corner, she imagines moving to Europe for a few years and then simply dying rather than finding a way to move through society on any quality other than beauty. In the final scene of the novel, Gloria is curiously absent from Anthony's side. Her disappearance from the novel recalls the scene of Beauty's Jazz Age reincarnation, in which Beauty was told that her time as a society girl would last fifteen years. At the time of the final scene, it has indeed been fifteen years since the reincarnation. Gloria is an embodiment of beauty that sweeps through Anthony's life and leaves him a ruin of his former self.

Adam Patch – Anthony's grandfather, who raised him after Anthony's parents died. Adam Patch fought for the Union in the Civil War and channeled his bitter energy in the wake of the war into making himself a Wall Street millionaire. After an attack of sclerosis at fifty-seven, he suddenly commits himself to combatting what he sees as the immoralities of society. These immoralities include "liquor, literature, vice art, patent medicines, and Sunday theatres." When he discovers that not only is Anthony failing to build a career, but also that he has been using his allowance to host parties with large amounts of alcohol, Adam Patch disinherits his grandson. While he always seemed to recover from his grave illnesses, he finally dies almost immediately after rewriting his will.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Anthony Patch – The protagonist of *The Beautiful and Damned*. Anthony is the grandson of Adam Patch and the suitor and eventual husband of Gloria Gilbert. Many of the supporting characters in the novel, such as Richard Caramel and Maury Noble, are Anthony's former classmates from Harvard. Although Anthony lives the life of a socialite, treating club events and drinking as nearly a profession, he has difficulty making deep personal connections. For example, he considers Maury his best friend but falls out of touch with him for many years after marrying Gloria. Even in his marriage, Anthony frequently isolates himself from Gloria to the point that he pursues an unfulfilling extra-marital affair with Dorothy Raycroft. Anthony's tendency to isolate himself seems to be rooted in his lonely childhood, during which both his parents and his grandmother died. Anthony's aversion to risk fetters his development of any sort of career, which causes him to be financially over-reliant on the grandfather who raised him. Expecting from the age of 22 that he is soon to inherit Adam Patch's fortune, Anthony uses the majority of his income (earned through his mother's inheritance, not through any work he accomplishes) to furnish his lavish wardrobe and apartment. By the end of the novel, Anthony's extravagant spending and lack of work ethic have gotten him into deep financial trouble. Disinherited by his prohibitionist grandfather,

Joseph Bloeckman – Gloria’s most serious suitor besides Anthony. Bloeckman works in the film industry, and Gloria maintains tenuous connections to him after she is married, partly because she is interested in acting and partly because she knows it makes Anthony jealous. Anthony drunkenly tries to confront Bloeckman after Gloria finally auditions for one of his contacts and finds out she is too old to be a leading lady. The encounter ends with Bloeckman throwing Anthony out on the street. Although Bloeckman initially thinks that Gloria’s choice of husband means he has lost to Anthony, this final encounter raises the question of who between them is the actual victor.

Richard Caramel – Attended Harvard along with Anthony Patch and Maury Noble. His friends also refer to him as Dick. Originally from Kansas City, he introduces his cousin Gloria Gilbert to Anthony and Maury when she and her parents visit New York for the winter. Dick shares his college friends’ dream of becoming an author, but he has much more drive than either of them. He is sensitive to their disparaging comments about how he is always working on his novel, *The Demon Lover*. However, by the time they are all in their early thirties, he alone has made a name for himself as a novelist.

Maury Noble – Anthony Patch thinks of Maury as his best friend. They spend most of their time together drinking and making fun of their friend Richard Caramel for taking his work as a writer too seriously. For Maury, unlike Anthony, drinking the day away is a phase that he thinks of as a project he will eventually complete in favor of an actual career. Maury meets Richard’s cousin Gloria Gilbert and becomes fixated on her before Anthony does, but his feeling that he is not suited to a fun love affair with a flapper prevents him from calling her. Once Anthony decides to marry Gloria, Maury becomes more and more absent from the narrative. He only appears again in the climactic sequence when Anthony must drunkenly beg him for money. His embarrassment to be seen speaking to Anthony suggests that their friendship, if it was ever real, has dissolved.

Dorothy Raycroft – The woman with whom Anthony has an affair while he is away training for the army. Much like his interest in Gloria, his initial obsession with Dorothy dissipates once they are involved with one another. She begins threatening suicide to keep his attention. The climax of the novel ends with Dorothy showing up at Anthony’s New York apartment. He attempts to attack her with a chair but passes out. When he comes to, she is gone.

Mrs. Gilbert – Gloria’s mother. When Anthony meets Mrs. Gilbert, he is struck by what seems to be a complacency that has developed out of decades of submission to her husband. She is most enthusiastic about Bilphism, a religion of Fitzgerald’s creation that is concerned with the reincarnation of the soul. After Mrs. Gilbert dies, Gloria becomes ever more preoccupied with Bilphism.

Shuttleworth – Adam Patch’s secretary, Shuttleworth replaces

Anthony as the heir to the Wall Street tycoon’s fortune. When Anthony and Gloria win their lawsuit to have the inheritance reinstated, Shuttleworth reportedly dies of suicide in a hotel room. This death echoes the death of Anthony’s father, which he witnessed at age eleven, and is said to break Anthony’s sanity.

Tana – Anthony and Gloria’s Japanese servant at their country house. Given Fitzgerald’s use of the novel to make social critiques, it is worth noting that Tana is one of the only people of color to speak in the novel. Fitzgerald writes the little dialogue he has as thickly accented and broken sentences.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Mr. Gilbert – Gloria’s father. Like Bloeckman, he has ties to the film industry that might contribute to Gloria’s flirtation with the idea of being a starlet. He often finds himself frustrated with Gloria because she is more difficult to control than Mrs. Gilbert.

Bounds – Anthony’s servant at his city apartment.

Muriel Kane – Gloria’s friend. Muriel is depicted as rather unintelligent and less fashionable than Gloria.

Rachael Jerryl – Gloria’s friend. Rachael is described as a “Jewess” who tries to imitate Gloria.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



WEALTH AND WASTE

In *The Beautiful and Damned*, Anthony Patch and Gloria Gilbert fall victim to their wealth. Born into a social class that promises unconditional financial security and the leisure to pursue fruitless projects, they conduct their lives with the expectation that their poor work ethic and imprudent financial decisions won’t cost them wealth, respect, or happiness. However, when Anthony’s disinheritance by his grandfather, Adam Patch, robs the couple of their financial security, they find themselves in a trap: having grown up rich, Anthony and Gloria lack the financial sense and work ethic that could repair their financial standing, leaving them to undertake an embarrassing lawsuit—one that loses them respect in their community—to restore their wealth. Fitzgerald sums up his message about wealth and ruin in the epigraph of his novel, “The victor belongs to the spoils.”

Anthony’s total financial dependence on his grandfather makes him a financial “victor” among his peers during his youth.

However, his early sense that he has won prosperity cripples his ability to develop financial independence, and he wastes the potential of his early head-start. Anthony goes to Harvard, uses his grandfather's money and mother's inheritance to travel abroad, and rents a luxurious apartment in New York on an allowance from the same sources. His privileged youth allows him to make potentially-valuable social connections with other Harvard-educated men, but since he knows that he has his allowance and inheritance to fall back upon, Anthony lacks the motivation and discipline to use his elite education or social connections. Instead of writing the book he hopes to publish, he spends his days drinking with his friend Maury, another lazy aspiring writer, and making fun of their friend Richard for working incessantly on his own novel. When Anthony's grandfather disinherits Anthony, however, Anthony has no job and no success as a writer upon which to fall back. He and Gloria have become accustomed to an expensive lifestyle that might be supported by an established career but that would be difficult to maintain on an entry-level wage. Even when Anthony attempts to work as a salesman, his drinking and lack of discipline quickly derail his success, and he only regains his stability through an immoral and embarrassingly public lawsuit against the man who inherited his grandfather's money.

As Anthony and his friends move further into adulthood, their lives diverge tellingly. Anthony's descent into alcoholism and his failure as a writer contrasts with Richard's slow but steady literary success and Maury's gradual settling into a comfortable but unspectacular life. The growing contrast between Anthony and his friends emphasizes that it's Anthony's sense of entitlement that has derailed his life—after all, Richard worked hard for his success, and Maury (unlike Anthony) pulled himself out of the carousing phase of his life years ago in order to become a responsible adult. Anthony's entitlement leads him to lose the respect of his community—even strangers recognize Anthony as the infamous man who lost his mind and bodily integrity to alcoholism following the suicide of Shuttleworth, the secretary he sued for his grandfather's money—but importantly, Anthony's financial stability is restored through the lawsuit, allowing him and Gloria to live out their lives without knowing the utter ruin for which they seemed destined. Through this fate, Fitzgerald satirizes the society that allows this couple to skate by on dumb luck. The American class system endows them with spoils that hinder their development into responsible adulthood. Despite all the unhappiness they endure as a result, their victory in the lawsuit perpetuates the promise that young socialites can emerge victorious, despite wasting their potential and succumbing to foolishness and immorality.

wealthy. Those who are already wealthy dream of becoming wealthier, to the point of each standing out as the single millionaire tycoon in the crowd. Fitzgerald is uneasy about the way the wealthy, who have never had to work for anything, can so easily misread the possibility of greatness as the promise of greatness. Anthony Patch and Gloria Gilbert exemplify the cycle of dissatisfaction created by society's normalization of constantly dreaming of a bigger and better life without making concrete plans to achieve it.

Although Anthony and Gloria begin life near the top of the social ladder, they always desire more. These aspirations, however, always come at a cost. For example, Gloria tells Anthony that she envisions them living in a little gray country house, so they rent one, in addition to maintaining their apartment in the city. Though they know that they do not have the money to rent two homes, they nonetheless find themselves drunkenly renewing their second lease, placing themselves in financial jeopardy for a dream of country life that neither of them even seems to enjoy. This inability to temper desire in favor of practical reality is also apparent in Anthony and Gloria's drinking. The young couple wants to live in the thick of high society, but Anthony's grandfather, Adam Patch, has prohibitionist politics and his money is their main source of income. Despite knowing that Adam disapproves, Anthony and Gloria continue to rely on his money to host extravagant parties with copious amounts of alcohol, which leads the couple to the brink of financial ruin when Adam disinherits them. However, even after Anthony's grandfather revokes his money, Anthony and Gloria cannot conceive of a reality in which they must sacrifice any of the things they want. They continue to make extravagant purchases, banking on the hope that they will win a lawsuit for the inheritance money instead of reining in their lifestyle in accordance with their means.

In addition to Anthony and Gloria's inability to make their desires match their means, they also are unable to understand that in order to achieve their ambitions, they must work hard and make sacrifices. Gloria wishes she were an actress. She hopes that by hanging on the arm of Joseph Bloeckman, a film producer, she will somehow become a movie star. Even after marrying Anthony, she continues to hope that she will achieve her dream by simple association with Bloeckman. But eight years pass before she finally attempts a screen test. Told that she is past the age of a young starlet, she gives up the dream rather than trying to realize it in a way other than how she had imagined. Likewise, aspiring writer Anthony is easily deterred when the few stories he submits for publication are rejected. Rather than rewriting them and working at improving his craft, he decides that he will have better luck as a salesman—that is, until salesmanship also fails to bring him instant success. At each of these moments, Anthony has an opportunity to use his talents and resources to build a career. However, because he sees the world as full of endless opportunity, he convinces



DREAMS AND REALITY

The America Fitzgerald depicts in *The Beautiful and Damned* is obsessed with the dream of becoming

himself that there must be an easier, more comfortable career available, if he could only stumble upon it. Consequently, he ends up with no career at all. By contrast, Richard Caramel writes daily from a young age, even through his early days of mediocre reception. His commitment to a plan, coupled with his understanding that he will not receive success as a handout, leads him to a respectable literary career that is getting underway just as Anthony and Gloria are most dejected about their own careers.

Perhaps the most damning aspect of Anthony and Gloria's inability to match desire with reality is that even when they do attain what they want, they tire easily of it. They seem doomed never to enjoy or make use of the pleasures they seek, even as this pursuit ruins their lives. Immediately after their wedding, for example, Anthony and Gloria experience buyer's remorse with one another. Gloria finds Anthony cowardly for refusing to drive too fast, and Anthony finds Gloria flighty for neglecting domestic tasks like sending out the laundry. Their eagerness to attain each other as life partners without knowing one another better leads directly to their dissatisfaction in marriage. Similarly, while he's away from home for military training, Anthony fixes his attention on Dorothy as his mistress—but as soon as he forms an attachment with her, he can think only of Gloria. Dorothy's threats of suicide to maintain Anthony's attention demonstrate that after their initial encounter, his interest in her is only piqued by the idea that he might lose her. At the end of the novel another dream is achieved as Anthony and Gloria win their lawsuit. Gloria is initially gleeful, but Anthony appears alone in the final scene, physically crippled and perhaps mentally unstable. The couple does not appear to have used their newfound money to rebuild their life together. Rather, the money has funded Anthony's further spiral into alcoholism and isolation from his wife.

The presence of characters such as Richard Caramel—who works hard and achieves his dream of becoming a successful writer—suggests that it is possible to navigate the society Fitzgerald is criticizing without falling prey to unrealistic expectations about dreams and reality. Still, the economic order in which Anthony and Gloria exist offers too many opportunities and too many shortcuts. If one dream fails, there is always another waiting to be taken. As a result, the couple doesn't learn from their mistakes. They remain convinced that true fulfillment of the American dream involves not a day of work, and contentment thus remains forever just out of their grasp.



IMMATURITY AND WISDOM

It is not until after Anthony Patch has reached financial ruin, cheated on his wife, and turned to alcoholism that he begins to understand the consequences of his irresponsible decision-making as a young man. By this time, he can no longer decide to save his money,

remain a faithful husband, or drink responsibly, because the damage is already done. Similarly, Gloria Gilbert's naïve youth, which she already mourns at the young age of 22, leads her to reckless decisions she later regrets. The loss of youth brings both characters wisdom that would only have been useful when they were younger, a tragic irony that Fitzgerald underscores through the fact that Anthony and Gloria are only in their early 30s when they realize they have wasted their lives.

Anthony and Gloria's particular inability to cope with adulthood is apparent in the lies and self-deceptions they advance about their age. Gloria, who often thinks about her impending birthdays, contradicts the narrator's initial assertion that her birthday is in August when she pushes her birthday back several months, reflecting that she "would be twenty-nine in February." Gloria and Anthony also find it incredibly insulting that Bloeckman's colleague, who conducts a screen test for Gloria, wants to cast her as a 30-year-old character when she is only 29. Following Gloria's mental gymnastics about the timing of her birthday, she may in fact be 30 after all. These petty deceptions betray Anthony and Gloria's desperation to deny even the slightest signifiers of aging, showing how central their immature desire to deny the realities of adulthood has become to their lives and psyches.

Although most of the characters of the novel are young, many of them worry that time is slipping away from them. Rather than work toward goals, they stall for time in the hope that adult fulfillment will happen upon them. Soon after Anthony meets Gloria, she tells him that she does not want the responsibility of marriage or children. She says that she would like to be 18 from now on, instead of acknowledging her actual age of 22. Her request for a gum drop and her statement that, "I'm always whacking away at one – whenever my daddy's not around" suggests that by sneaking candy, she hopes to remain childlike instead of caring for her own children. Maury, too, is dismayed and befuddled by the onset of adulthood. He worries that he has not accomplished his intended goals in the intervening years since graduating from Harvard. Paralyzed by his anxiety, he spends his time discussing Dick's novel instead of rising to adulthood by working on his own writing projects. However, Maury's discomfort with his increasing age separates him from Anthony, who is unable to admit that, at 26, he should be making solid strides toward a career. Maury exits the party scene that Gloria and Anthony still inhabit, distancing himself from the youthful exploits of his friends and thereby managing to reappear later on as a composed and moderately successful man from whom a drunken Anthony must beg for money.

Despite their attempts to convince themselves that they can remain forever young, Anthony and Gloria are relentlessly haunted by an unreasonable fear of death. In the direst of financial straits, Gloria tells Anthony that they should move to Italy for three years and then "just die." Her realization that their extravagant lifestyle is untenable without a steady income

convinces her not that they should reduce their expenditures, but rather that their poor financial decisions have shortened their lives. Her misconception that old age has been thrust upon her ironically demonstrates that there is immaturity even in her wise realization that she and Anthony are in financial trouble. At the end of the novel, Gloria and Dick find Anthony on the **bathroom** floor, poring over his exotic **stamp collection**, which he started during childhood as a “diversion” from his worries about death. Dick’s joking comment about whether Anthony is returning to childhood underscores both the absurdity and the tragedy of Anthony’s preoccupation with this relic from his youth. He is so distracted by the feeling that death is near that he retreats into the past, and into his imagination of far-off places, rather than enjoying the present while he is alive.

It is true that Anthony and Gloria make immature choices they cannot retract later in life. However, their preoccupation with lost time makes a self-fulfilling prophecy of their fear about premature aging. Once they realize that their lives are passing them by, they find themselves caught between nostalgia and mortality, with no room left for the adulthood that is supposed to fall between childhood and old age.



BEAUTY AND SELF-SABOTAGE

As the title “The Beautiful and Damned” suggests, Fitzgerald takes a skeptical view of beauty. His critique of beauty follows the conventions of

nineteenth-century realist authors, such as George Eliot and Gustave Flaubert, who criticized beauty for distracting from more important societal issues, like poverty. Published in 1922, *The Beautiful and Damned* integrates the realists’ unease about beauty into a depiction of twentieth-century American high society. The socialites at the story’s center become so preoccupied with the material beauty that governs the lives of Jazz-Age elites that they lose track of what it means to live moral, productive lives.

By incorporating references to Plato’s *Symposium* into the novel, Fitzgerald folds the philosophical discourse of beauty into his rendering of Anthony and Gloria’s misadventures in high society. *The Symposium*, a classical work that has influenced many writers on the subjects of love and beauty, tells the tale of a dinner party among several great thinkers. Over the course of the evening, each thinker offers an opposing viewpoint on love and desire. Ultimately, Plato’s text is ambivalent about the morals of loving beautiful objects. Fitzgerald structures his novel around this ambivalence, gradually moving from an optimistic to a pessimistic outlook on beauty. In the early days of marriage, Gloria tells Anthony uncertainly, “mother says that two souls are sometimes created together and – and in love before they’re born.” The idea that love is the divine reunion of two souls comes directly from Aristophanes’ speech in *The Symposium*. Like the follow-up

speeches in Plato’s text, both Gloria’s hesitation and the laugh with which Anthony responds undermine Gloria’s suggestion that their attraction is divinely ordained. What’s more, the central chapter of *The Beautiful and Damned* is entitled “Symposium.” This chapter title not only references Plato’s work, but also places it at the heart of Fitzgerald’s novel. The uncertainty about beauty that characterizes *The Symposium* is thus central to the novel’s philosophical arc. However, the ambivalence of the chapter “Symposium” contrasts with the more certainly pessimistic title of the novel as a whole. Gloria and Anthony’s beauty, and their moneyed insulation from more practical concerns, “damns” them to yield to their attraction to each other and to the image of wealth. Their marriage grows ever-more unstable, both emotionally and financially, as they attempt to supplement the ugliness of their relationship with a second residence and other beautiful objects of excess.

The insidiousness of beauty hinders the characters’ ability to behave admirably, as both Anthony and Gloria conflate self-worth with their own ever-fading attractiveness instead of with moral goodness or societal contribution. Having failed to achieve fame as a young writer, Anthony reflects that marrying Gloria will make him feel young and more handsome than ever. However, youth and handsomeness cannot endure the way a marriage or a career must. Anthony fails to achieve a productive career or a successful marriage because he fundamentally misunderstands the moral commitment each requires. Gloria’s concern for her personal beauty stunts her career, as well. Instead of pursuing her goal of acting, she spends her youth wishing she were even younger and flirting with the idea of what might have been had she married film producer Joseph Bloeckman. By the time she decides to audition for an acting role, she is already too old to play her dream role of leading lady. She begins obsessively using face creams in the hope that they will reverse the aging process, but her efforts are too little, too late. Though early on Anthony and Gloria imagine the possibility of children, Gloria comes to fear motherhood as a “menace to her beauty.” Gloria’s maternal ambivalence constitutes a bold statement in the context of early 20th-century America. The elite class, which allows ladies like Gloria to hold domestic roles rather than working, is diminishing in power. Gloria relishes her own beauty over motherhood, which many around her would consider not only the moral duty of all women, but also part of her social duty to conserve the American aristocracy. Her preoccupation with her beauty thus contributes to what Fitzgerald depicts as the downfall of her own social class.

Gloria and Anthony’s obsessive desire to be beautiful and to possess beautiful things is symptomatic of their elite position in society. Although they squander their wealth, they belong to a social class that promises them a life of beauty and leisure. The fact that they have not been conditioned to worry about more pressing issues, such as earning enough money to buy food or

to pay for their education, leaves them vulnerable to the obsessiveness beauty can inspire in the onlooker. The America Fitzgerald depicts places such a premium on beauty that gifted young people spend their lives as narcissists and magpies, not only neglecting social realities, but also destroying much of what they touch.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



ANTHONY'S BATHROOM

Anthony considers his luxurious bathroom to be a sanctuary—he retreats there often to hide or recover from his relatively easy life. Therefore, the bathroom represents Anthony's futile attempts to hide from reality. His bathtub has a book stand so that he can read there, and the floor has a plush carpet that cups his bare foot in such a way that he walks on a literal cushion of riches. The wall bears a picture of the sun shining on a snowy landscape, which Anthony likens to the cold shower head. His preference for warm baths over cold showers is significant because baths often symbolize the womb. The fact that Anthony's mother died young, and the way he uses long baths to escape from the realities of adulthood and mortality, suggests that his retreats into the bathtub are also retreats into an infantile state of safety and insulation that was taken from him too young. Throughout the novel, Anthony does not want to give up his apartment and he even worries about sharing his beloved bathroom with Gloria. However, the more he clings to the comfort it offers, the clearer it becomes that the bathroom offers only illusory protection from the harsh realities of adulthood. The wardrobe full of fancy clothes represents both wealth and the false performance of wealth through costume, while the pictures of beautiful actresses on the walls are only the image of fame and happiness, reinforcing that, to Anthony, fame and happiness are only a dream.

The climactic scene of the novel resolves with Anthony on the bathroom floor with his **stamp collection**, completely out of touch with reality and unable to understand when Gloria tells him that they have won their lawsuit. The scene complicates Anthony's hedonistic enjoyment of his lush carpet. The carpet may represent wealth and entitlement, but it is the only layer between Anthony's body and the cold, hard bathroom floor. The bathroom thus embodies the irony of Anthony's life: while on the one hand the room seems a fortress of solitude, it is simultaneously a chamber of isolation in which Anthony imprisons himself, arresting his own personal growth.



THE STAMP COLLECTION

Anthony's stamp collection represents the paralyzing effect of his fear of maturity and death. Anthony experienced the deaths of several family members at a young age, including both of his parents and his grandmother. Afterwards, living at his grandfather's house, Anthony developed escapist habits to cope with the overwhelming feeling that death was waiting for him at every corner. One of these habits was collecting stamps, a hobby (or, at times, a compulsion) that has persisted into his adulthood. The stamps represent for him all the exotic places in the world to which he could travel to escape his own daily existence, though he never develops concrete plans to go to any of the destinations, apart from his brief travel in Europe after graduating from Harvard. What's more, to go abroad would be unequivocally foolish given Anthony's constantly dwindling finances. For the most part, it is enough for him to dwell on the stamps because when he is focusing on dreams of the far-away, his mind is set free from reality. Anthony keeps his stamp collection in his apartment. It does not make frequent appearances in the narrative, but it comes back at the climax of the novel. Home alone while Gloria hears the verdict of their lawsuit, Dorothy Raycroft, Anthony's former mistress, shows up at the apartment. He attempts to throw a chair at her, but she makes her escape when he passes out drunk. When Gloria returns with Dick, Anthony has come to and pulled out his stamp collection on the **bathroom** floor. Incommunicative, Anthony has traveled through the stamp collection back to a preverbal, infantile state.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Vintage edition of *The Beautiful and Damned* published in 1922.

Chapter 1 Quotes

☛ In 1913, when Anthony Patch was twenty-five, two years were already gone since irony, the Holy Ghost of this later day, had, theoretically at least, descended upon him. Irony was the final polish of the shoe, the ultimate dab of the clothes-brush, a sort of intellectual "There!" – yet at the brink of this story he has as yet gone no further than the conscious stage.

Related Characters: Anthony Patch

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 3

Explanation and Analysis

The opening lines of the novel, this quote establishes that irony will be of utmost important throughout the book. To Anthony, irony is the new “Holy Ghost,” meaning that it is all-permeating and ever-present. What’s more, it’s suggested that people like Anthony in this “later age” of his society have the same unshakeable faith with which a Catholic believes in the Holy Ghost. This belief in itself is ironic because irony is a kind of deception by which things are something other than what they seem. To believe in irony is thus to believe in falsehood.

Further, the idea that this all-encompassing irony suddenly descended precisely two years ago seems at odds with the permanence and gravity of a force like the Holy Ghost for Catholics. This discord foreshadows how unstable Anthony will be in all of his convictions as the novel progresses. The idea that Anthony is still only in the “conscious stage” of his commitment to irony sets up at the outset of the novel a distinction between ideology and action. Anthony can profess, even to himself, to live according to an ironic belief system, but that does not mean that he manages to translate this belief system into his actions.

☞ ...[T]o Anthony life was a struggle against death, that waited at every corner. It was a concession to his hypochondriacal imagination that he developed the habit of reading in bed – it soothed him. He read until he was tired and often fell asleep with the lights still on.

Related Characters: Anthony Patch

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 6

Explanation and Analysis

Describing Anthony’s early encounters with death, first of his parents and then of his grandmother, the narrator establishes that Anthony’s escapist tendencies are rooted in the self-soothing tactics he developed as a child to cope with anxiety.

This quote does not excuse Anthony’s inability to deal with reality as the story goes on, but it does establish that his upbringing has everything to do with his shortcomings as a character. He has reason to be anxious about death. However, the fact that his rich grandfather neglected to care for him emotionally but allowed him to self-soothe in this way has set Anthony up for great difficulty dealing

head-on with adult problems, both practical and emotional.

☞ One of those men devoid of the symmetry of feature essential to the Aryan ideal, he was yet, here and there, considered handsome – moreover, he was very clean, in appearance and in reality with that especial cleanness borrowed from beauty.

Related Characters: Anthony Patch

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 8

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator describes Anthony Patch at the moment the story begins, in 1913. He is twenty-five years old and coming into his own. It has already been established that Anthony sets a great deal of store by appearances; for years, he has been a connoisseur of dandy’s clothing and carefully grooms himself so that he looks, if not fashionable, at least distinctive.

Because Anthony is invested in looks and the image he projects to the rest of society, it is important to consider the beauty standards of the society in which he exists. Fitzgerald wrote the novel in the intervening years between World Wars I and II, when rhetoric around the “Aryan ideal” was building into what would eventually become the ideology the Nazi party used to justify the genocide of the Holocaust. Fitzgerald’s comparison of Anthony to the Aryan ideal thus has a significant cultural valence. Anthony fails to embody this cookie-cutter, symmetrical standard of beauty, but his failure also marks him as somewhat unique in his features. This uniqueness plays into Anthony’s sense of himself as existing on a parallel and superior plane to the masses, but it also contributes to his shortcomings and his own anxieties about living up to social standards.

Chapter 2 Quotes

☞ “Portrait of a Siren”

Related Characters: Gloria Gilbert

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 26

Explanation and Analysis

The title of chapter 2, “Portrait of a Siren” seems to refer to the introduction of Gloria Gilbert to the novel. Dick’s cousin, Gloria appears first through his indirect description of her to Anthony. It takes multiple attempts for Anthony to meet Gloria, so he has an image of her before he knows her. The reader also encounters Gloria through Dick’s description, through Maury’s description, and through Anthony’s imagination. When Anthony finally meets Gloria, he is deeply invested in her clothing and other aspects of her appearance so that Gloria does indeed seem to appear in the novel as a portrait to be gazed upon.

The word “siren” evokes the mythological figure of the siren, a beautiful woman (or, in some cases, a monster) who sings and lures passing sailors, such as Homer’s Odysseus, off course and to their deaths. Dick explains to Anthony that Gloria is a society girl, suggesting that she attracts a decent amount of male attention. When Maury independently describes meeting and becoming infatuated with Gloria, it seems that she does have the kind of indiscriminate power over men that sirens possess. Anthony thinks of himself as separate from the masses, and possibly immune to such effects as Gloria’s wiles. However, throughout the chapter, the reader sees Anthony become ever more deeply infatuated with her. Fitzgerald’s use of the siren figure to describe Gloria, and the fact that sirens notoriously cause shipwrecks, suggests that there is imminent disaster in Anthony’s future as a result of his susceptibility to Gloria.

While it seemed to him that the average débutante spent every hour of her day thinking and talking about what the great world had mapped out for her to do during the next hour, any girl who made a living directly on her prettiness interested him enormously.

Related Characters: Gloria Gilbert, Richard Caramel, Anthony Patch

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 29

Explanation and Analysis

Dick has just told Anthony about his cousin, a girl named Gloria Gilbert, who is visiting from Kansas City. Anthony tells Dick that he does not care for young girls, but immediately thereafter reflects, through the narrator’s voice, that this is not a true statement. In fact, he admires girls who manage to get by without doing anything except being pretty.

Anthony’s admiration of girls who make a living on their beauty reflects both his desire not to work and his obsession with his own good looks. His desire of beautiful women goes beyond simple heterosexual desire; he does not just want these girls but rather wants to be like them. What’s more, his derision for a mapped-out schedule demonstrates that he has a fear of time. He does not want to live a life that is subject to such rigidly structured time in part because he does not want time to pass him by, taking his youth and beauty with it.

Anthony does not require much introspection at all to tell himself that he admires beautiful women in this way, but he nevertheless says otherwise to Dick. His compulsion to feign disinterest belies his investment in how he appears to others. In fact, he prioritizes an appearance of aloofness over honesty in his friendship with Dick.

“...[Dick] says the biography of every woman begins with the first kiss that counts, and ends when her last child is laid in her arms...He says unloved women have no biographies – they have histories.”

Related Characters: Gloria Gilbert (speaker), Anthony Patch, Richard Caramel

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 53

Explanation and Analysis

On their first date, Anthony jokes that Gloria seems to love talking about herself. He imagines that her autobiography would be “a classic.” Gloria responds by telling Anthony that according to Dick, only women who are loved by men can have biographies. Otherwise, they have histories.

The contrast Dick has reportedly made between, on the one hand, a mother who has had a “kiss that counted,” and on the other hand, an “unloved” woman is a loaded idea: Dick thinks that women rely not only on men but also on motherhood to lead “loved” existences. Additionally, Dick seems to have made a value judgment about loved and unloved women. Only loved women are deserving of the romantically constructed stories contained in biographies, he implies. Unloved women’s lives can only be recounted as a series of events with no extra sense of fancy or narrative impetus.

Gloria’s choice to parrot Dick instead of responding to Anthony with her own thoughts demonstrates the extent to which Gloria is influenced by others, especially when it

comes to others' opinions of her. She is unsure whether she deserves the autobiography Anthony mentions because Dick has told her there are certain qualifications, which she feels she might not meet. This quote, situated within a chapter entitled, "Portrait of a Siren," demonstrates the tension between the fact that Gloria is at the center of intensely focused male attention—like what the sirens of Homer's *Odyssey* experience—and the fact that she ultimately feels that she might be unloved. It also introduces the maternal ambivalence that will plague Gloria throughout the novel. Over the next several years, Gloria will dwell on how to craft a romantic story for herself that does not rely on motherhood.

even rejects the company of others who might make him feel better. Fitzgerald might want the reader to sympathize with Anthony for his mental issues, but he also wants the reader to see how foolish Anthony is for thinking that he is somehow special and exempt from the time and rules that govern the rest of the world around him.

●● Her eyes appeared to regard him out of many thousand years: all emotion she might have felt, all words she might have uttered, would have seemed inadequate beside the adequacy of her silence, ineloquent against the eloquence of her beauty—and of her body, close to him, slender and cool.

Chapter 3 Quotes

●● There was one of his lonelines coming, one of those times when he walked the streets or sat, aimless and depressed, biting a pencil at his desk. It was a self-absorption with no comfort, a demand for expression with no outlet, a sense of time rushing by, ceaselessly and wastefully—assuaged only by that conviction that there was nothing to waste, because all efforts and attainments were equally valueless.

Related Characters: Anthony Patch

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 79

Explanation and Analysis

Anthony has just seen an usher named Geraldine out of his apartment. Geraldine has bet him that he will be married within the year, and Anthony has protested that such a plan would be impractical financially. He claims that he never intends to get married. However, in between casual encounters with Geraldine, Anthony has been seeing Gloria. As he says goodbye to Geraldine, there is a sense that Anthony has realized he does not have the financial means to support Gloria should they decide to get married.

The fact that Anthony sees his company out just as the loneliness descends upon him suggests that he tends to self-isolate. Although Anthony seems to display signs of anxiety and depression, Fitzgerald's characterization of him invites the reader to think of Anthony as a self-saboteur, who places himself in situations that make him feel helpless. In this case, he convinces himself that marriage is an option despite knowing it is an untenable arrangement in his current state, and he convinces himself that somehow his situation will improve if he just sits and lets time pass, and

Related Characters: Anthony Patch, Gloria Gilbert

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 88

Explanation and Analysis

Still in the beginning stages of their romance, before their engagement, Anthony and Gloria have left all their friends behind at a party to go in search of gum drops for Gloria. They are riding around in a taxi, and Anthony kisses Gloria. She says nothing while he regards her. When she finally does interrupt the narrator's description of Anthony's thoughts on her beauty, it is to ask that they return to the party.

Anthony's lack of interest in Gloria's potential words, and his notion that she is connected to something many thousand years old, indicates that he is less interested in Gloria's individual person than in some greater romantic ideal she represents. Her beauty and her body speak more to him than her words ever could. He is not even interested in the emotion she might be feeling—it all seems secondary to her physical appearance, which to him seems inspired by an ancient force. Because of this, he prefers her silence to her speech, since when she speaks she necessarily becomes an individual person, rather than an ideal of beauty to be gazed on and admired.

The quote recalls the passage in chapter one in which one iteration of "Beauty" was introduced to earth as a flapper. Fitzgerald acknowledges that Gloria might have words or emotions, but to Anthony, these marks of interiority are less important than her role as a beautiful girl. The result is that even though she does not want to be in the "scene" at all, her desire to go back to the party is made narratively secondary to Anthony's fascination with how she looks.

Her arms fell to her side. In an instant she was free.

Related Characters: Anthony Patch, Gloria Gilbert

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 97

Explanation and Analysis

After one of their first afternoons together, Gloria and Anthony return to the hotel room where Gloria is living with her parents. They talk for a while, and then Anthony kisses her. It is their second kiss, their first having taken place in the taxi they took while away from the party with their friends. Again, it is Anthony who initiates the kiss.

Gloria's reaction starts out similarly to her reaction to the first kiss – that is, she barely reacts at all but rather goes limp, becoming completely passive. However, in this moment, becoming “instantly free,” she tells Anthony that no, she does not want to kiss him. In fact, she repeats her refusal several times, eventually banishing him from the hotel room. The moment seems to mark a turning point for both her character and for her relationship with Anthony. She transitions from passive object of beauty and affection to active player in the relationship.

It is unclear what exactly Fitzgerald means when he writes that, “In an instant she was free.” Does she become free an instant after her arms fall to her side? Is she free for only the span of an instant? Regardless, it seems that the kiss in some way breaks Gloria out of a cage of passiveness. Ironically, she must be objectified in order to gain subjectivity. The power dynamic in this moment foreshadows the friction that will characterize Anthony and Gloria's marriage, with Gloria able to assert her will only in opposition to Anthony's.

Chapter 4 Quotes

Always the most poignant moments were when some artificial barrier kept them apart: in the theatre their hands would steal together, join, give and return gentle pressures through the long dark; in crowded rooms they would form words with their lips for each other's eyes—not knowing that they were but following in the footsteps of dusty generations but comprehending dimly that if truth is the end of life happiness is a mode of it, to be cherished in its brief and tremulous moment. And then, one fairy night, May became June. Sixteen days now—fifteen—fourteen—

Related Characters: Gloria Gilbert, Anthony Patch

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 118-19

Explanation and Analysis

Anthony and Gloria are in the midst of their engagement, when they do nothing but daydream about the future. They both have an idealized image of what marriage will be like. In fact, they seem to think that marriage will automatically solve all their problems and rid them of their discontent. They also take for granted that Adam Patch will soon die and that they will inherit all of his money. Most of their daydreams are founded on the notion that they will be rich and able to afford building any kind of household and life they desire.

Fitzgerald offers dreamy descriptions of the young couple's happiness, but in this quote he twists that happiness into something disturbing and worrisome. Their daydreams are so elaborate that they are happier thinking about being with each other than they are actually being with each other. They forget to cherish the moment in which they exist, constantly counting down to the future they believe will be even more fulfilling. There is a tension between the characters' counting down to the future and the narrator's countdown: the characters want the future because it is distant and dreamy, whereas the narrator reminds the reader that the future is rapidly happening upon them, indeed transforming into not a distant future at all but rather a present reality. Fitzgerald suggests that discontent, rather than bliss, is about to dawn on the couple.

...After a moment she found a pencil and holding it unsteadily drew three parallel lines beneath the last entry. Then she printed FINIS in large capitals, put the book back in the drawer, and crept into bed.

Related Characters: Anthony Patch, Gloria Gilbert

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 128

Explanation and Analysis

The night before Anthony and Gloria's wedding, Gloria looks back through her diary, in which she has made note of all the men she has dated since her first kiss at fifteen. She rereads her entries over the past several months, which make clear that Anthony is the man she wants to marry.

However, she tears up over the memory of her first kiss before writing “Finis” at the end of the diary.

Gloria’s need to write an ending to the diary demonstrates that she thinks of her life in terms of a narrative arc that she is trying to write. The arc her diary takes, from first kiss to marriage, contrasts the arc of a woman’s biography as Dick has described it to her. Rather than running from “the first kiss that counts” to motherhood, Gloria structures her diary as a narrative running from her first kiss, which she has told Anthony may or may not have “counted,” to the evening before her wedding.

There is tension between the fact that Gloria is taking the agency to write her own autobiography and the fact that she seems to think the story is now over. Her marriage, if not an end to her life, does serve as an end to her autobiography. She either no longer imagines herself as the author of her own life, or she imagines that a chapter of her life has come to a close. Pessimistically, her choice of the word “finis,” which traditionally appears at the end of novels, emphasizes finality more than it suggests the beginning of a new chapter.

“It’s been mighty funny, this success and all,” said Dick. “Just before the novel appeared I’d been trying, without success, to sell some short stories. Then, after my book came out, I polished up three and had them accepted by one of the magazines that had rejected them before. I’ve done a lot of them since; publishers don’t pay me for my book till this winter.” “Don’t let the victor belong to the spoils.”

Related Characters: Anthony Patch, Richard Caramel (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 162

Explanation and Analysis

Visiting Anthony at his house in Marietta, Richard Caramel reflects on his recent success as a novelist. He tells Anthony that although he was not able to succeed as a short story writer before his novel was published, he has since managed to sell several stories to publishers, tiding him over financially until he is paid for his novel. Anthony’s response, “Don’t let the victor belong to the spoils,” is rephrased as the epigraph of the novel.

This exchange between Richard and Anthony recalls the relationship between Fitzgerald and one of his contemporaries, Ernest Hemingway. Fitzgerald used short

story writing as a means of making ends meet, and Hemingway looked down upon the practice. Anthony’s advice to Richard not to let the victor belong to the spoils suggests that Richard, victorious in the wake of his novel’s publication, should not let his integrity be ruined by the benefits he receives as a result.

Within the novel itself, though, Anthony’s warning is extremely hypocritical because he himself has demonstrated such poor character as a result of the high social status into which he has been born. The maxim thus seems to come to Anthony out of situational convenience more so than a real adherence to this nugget of wisdom. The warning may be motivated by some genuine concern for Dick, but it also demonstrates that Anthony is jealously invested in arresting his friend’s rise to more impressive financial and artistic standing.

Chapter 5 Quotes

“In a moment he would call Tana and they would pour into themselves a gay and delicate poison which would restore them momentarily to the pleasurable excitement of childhood, when every face in a crowd had carried its suggestion of splendid and significant transactions taking place somewhere to some magnificent and illimitable purpose...Life was no more than this summer afternoon; a faint wind stirring the lace collar of Gloria’s dress, the slow baking drowsiness of the veranda...Intolerably unmoved they all seemed, removed from any romantic imminency of action. Even Gloria’s beauty needed wild emotions, needed poignancy, needed death...”

Related Characters: Joseph Bloeckman, Tana, Gloria Gilbert, Anthony Patch

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 184-5

Explanation and Analysis

When Joseph Bloeckman visits Anthony and Gloria in Marietta one afternoon, he discusses the film industry with Gloria while Anthony reflects on how he is bored by his marriage. He once saw Bloeckman as his great romantic rival, but now he is not sure why they were fighting over Gloria.

Anthony’s pull towards alcohol is not simply motivated by a desire to be intoxicated to pass the time. Rather, alcohol provides him with access to a nostalgic past, when possibility abounded that has since been foreclosed.

Anthony feels trapped in his current situation, and indeed his mind dwells on the mundane details of his surroundings rather than on goals toward which he might work. He reflects that although Gloria is still beautiful, her beauty is unappealing in its current, static context. As much as Anthony struggles to deal with wild emotions, poignancy, or death, the safety and calm of summer in the country house makes him desire a dramatic, dangerous context in which to observe and appreciate Gloria's beauty.

☛ She was at the top now and could see the lands about her as successive sweeps of open country, cold under the moon, coarsely patched and seamed with thin rows and heavy clumps of trees...The oppression was lifted now – the tree-tops below her were rocking the young starlight to a haunted doze. She stretched out her arms with a gesture of freedom. This was what she had wanted, to stand alone where it was high and cool.

Related Characters: Maury Noble, Richard Caramel, Anthony Patch, Gloria Gilbert

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 213

Explanation and Analysis

Dick, Maury, and a stranger named Joe Hill come to the house in Marietta one night. Gloria does not trust Joe, but Anthony does not listen to her protestations of his company. She escapes to the bedroom, but Joe finds her there. It seems as though she might be assaulted, so Gloria runs out of the house, seeking high ground and solitude.

Gloria's elevation above the landscape is reminiscent of other moments at which she and Anthony try to position themselves above others. However, in this instance, there is a curious lack of other people on whom Gloria is looking down. This moment seems to be less about her desire to occupy an elevated social position and more about her desire to extract herself from the oppressive environment of society as a whole.

The fact that Gloria's moment of solitude has a backdrop of a party with all of Anthony's friends shows that there are fundamental differences in what she and Anthony want. She has escaped not only from society but also from the domestic scene of her and Anthony's marriage. Additionally, the house party represents a space in which Gloria is the object of several men's desire; she must leave and make it to high ground before the narrator can articulate anything

about "what she had wanted." Within the social environment of her marriage, Gloria is the object rather than the subject of wanting.

Chapter 6 Quotes

☛ Things had been slipping perceptibly. There was the money question, increasingly annoying, increasingly ominous; there was the realization that liquor had become a practical necessity to their amusement – not an uncommon phenomenon in the British aristocracy of a hundred years ago, but a somewhat alarming one in a civilization steadily becoming more temperate and more circumspect. Moreover, both of them seemed vaguely weaker in fibre, not so much in what they did as in their subtle reactions to the civilization about them.

Related Characters: Anthony Patch, Gloria Gilbert

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 239

Explanation and Analysis

Following the raucous party at which the prohibitionist Adam Patch unexpectedly appeared, Anthony and Gloria are waiting in suspense to find out if they will still inherit the old man's money upon his death. They are more aware than ever that their spending and drinking are both out of control, but they are unable to convince themselves to change their ways.

Fitzgerald sets up a conflict between Anthony and Gloria and the specific society in which they exist. Their habits seem to be a holdover from an older world order, but the moment in which they live is one of rapid change. They are not keeping up with this change.

Fitzgerald is critical of Anthony and Gloria, but his emphasis on the conflict between them and society reminds the reader that Fitzgerald's project is an indictment also of a society that promises people like them that they can live as old-world aristocrats. Actually, Fitzgerald asserts, the aristocratic system is crumbling and threatening to take people like Anthony and Gloria down with it.

☛ The phone clicked. Her eyes looking along the floor saw his feet cut the pattern of a patch of sunlight on the carpet. She arose and faced him with a gray, level glance just as his arms folded about her.

"My dearest," he whispered huskily. "He did it, God damn him!"

Related Characters: Anthony Patch (speaker), Anthony Patch, Gloria Gilbert

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 252

Explanation and Analysis

After Adam Patch's death, Anthony and Gloria have difficulty restraining themselves from calling the lawyer of the deceased to find out if they have been cut out of his will. They manage a week before calling and leaving a message. When the phone rings, Gloria falls to the floor in a near-faint while waiting to hear what the lawyer is saying to Anthony. Finally, he hangs up and tells Gloria that indeed, they have been disinherited.

Anthony and Gloria are panicking in this moment, but it is also one of the few moments in which they appear to be a single unit, holding each other while facing a mutual hardship. As much as they desire an easy financial situation, it is not clear that receiving a large inheritance would automatically make them a happy couple. In fact, they often rely on adversity to make their marriage function as any kind of partnership.

This quote makes clear the extent to which Anthony and Gloria have been absorbed by the desire for riches. It has only been a week since Anthony's grandfather died, and the couple ought to be in deep mourning. However, their horror and sense that the sunlight is being blocked from their lives is motivated not by the loss of their family member but rather by the fact that his death has not resulted in the sudden windfall they have been expecting.

☞☞ "The Winter of Discontent"

Related Characters: Anthony Patch, Gloria Gilbert

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 254

Explanation and Analysis

Fitzgerald uses "The Winter of Discontent" as the heading for a section in chapter six that follows Anthony and Gloria through the winter after Adam Patch dies and leaves them nothing. Anthony and Gloria have begun the legal process to sue for the inheritance, but now all they can do is wait. They keep meaning to begin living a more sustainable lifestyle, but they also keep putting off the moment at which they will do so. Meanwhile, the lawsuit progresses slowly,

and they dig themselves deeper into debt.

The title of the section echoes the famous opening monologue from William Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Richard of Gloucester, who has just led his family to victory in the Wars of the Roses, claims that the country is now at end of the "the winter of our discontent." The play then progresses through bloody scene after bloody scene as Richard murders his way to the throne. Emerging from the winter of discontent seems to lead only to even greater tragedy.

By invoking Richard's opening monologue, Fitzgerald suggests that while Anthony and Gloria are about to go through some difficult times, their emergence on the other side will not be the end of the story. In fact, they will likely cause themselves even greater pain.

In *Richard III*, the titular character is portrayed as being detestable and responsible for his own downfall. Some of his misanthropy, which plays into his violent end, is caused by his feeling that society has rejected him because of the abnormal curvature of his spine. Like Richard, Fitzgerald suggests, Anthony and Gloria have been born with a kind of disability—they do not have the work ethic or self-awareness to succeed in the world in which they live. They are partly responsible for their downfall, as Richard was, but a misleading and unforgiving society is also at fault.

Chapter 7 Quotes

☞☞ It occurred to him that all strongly accentuated classes, such as the military, divided men into two kinds: their own kind – and those without. To the clergyman there were clergy and laity, to the Catholic there were Catholics and non-Catholics, to the negro there were blacks and whites, to the prisoner there were the imprisoned and the free, and to the sick man there were the sick and the well. . . So, without thinking of it once in his life-time, he had been a civilian, a layman, a non-Catholic, a Gentile, white, free, and well. . .

Related Characters: Anthony Patch

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 289

Explanation and Analysis

Anthony has just been promoted to corporal—the first time he has advanced in any kind of career. Reflecting on this promotion, he realizes that he has always occupied a privileged class, in almost every aspect of his identity.

The fact that Anthony is only realizing his privilege now

demonstrates both how much he takes his financial and social status for granted, and how late in life he is actually accomplishing the social climbing he has been planning for years. Ironically, he has achieved his promotion only in a military career, in which daily work is closely monitored and unavoidable. His first major career advancement is thus the result of rule-following and conformity rather than personal achievement. Even as he characterizes himself positively as one of the “haves” rather than the nameless masses of “have-nots,” he fails to realize that his current position of privilege has come about through his assimilation with the crowd of soldiers in training rather than any kind of distinction.

☛ Then he found something that made him stop suddenly and sit down on one of the twin beds, the corners of his mouth drooping as though he were about to weep. There in a corner of her drawer, tied with a frail blue ribbon, were all the letters and telegrams he had written her during the year past. He was suffused with happy and sentimental shame.

“I’m not fit to touch her,” he cried aloud to the four walls. “I’m not fit to touch her little hand.”

Nevertheless, he went out to look for her.

Related Characters: Anthony Patch (speaker), Gloria Gilbert

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 308

Explanation and Analysis

Now that an armistice has been called, Anthony has been allowed off-base from the military camp in New York. He has gone to the apartment he shares with Gloria, looking for her, but she is out. He rifles through drawers, looking for signs that Gloria has been having an affair. Instead, he finds a packet she has saved of all the letters and telegrams he has sent while away.

Anthony’s frantic search for signs that Gloria has been having an affair reflects his unease about his own unfaithfulness while at the army training camp. His self-loathing is beginning to take hold, making him feel as though he may in fact not deserve all of the things life has given him—including Gloria. However, he is unable to deny himself contact with her, which he still feels entitled to despite his lament here.

What’s more, Anthony has idealized Gloria during their separation. She appears so perfect to him here that she is an

untouchable image, which he wants all the more for being unrealistic. Although he has never felt this way about Gloria when he is actually in her presence, he is compelled nonetheless to keep pursuing her.

Chapter 8 Quotes

☛ Gloria told over to herself the people who had visited them in the gray house at Marietta. It had seemed at the time that they were always having company – she had indulged in an unspoken conviction that each guest was ever afterward slightly indebted to her. They owed her a sort of moral ten dollars apiece, and should she ever be in need she might, so to speak, borrow from them this visionary currency. But they were gone, scattered like chaff, mysteriously and subtly vanished in essence or in fact.

Related Characters: Anthony Patch, Gloria Gilbert

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 314

Explanation and Analysis

After Anthony’s return to Gloria in New York at the end of chapter 7, chapter 8 begins with a flashback to Gloria’s experience of his absence while he was at the military training camp. After Anthony’s departure, Gloria realized how profoundly alone she was. His absence made obvious to her that her friends had been disappearing for a while.

Gloria’s notion of friendship seems oddly transactional. As if hospitality could purchase friendship, she seems to have been under the impression that simply filling the house in Marietta with people would forge meaningful human bonds. Rather than mutual respect or liking, Gloria thinks of debt as the cornerstone of her relationships. The fact that the so-called friends she thought she “bought” have disappeared demonstrates to her that this capitalist sense of friendship was never real to begin with. However, she remains alone because she does not know how else to make friends. Her worldview has been entirely skewed by her relationship to money, to the extent that even when recognizing that it is wrong, she does not have the tools to replace it.

☞ This was her twenty-ninth birthday, and the world was melting away before her eyes...

“Oh, my pretty face,” she whispered, passionately grieving. “Oh, my pretty face! Oh, I don’t want to live without my pretty face! Oh, what’s happened?”

Then she slid toward the mirror and, as in the test, sprawled face downward upon the floor – and lay there sobbing. It was the first awkward movement she had ever made.

Related Characters: Gloria Gilbert (speaker), Anthony Patch, Joseph Bloeckman

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 349

Explanation and Analysis

After waiting in suspense for several days to find out the result of her screen test, Gloria has just received a letter stating that she is too old to play a young flapper on film, but could be cast instead as an older character. She has avoided telling Anthony about the screen test because she knows he will be jealous that Joseph Bloeckman arranged it for her, and so she experiences this moment of disappointment alone. Gloria seems to believe that it is her twenty-ninth birthday, but this account is at odds with the narrator’s earlier statement that Gloria’s birthday is in August – this is February. Gloria has also thought earlier in the chapter about her approaching birthday. Based on that account, it should not be for another few days.

Gloria is clearly desperate to cling to her youth and beauty, but the issue is more complicated than that. She has already convinced herself that her birthday is six months later than it is so that she will not have to be twenty-nine yet. However, upon receiving the news that she cannot play the flapper she has always wanted to in the movies, she does not cope by convincing herself that her birthday is even later but rather moves it up by a few days. By doing so, she heightens the drama of the moment so that in a way, she is acting as the leading lady in her own life, albeit a tragedy. The tragedy is heightened by the fact that Gloria is alone and cannot tell Anthony about her plight: she has no audience. The narrator emphasizes the futility of Gloria’s acting attempt by calling it her “first awkward movement.”

Chapter 9 Quotes

☞ For a moment he did not doubt that the whole project was entirely natural and graceful. To his distorted imagination Bloeckman had become simply one of his old friends.

Related Characters: Joseph Bloeckman, Anthony Patch

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 375

Explanation and Analysis

Anthony has been out on the town all evening, searching for someone who might lend him money. He is drunk because he has gone to a bar and gotten free alcohol by pretending he forgot his pocketbook. After leaving the bar, he has been snubbed by Maury and even tried waiting for his broker at his home to see if he might be able to get money out of him. Finally, Anthony has decided to track down Bloeckman at a social club to see if he might lend him money.

Anthony has not spoken to Bloeckman in years, and he is even angry with him for dashing Gloria’s hope to become an actress. To go to Bloeckman for money is entirely inappropriate. Fitzgerald draws the reader’s attention to this fact by stating that Anthony’s “distorted imagination” has convinced him to go through with the plan. However, Anthony’s inappropriate behavior is more than a simple social faux pas. His ability to convince himself that Bloeckman is his old friend is symptomatic of a serious misunderstanding of the concept of friendship. He has never been more than a romantic rival with Bloeckman; like his so-called friendships with Dick and Maury, Anthony’s relationship to Bloeckman is somewhat adversarial and involves no close emotional connection at all. If Anthony thinks of Bloeckman as a friend, he must not have many true close relationships.

Part of Anthony’s misunderstanding of friendship is his conflation between it and the financial relationship he has with, for example, his broker. His broker is one person in the list of possible “old friends” from whom Anthony considers borrowing money. He goes to his broker’s house, indicating a misunderstanding of the boundaries between professional and personal relationships. What’s more, he assumes that an “old friend” is bound to lend him money. He does not simply hope that Bloeckman might give him money but, furthermore, convinces himself that asking for the money is “entirely natural and graceful” according to the social script he aspires to perform.

☞ Turning about from the window he faced his reflection in the mirror, contemplating dejectedly the wan, pasty face, the eyes with their crisscross of lines like shreds of dried blood, the stooped and flabby figure whose very sag was a document in lethargy. He was thirty-three-he looked forty. Well, things would be different.

Related Characters: Anthony Patch

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 383-4

Explanation and Analysis

While Gloria and Dick await the final verdict of the lawsuit, Anthony remains at home contemplating what he will do should they win the money. Although he and Gloria have seemed paranoid about their advancing age throughout the novel, it now seems that Anthony might not have been wrong to worry about his age after all, given that he has been rapidly wearing down his body through excessive

drinking.

This moment of self-consciousness mirrors earlier moments in the novel, when Anthony would catch his reflection and marvel over how young and beautiful he looked. Whereas then the brief glimpses assuaged his worries that he might discover his beauty slipping, now he actually sees a face aged beyond its years. As his life has become more and more of a mess, his reckless, unrealistic optimism has grown so that he can recognize that he looks like a disaster but persist in the delusional belief that “things would be different”—as long as the money comes through, presumably.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

The novel opens with the narrator's description of Anthony Patch in 1913, at age 25. Anthony is of the mind that irony, "the final polish of the shoe, the ultimate dab of the clothes-brush, a kind of intellectual 'There!'" is the new Holy Ghost. He alternates between thinking of himself as an oil slick on the water of the world and an exceptional member of society.

For Anthony, irony takes the place of the Holy Ghost, meaning that it is all-encompassing and embedded in the very fabric of the universe. He is aware that he exists in a world that, through fashion and beauty, pretends to be something that it is not—but he participates in this project of performativity. His attempts to be a member of this ironic society make him feel as though, like oil in water, he cannot mix with it. Sometimes this inability to mix makes him feel as though he is a man of superior substance.



At moments when he feels exceptional, Anthony acts agreeable and finds himself the center of attention. He imagines as a matter of course that he will achieve something distinguished and immortalizing without trying, because although he thinks of honor and courage as illusions, he nevertheless believes that he embodies these qualities effortlessly.

Anthony excels the most socially when he thinks of himself as not one of his peers but rather as a superior. His self-image is not based on actual accomplishments but rather on the feeling that he will inevitably achieve great things in the future. He thinks he is wiser than people who value courageous and honorable deeds, though he performs courage and honor only in order to be respected.



The narrator reflects that Anthony enjoys an elevated social status not because he is descended from nobility but because his paternal grandfather, Adam J. Patch, made a fortune on Wall Street after returning home from the Civil War. For many years, Adam Patch spent his energy trying to rid society of alcohol, art, and other seemingly hedonistic preoccupations.

Anthony's position in society is foundational to his character and to the themes Fitzgerald explores throughout the novel. His family is not aristocratic, but they have recently come into enormous amounts of money. With that money comes a ticket into high society and into the inner circle of social influence. Adam Patch has used his influence to try to impose a moral code on the booming post-war economy. Along with his money, Anthony inherits a legacy of social activism.



At the time the story starts, Adam Patch spends less time on social projects and more time dwelling on his dead wife and son and, to an even greater extent, Anthony. Adam's son (Anthony's father) was a successful writer who became depressive following the death of his wife (Anthony's mother). At eleven, Anthony watched his father die in a hotel room in Italy. Anthony's care was thereafter left to his grandfather.

Anthony's grandfather, near the end of his life, is paying attention to Anthony's actions and thinking about how Anthony will carry forward his legacy. The pressure on Anthony is heightened not only by his status as his grandfather's sole heir but also by the fact that his parents died young and disgraceful deaths. Anthony comes from privilege, but he also comes from tragedy.



Anthony grew up terrified of death because of his parents' and grandmother's early demises. He habitually used books and his **stamp collection** as means of escape from his anxiety. Anthony's anxiety led to isolation from his peers. His private tutor convinced him that attending Harvard would help him make valuable connections, but he spent his time there drinking and collecting expensive dandy's clothing that he would wear at home while looking out his window at the passing world. Anthony found that his isolation made him an attractively mysterious figure to his classmates, who placed him on a pedestal.

Anthony graduated in 1909 at age twenty, and spent the following three years dallying around Rome with Harvard acquaintances, including Maury Noble, enjoying art, music, poetry, and sexual exploits. In 1912, Anthony moved home because his grandfather fell ill. He decided to rent an apartment and put off moving permanently abroad until after Adam Patch's death.

Anthony now lives in the most desirable apartment in his building. He thinks of his home as a rung on a giant ladder running from Washington Square to Central Park. The "heart and core of the apartment" are Anthony's bedroom and **bathroom**. Anthony especially loves his bathtub, complete with a bookholder, and thinks of his bathroom as his "pride." His bathroom rug "seemed almost to massage the wet foot emerging from the tub." A servant named Bounds works somewhat begrudgingly for Anthony and two of his neighbors, releasing Anthony from most of his domestic chores.

Anthony visits his broker at least one morning a week. Doing so makes him feel financially responsible and on the brink of millions, even though he habitually spends almost all of his income, which consists entirely of interest on his mother's inheritance and the occasional Christmas check from his grandfather.

Losing his parents young, and especially witnessing his father's death, left lasting impressions on Anthony's ability to socialize. He is most comfortable when he is alone with his imagination and with money to spend. The success he has attained in school has come about at the urging of mentors rather than of his own volition. Even his social success at Harvard is due to others' attraction to the solitary, wealthy image he projects rather than to any bonds he forms with his peers.



Anthony's privileged upbringing and talents set him up to graduate two years younger than most, but he wastes that time and more indulging in exactly the kinds of hedonistic activities against which his grandfather used to campaign. When called home, he thinks of his return to responsibility as a temporary roadblock to a lifelong vacation.



Although Anthony is still living on an allowance and has done very little to earn his high social status, he is proud that he has rented an apartment that gives him a physically elevated position on the ladder of society. His favorite things about the apartment are the most solitary rooms, reflecting his desire to be revered rather than socially connected. His bathroom especially is a sanctuary where he is waited upon and doesn't even have to walk on the cold hard ground.



Knowing that he is doing nothing to earn the money his broker is doling out to him, Anthony convinces himself that simply visiting the broker is the work required for financial success. It is precisely his allowance and the checks from his grandfather that allow him to sustain a childish fantasy of adult financial independence.



The narrator reflects that a year ago, immediately after moving into his apartment, Anthony called his grandfather and was disappointed to discover that he was still alive. He went to visit him and met Edward Shuttleworth, the reformed drinker and gambler who now works as Adam Patch's secretary. Shuttleworth refused to leave the room as Adam Patch confronted his grandson about "doing something" with his life. Anthony interpreted this to mean that he needed to think about the legacy he would leave upon his own death. Despite the old man's physical deterioration, his and Shuttleworth's combined presence cowed Anthony into agreeing to write a history of the Middle Ages before taking his leave. Now, in October 1913, Anthony has lists of chapter titles and sources, but he has written nothing.

The narrator sets the scene: It is a fall afternoon, and Anthony is reading *Erewhon* by his apartment window. He sets the book aside to take a bath before meeting his friends Maury Noble and Dick Caramel for dinner at the Ritz. He admires his body in the mirror. Relaxing in the tub, Anthony reflects that while he and Maury go to the theater after dinner, Dick will probably go home to work on his book. Anthony is glad that he has no plans to work on his own book.

While dressing meticulously after his bath, Anthony notices a woman through the window across the alley. He is totally captivated by her because, he realizes, she is far away. The illusion shatters when she stands and he sees that she is "fat, full thirty-five, utterly undistinguished."

Once Anthony makes his way to the Ritz, he finds only Maury. Maury, the narrator notes, was considered by classmates at Harvard as even more unique and brilliant than Anthony. Anthony considers Maury his best friend and is unusually at ease around him.

Anthony's quiet wish for his grandfather's death reflects Anthony's deep-seated self-interest and sense of isolation. He himself is terrified of death and has seen three parental figures die. And yet, rather than fear for the loss of his grandfather, his closest remaining relative, it only occurs to Anthony to think of the money he stands to inherit from this man. He counts on Adam Patch's imminent death and lacks motivation to make a career for himself because he sees his grandfather as a source of endless money that is essentially already his. In fact, having been morally reformed by Adam Patch, Shuttleworth arguably has a closer personal relationship with the man than Anthony does.



The book Anthony is reading is Samuel Butler's 1872 satire of Victorian society. It is ironic that Anthony would be reading a book that is critical of a societal order when he himself is a character in a book that is critical of society. Whereas criticism of the society in which one exists requires a certain objective distance, Fitzgerald reminds readers of Anthony's shortsighted self-absorption by describing his narcissistic gaze in the mirror and his misguided contempt for Dick's work ethic.



Anthony is obsessed with appearance. Although his own body currently lives up to his beauty expectations, his disgust when the woman across the alley comes into focus suggests that Anthony is destined to be disappointed by the reality of things he wants to be beautiful.



Anthony, who thinks of himself as exceptional, surrounds himself with other exceptional people. The narrator has framed his bond with Maury as less one of affection and more one of respect. The fact that this man is his "best" friend suggests that in selecting his friends, Anthony values mutual respect or admiration over the affectionate bonds that usually form the basis of lasting relationships.



In a passage that Fitzgerald formats like a scene in a play, Anthony and Maury discuss Dick's absence and his devotion to the novel he is writing, *The Demon Lover*. They exchange resentful comments about his talent. When Anthony speculates that eventually Dick will burn out and fail as a writer, Maury tries to redirect conversation. Anthony only stops his bitter comments when Dick finally shows up.

Dick has a bulging paunch and a bulging forehead. He is beginning to go bald. Dick shakes hands with Maury and Anthony and makes light fun of them for drinking and womanizing while he is hard at work. Anthony and Maury meanwhile tease him for overinflating the importance of his work. Art is only meaningful, Maury states, in that it tries to make life less meaningless. The philosophical conversation is cut short by the arrival of the soup, which ends the dramatic scene.

After dinner, Maury and Anthony go to a play. Anthony notices above all the varied clothing ensembles of the audience members and the "artificial lake of laughter" in the theatre. Maury goes dancing after the play, leaving Anthony to walk home alone. On the way, his senses are overloaded by the sights, sounds, and smells of the city. His mood fluctuates rapidly in response to his surroundings. Back in his apartment, he smokes a cigarette and reflects that in New York, he is never alone but always lonely. He enjoys living in his apartment, which keeps him safe from the threat of life outside.

In another passage formatted as a dramatic scene, Fitzgerald describes Beauty as a character who is reborn every century. She sits in an outdoor waiting room to receive her next assignment, and "the beauty of her body was the beauty of her soul." She personifies the unified image of beauty for which philosophers have long been searching.

Although both men resent Dick's progress on his novel, Anthony is more invested than Maury in denigrating his work ethic. Underlying the resentful comments, there seems to be a self-conscious anxiety, especially for Anthony, over his own inability to write consistently. By using the dramatic scene format, Fitzgerald foregrounds the dialogue and demands that the reader parse it for subtext.



Maury's attempt to philosophize about art is suspect when he himself has managed to produce so little of it. However, his comment that the act of producing art is pointless unless it helps life become less pointless lets him and Anthony off the hook for their difficulties with motivation—the writing they haven't produced hasn't made their lives more meaningful and so is itself meaningless. The interruption of the conversation with soup in turn challenges the meaning even of the preceding philosophical conversation.



Rather than focus on the artificiality of the performance onstage, Anthony notices how artificial the audience members' reactions to the play are. Anthony feels separate from the crowd not only in the theatre but also in the city more generally. However, he also feels the presence of the rest of the city, as though it were a performance meant to trick him. His financial situation allows him to maintain an apartment that he feels insulates him from taking part in the drama of society.



Philosophers such as Plato, Plotinus, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Augustine all tried to define beauty and its relationship to the divine. Beauty always poses a problem because it is ephemeral, whereas the divine forces that these philosophers suggest it signals are eternal. This image of Beauty solves all these philosophers' problems. The dramatic scene format seems to place Beauty directly before the eyes of the reader, rather than filtering her through a third person narrator.



The narrator, “I,” professes to recount a fragment of conversation between Beauty and a disembodied voice on the wind. The voice tells Beauty that for the next fifteen years, she is to go to a new land where the wisest leaders believe in Santa Claus and even ugly women control men who are supposed to be strong and wealthy.

Beauty is shocked and disturbed. How will she fare in a world that gives power to unattractive women? The voice tells her that it will be more difficult for her than usual, but that as always, her visit on earth will be “the interval between two significant glances in a mundane mirror.”

The voice says that while Beauty was initially to be incarnated as a movie star, that decision has been revised so that she will be a society girl, which is a sort of “bogus aristocrat.” She will be paid, as usual, in love, and she in turn will love being called a jazz-baby. The narrator ends the scene by stating that it has all taken place seven years before Anthony’s cigarette alone in his apartment.

CHAPTER 2

A month later, in November, the cold winter seems to be making people in the city more eager than ever to socialize, many with an eye to marriage. Anthony sees an uptick in social invitations. On 42nd Street one afternoon, Anthony runs into Richard Caramel. He begrudgingly walks with Dick and listens to him discuss his writing process, remarking how disgusted he is by Dick’s face in the cold.

Dick tells Anthony that he has a famous cousin named Gloria Gilbert who they could go see. She is from Kansas City but lives at the Plaza during the winter with her parents. Her mother, Dick says, is a practicing Bilphist, and her father would like to be a character in one of Dick’s novels. Anthony remarks that he has heard Gloria’s name. He says that he does not care for young girls but reflects inwardly that he is in fact fascinated by women who make a living on their beauty alone.

An unnamed “I” intrudes as a narrator in the stage directions, which is unusual and immediately undermines the impression that the dramatic format is being used to eliminate layers of narration. It signals to the reader to begin thinking critically about the reliability of information being presented. This scene appears to be presented from a perspective that looks derisively upon American society’s relationship to beauty in the early twentieth century.



Although Beauty has been presented in her perfect form at the beginning of the section, it seems that in practice in society, her power and meaning depend entirely on society’s self-reflexive view at any given moment.



In the society of Fitzgerald’s novel, society girls are the incarnation of this essentially meaningless Beauty. Society girls make it into the highest ranks of society on the merit of their beauty alone. Everyone will love Beauty, and she will enjoy her role. The timeline of the scene places Beauty about halfway through her stay in the Jazz Age. She has eight years left to go.



Anthony exists in a society with elaborately choreographed rituals, into which he is invited despite his continual feelings of loneliness. One of these rituals is marriage. As is any young bachelor, Anthony is in danger of being the target of women looking for husbands. Anthony’s disgust with Dick’s face and distraction from the substance of Dick’s conversation suggests that Anthony might be prone to the traps of the society girl who is beauty incarnate.



As a “famous” society girl, Gloria has presumably made a name for herself through no means but her beauty. Anthony’s attraction to the idea of monetizing beauty reflects not only his attraction to beautiful women but also his narcissism and hope that his own beauty might be enough for him to get by in the world without working.



Dick goes on to say that Gloria is nice but has no brains. When Anthony teases Dick for the kind of intelligence he expects women to have, Dick asks why Anthony and Maury treat him as though he were inferior to them. Confused by the question, Anthony distracts Dick with a speech about how an artist is better served by the ability to imitate tradition than by great intelligence. Having reached the Plaza while talking, Anthony looks at his and Dick's reflections and is relieved to find that in contrast to Dick, the cold has made his face appear more handsome.

Anthony and Dick go upstairs to the Gilberts' apartment. Gloria is out dancing, but they meet first Mrs. Gilbert then Mr. Gilbert, who has loose ties to the film industry. Neither approves of Gloria's free-spiritedness. Mrs. Gilbert worries that she will dance herself to exhaustion, and Mr. Gilbert is frustrated that he cannot control her as easily as he controls his wife. The narrator remarks that thirty years of marriage have sapped Mrs. Gilbert of "moral courage."

Anthony and Dick discuss the weather and Gloria with the Gilberts. The narrator describes the young men laughing in "three-four time," and the scene ends with "Smiles! Smiles! Bang! Two disconsolate young men walking down the tenth-floor corridor of the Plaza in the direction of the elevator."

The narrator's attention shifts to Maury Noble. Maury is at a transition point in his life. His plan was always to become rich after three years of travel in Europe. Back in the U.S., it is time for the second phase of his plan. Although he is not rich yet, his latest endeavor has been to take up drinking. He pursues drinking with the same commitment he would use to learn a language while in school.

Maury has an apartment in New York City but often spends weekends in Philadelphia with his mother and brother. After his afternoon with Dick, Anthony is delighted to find that Maury is home for a weekend for once. Maury's presence fills the apartment and gives Anthony a sense of comfort that he finds paralleled only by the company of a "stupid woman."

In this moment Anthony proves unable to have a conversation about an interpersonal issue. Rather, he must deflect to philosophy, which is all he has been trained to discuss. His privileged upbringing has given him an array of intellectual tools but has left him emotionally stunted. He is unconcerned by Dick's expression of discomfort in their friendship but continues to be preoccupied by the desire to be more beautiful than Dick.



The Gilberts are one of the only models of marriage Anthony has seen as an adult. Mr. Gilbert models controlling behavior on the part of a husband, while Mrs. Gilbert models a wife's concession to being controlled. The absence of Gloria in this scene both emphasizes the unbalanced marriage and builds up more mystery and legend around the dream of Gloria.



The style of the passage emphasizes that this social interaction is an aesthetic performance and that the characters have been groomed to perform a certain way. This then raises the question of who the audience is.



Although Maury has been spoiled by a privileged upbringing and often drinks with Anthony, it seems that he is less constitutionally unable to accomplish anything than Anthony is. Rather, he is deliberately spending his days drinking as part of a concerted project. Unlike Anthony, he is conscious of his need to do something to enact his plan to get rich.



Anthony depends on Maury, his intellectual sparring partner, and on women he considers his intellectual inferiors to feel safe in his own home. Maury might be seen as a foil for Anthony in several ways. His closeness with his mother and ability to spend weekends with her contrasts with Anthony's orphaned loneliness. In fact, it is important to note that Anthony is in competition with Maury's mother for Maury's time.



Anthony tells Maury about the current “stupid woman” he has been seeing, named Geraldine. Maury marvels that she probably understands nothing of the history of the world. The question of whether or not Dick could write her as a character in his book leads Anthony and Maury to an abstract discussion about literature. The conversation dies when Anthony describes a “classic” as a book that stands the test of time. The narrator remarks that the two men are more interested in generalities than the technical aspects of literary study.

Tired of literary discussion, Anthony and Maury begin discussing their respective days. Maury describes the girl he met at tea who distracted him to the point that he missed his train to Philadelphia for the weekend. She was young, ate gum drops compulsively, and discussed the beauty of her legs with Maury. When Maury reveals that she turned out to be Dick’s cousin, Anthony realizes that the girl is the very Gloria Gilbert he missed at the Plaza.

Maury and Anthony go on about how wonderful it is that Gloria is beautiful and not smart. Anthony tells Maury that he seems especially taken with her. Maury responds with worries about his advancing age (he is two years older than Anthony). He feels unable to escape into romance the way Anthony can. Still, he tells Anthony, he felt a kinship with Gloria, as though something about her were old just like him.

Morning several days later finds Anthony sleeping late. When he finally gets up, he dresses slowly and adds an evening with Dick and Gloria to a very short to-do list. He marvels at how much more structured his day looks than usual.

Anthony stares at the books he has taken out from the library and failed to read. They are accruing late fees, but he has no plans to return them soon. The sight of them sets Anthony into one of his melancholy moods. He laments to himself that he is weak and aging too fast, lacking the aspirations of Dick or even Maury.

The narrator has stated that Anthony feels more comfortable around Maury than Dick. This passage contrasts with the preceding interaction with Dick to demonstrate that Maury is more likely than Dick to talk in abstract philosophical terms that are comfortable to the highly-educated but poorly socialized Anthony.



Both Anthony and Maury notice Gloria’s youth and beauty above all. In fact, her youth and beauty are so distracting that Maury neglects to stick to the schedule that usually governs his life. Fitzgerald uses Maury in this scene to demonstrate that it is not only Anthony who is dangerously attracted to Gloria. Like the sirens of Homer’s Odyssey, Gloria’s main defining characteristic is her powerful allure to men.



Maury and Anthony value women’s beauty and despise women’s intelligence. Their remarks reflect their conditioning by a society that not only casts women as objects to be gazed upon, but that also tends to valorize beauty over intelligence. Unlike Anthony, Maury has reservations about yielding to his desire for Gloria’s beauty and indeed sees that she might be more substantive underneath its mask.



Anthony’s renewed interest in Dick is motivated by a newfound interest in Gloria, who he now desires both because of her beauty and because Maury covets her as well. His self-satisfaction with planning a social engagement demonstrates both his privileged access to leisure time and his poor time management skills. With each wasted day, he is wasting more of his life.



Anthony’s inability to stick to the social contract surrounding library due dates increases the reader’s sense that Anthony is unable to truly function in society. He worries that time and his friends are passing him by, and yet he passively allows himself to fall further behind schedule. Again because of his privileged upbringing, he does not worry about financial consequences of his lateness.



An afternoon of cocktails and luncheon at the University Club cheers Anthony. He runs into two of his former classmates who are now married, and they remind him of Mr. Gilbert. He realizes that he is still unattached and poised to use his grandfather's inheritance to "build his own pedestal and be a Talleyrand, a Lord Verulam." However, as soon as he returns to the solitude of his apartment, the cocktails wear off and he becomes melancholy once more.

Just as Anthony is overcome with disgust for his inability to apply himself to any pursuit except drinking cocktails, Dick buzzes into the apartment and announces Gloria. Upon answering the door, Anthony immediately notices her gloved hands and Alice-blue dress with a lace collar. As Dick sells up Gloria's beauty and Gloria complains of the cold, Anthony springs to action, making a fire and performing the duties of host.

Gloria immediately begins talking at length, even though she alone listens intently to her words. Anthony contemplates her beauty and only becomes aware of what she is saying when she compliments his name. She says that "Patch" suggests he should look like a horse, but that he lives up to the name "Anthony," looking both majestic and solemn.

Dick chimes into the conversation about names, but the conversation keeps falling back into a dialogue between Gloria and Anthony. They speak disparagingly of Adam Patch's reformist tendencies, but what makes Gloria sit straight up is Anthony's assertion that he has heard a few things about her.

When Gloria asks what Anthony has heard about her, Anthony mentions that Maury told him of her beauty. He ascertains that Gloria remembers Maury but that he never called her. Anthony begins to wonder how, earlier in the day, he found his apartment so dreary when now it is full of cheer.

Anthony is beginning to rely on alcohol to keep his mood up. When drunk, he manages to convince himself that he is better than those around him and that he will rise to greatness. He takes for granted that he will inherit a fortune from his grandfather on which he will build himself into a legacy-worthy political figure.



Anthony relies on the presence of others to distract himself from his self-loathing. His mood lightens when he sees Gloria's fashionable clothing. The sight seems to give him the energy to perform the role of host. The social grace of listening to his guest and making a fire is born not out of real hospitality but out of the desire to match Gloria's fashionable appearance.



Gloria is self-absorbed to the point that she does not seem to notice that no one is listening to her. Anthony once again demonstrates that he is interested in Gloria for her beauty alone. He only begins listening to her when she compliments his own appearance. They are perfectly matched in their self-absorption, but already show, this early in their relationship, a fundamental inability to attend to one another.



In each other's company, Anthony and Gloria fall immediately out of touch with the rest of the world. Gloria seems more comfortable than Maury with Anthony's preferred method of bonding: insulting mutual acquaintances or celebrities. Gloria mirrors Anthony's desire to be complimented by sitting up when she hears that her reputation, the image she carefully cultivates, has preceded her.



While the self-interested Gloria is flattered by the rumors circulating about her, Anthony is pleased to find that he seems to have won out over Maury in the competition for Gloria's attention. Gloria wants to be gazed upon as an object of beauty and intrigue. Anthony wants this object of beauty to gaze back at him.



Later in the week, Anthony and Gloria have tea on their own. Anthony contemplates Gloria in the gray suit she has explicitly picked out because it requires heavy makeup, and he wonders at how young and even childlike she seems, both physically and mentally.

Gloria carefully scopes out the restaurant, picking the perfect place to sit, and along the way pointing out to Anthony various attractive girls and their physical flaws. Anthony turns the conversation topic to Gloria herself. She tells him that according to Dick, she has no autobiography because “the biography of every woman begins with the first kiss that counts, and ends when her last child is laid in her arms.” Gloria isn’t sure whether she has experienced a kiss that counted in her 22 years.

Anthony tells Gloria that he thought she was only 18, and she tells him that is the age she is going to start being. She does not want the responsibility of aging, marriage, or children. At her request, Anthony orders some gum drops for Gloria to suck on while she turns the subject to him.

Aided by a cocktail, Anthony proudly announces that he does nothing because he has no useful skills. Gloria does not react as strongly as he had hoped, instead making a distracted statement that her father is angry at her. Anthony exasperatedly asks her if she ever forms judgments on things. Finally, she says it always surprises her that anyone does anything given that all she wants to do is sleep and be surrounded by enough active people to make her feel secure. It is her world, she says to Anthony, as long as she is young. Anthony understands that she first intended to say “beautiful.” Gloria changes the subject by asking Anthony to dance.

Anthony begins taking Gloria out on dates over the next several weeks. It is difficult to schedule with her around her other social engagements, and her attention often wanders when she is out with Anthony. He finds her frustrating and is especially jealous when, just before Christmas, he calls and she tells him she just sent a man out of her apartment. Although she is in a foul temper, Anthony quickly agrees when she tells him she wants to go do something exciting.

Gloria and Anthony seem equally invested in Gloria’s carefully composed appearance. Anthony’s wonder at Gloria’s youthfulness demonstrates both the infantilizing of women common to this society, and a nostalgic preoccupation with the lack of responsibility Anthony himself had as a child.



Like Anthony, Gloria is invested in elevating herself at the expense of others, particularly when it comes to physical appearance. By quoting Dick, she reveals that she thinks of herself in terms that society has laid out for her as a woman. She has kissed or been kissed any number of times, but she has difficulty distinguishing a performed kiss from a “real” kiss because she is constantly performing the role of the society girl. The line she quotes from Dick also shows that motherhood is expected of her as woman—her life is only defined in relation to men and children, not on her own terms.



Gloria professes to defy societal expectations by rejecting the timeline society has set for her, but she also reinforces this timeline by worrying about her age. She does not want to reject the timeline entirely but rather wants to remain suspended at a particular, youthful moment when she has the most power and agency within society’s expectations. It is in this moment that Anthony first caters to her wishes by ordering her the candy that makes her appear so childlike.



Because neither Anthony nor Gloria has the discipline to keep after adult responsibilities, they feel comfortable confessing their laziness to one another. In fact, in each other’s company, they are proud of their lack of accomplishments. Gloria’s self-absorption prevents her from focusing for long on Anthony’s confession of laziness, and Anthony betrays the first hint of his temper and frustration with being ignored by her. Both characters demonstrate an uneasy understanding that they conflate beauty with youth.



Anthony remains fixated on Gloria despite her inattention to him. In fact, he seems all the more determined to pursue her because of her affected disinterest, even though he finds it incredibly frustrating. He seems to want her because he cannot fully have her, and she enjoys being the object of his desire.



There aren't many options, so Gloria settles for the cabaret. Anthony notices that all the women there seem detached, as though they are in the crowd but not part of it. They seem to be there out of convenience, and to find husbands above their social standing. When Anthony finally looks at Gloria, she is the only one who looks supremely happy and comfortable.

Anthony and Gloria find themselves in the midst of a social performance. All the women are trying to sell images of themselves to the men of good social standing in the hopes of climbing the ranks of society. Anthony feels removed enough from this performance to reflect on it as though he is an objective observer, but the fact that Gloria seems the most at home of any of the women in this setting suggests that Anthony may be unwittingly falling prey to her performance.



When the play begins, the gaudiness makes Anthony supremely anxious about the falseness of life. Meanwhile, Gloria insists that she has "a streak of cheapness" and belongs here in the theatre. Anthony diverts his attention from the stage to Gloria. He wishes he could paint her in this moment, and finds her radiant as the sun.

Anthony has difficulty distinguishing between the false reality presented on stage and the reality of life. His anxiety over this blurred boundary reflects his conception of his life as a story that will unfold without his intervention. Gloria feels that a performance venue is exactly where she is most at home, suggesting that she too feels that her life is disconnected from reality. Anthony's intense desire to render an artistic representation of Gloria suggests an impulse to break with reality even further, becoming fully absorbed in her appearance instead of with his "real" life, or even his interactions with Gloria herself as a person beyond her beauty.



CHAPTER 3

Dick Caramel has always wanted to be a writer, but after college he was caught in the fad of working for charity or "service." He spent about a year working with immigrants before becoming bored and starting a journalism career. About a year into this second career, he was fired and began working on his novel, *The Demon Lover*.

Like Anthony, Dick has had trouble consistently maintaining a job. Not in desperate need of a large income, he has been caught up in societal trends that have waylaid his progress toward his vision for himself. Still, he has maintained the goal of becoming a writer and has begun to work towards this goal in earnest.



In January 1914, Dick's book is nearly complete and is the subject of most of his social interactions. It follows him like a shadow and has turned his nose a blue color that is "suggestive of the flames licking around a sinner." One of his literary confidantes is Mrs. Gilbert, who tells him one day that her palmist sees great things in store for him, despite never having heard his name. Uncomfortable discussing himself, Dick changes the subject to Gloria and his opinion that Anthony is smitten with her. He thinks she ought to marry him and have done with it, because the caliber of men she has been hanging around has been decreasing.

Dick's book is consuming him, creating his own personal version of hell. However, as Mrs. Gilbert's palmist predicts, Dick's suffering now will pay off for him later. Dick's absorption in his work and discomfort discussing himself contrasts sharply with Anthony and Gloria's desire to discuss only themselves and never to actually work. Despite his familiarity with both Anthony and Gloria's lack of work ethic, Dick thinks that they should get married because it will preserve Gloria's social standing.



Mrs. Gilbert reflects that Gloria used to surround herself with undergraduate men until one day she suddenly announced she had grown tired of them. While she used to cultivate a reputation as the most sought-after young woman in Kansas City, she no longer seems to care about her reputation and has grown “cold.” Dick listens, reflecting that while he used to be interested in Gloria as the subject of a journalistic endeavor, he now finds himself interested in her on a familial level. Just as he begins to wonder why Gloria has been spending time with Joseph Bloeckman, Muriel Kane, and Rachael Jerryl, the door opens, and Gloria walks in with the latter two.

Dick notices Gloria’s two friends with what he thinks of as the novelist’s eye. Muriel Kane hovers between “plumpness and width” and is too fashionable, overly aware of style but not manners. Rachael Jerryl, meanwhile, is older and more reserved. Dick pegs her as a “Jewess” and notices that she seems to follow or copy Gloria’s every move. Gloria sucks on a gumdrop and largely ignores the group as they get to know one another, and Mrs. Gilbert describes Dick as an Ancient Soul. Gloria finally intervenes to invite everyone to a party, at which she promises to introduce Dick to Joseph Bloeckman.

On Monday, Anthony takes a girl named Geraldine, who works as an usher, to lunch. He doesn’t think much of her but prefers her to women of his own class because she does not expect him to marry her. In response to Geraldine’s questions about his heavy drinking and relation to millionaire Adam Patch, Anthony says that he does not intend to live to forty anyway and that, even if everyone wants to marry him because of his wealthy grandfather, he never intends to marry either.

Geraldine tells Anthony she is sure he will one day fall in love. Anthony tells her the story of his fictional character Le Chevalier O’Keefe, who fell to his death from a tower as he attempted to visit a maiden. Unimpressed, Geraldine bets Anthony he will be married within a year. Anthony protests that in addition to his distaste in marriage, such a plan is impractical for financial reasons. After Geraldine leaves, he feels intensely lonely and throws a tennis ball across the room in frustration.

Mrs. Gilbert’s sense that Gloria no longer cares about her reputation is at odds with Gloria’s interest in what Anthony has heard about her. The tension between these two moments suggests that Gloria is interested in her reputation, but is no longer concerned with conforming it to societal standards. Mrs. Gilbert’s concern that Gloria has grown “cold” emphasizes that, just as she herself expressed to Anthony, she is failing to live up to the ideal of womanhood that has been constructed for her. Now that Gloria is allowing her reputation to differ from that of the ideal society girl, Dick is no longer interested in her intellectually and wants to marry her off favorably.



Dick is less concerned with the women he observes than with how his observations reflect back on him as a novelist. The women are objects of beauty (or of beauty’s shortcomings), while Dick allows himself intellectual interiority. Mrs. Gilbert reinforces his self-assurance by calling him an Ancient Soul. This imbalanced perception of gender reflects the educational norms of the elite class at this time—as a man, Dick was allowed to attend Harvard—and foreshadows Anthony’s condescension to Gloria in their marriage. Although Dick might read Gloria’s invitation as evidence of her flightiness, her introduction to Bloeckman could prove vital to Dick’s career.



Anthony purports to reject social conventions such as marriage when they would constrain him, but he nonetheless reinforces social stratification by looking down on Geraldine, a working-class woman. Ironically, Geraldine’s work makes her much more financially stable than Anthony, whose financial plan, he announces, is to live as a bachelor and die before the age of forty. He is unable to conceive of shouldering the responsibility of middle age, let alone old age.



Just as he did when he was a child, Anthony retreats into books rather than dealing with the real world around him. By using his unstable finances as an excuse for his opposition to marriage, Anthony betrays his own uncertainty about his financial situation. He masks his anxiety as a desire to remain a bachelor, but once he is alone, his unwillingness to work for an income that would support two adults makes him feel as though he will always be alone.



The party to which Gloria invited Dick and her friends takes place at the Biltmore. Before Gloria, Muriel, or Rachael arrive, Joseph Bloeckman commands the attention of the room. At 35, he is socially disconnected from Anthony, Dick, and Maury. Anthony scoffs internally when Bloeckman attempts to bond with him, first over knowledge of Anthony's grandfather and second over Harvard-Princeton sports rivalries. Anthony finds both conversation topics boring. When the girls finally arrive, Gloria and Rachael disappear into the dressing room while Muriel takes over as the center of attention. Bloeckman recaptures Dick's attention by mentioning his work in the film industry and the adaptation of novels for the screen.

As soon as Gloria and Rachael reemerge, everyone begins dancing except for Bloeckman, who sits at a table and hopes for Gloria to rejoin him "on his left hand" while the oysters are still fresh. Meanwhile, Anthony is dancing "on Gloria's left hand." He compliments her beauty and says he approves of her as a priest approves of the Pope. Gloria comments on the vagueness of the compliment, then redirects Anthony's attention to Muriel, who is leaning on Maury, swaying, and singing.

When the song is over, everyone returns to the table. Gloria complains that "Blockhead" never dances. She frequently puns on Bloeckman's name like this. Muriel comments that he must think the rest of them a frivolous crowd. Bloeckman responds by stating abruptly, "When a man speaks he's merely tradition. He has at best a few thousand years back of him. But woman, why, she is the miraculous mouthpiece of posterity." Everyone attempts not to laugh, and Anthony shouts that Bloeckman must have memorized a subtitle from one of his movies. Gloria stares at Bloeckman in silent reproach until he resumes the air of a middle-aged man among youths.

Everyone falls to eating soup and listening to the orchestra. All but Richard and Rachael drink champagne, and all but Gloria and Bloeckman dance. Anthony watches Gloria as she listens to Bloeckman and watches the dancers. He wonders what Bloeckman is saying to her.

By locating the party at the Biltmore, Fitzgerald once again reminds readers that the characters exist among social elites. Bloeckman is out of place among Anthony and his friends, but there is an ironic sense in which he is out of place because he is more adept at social networking than they are. Bloeckman attempts to make professional connections by which he and others such as Dick may get ahead, but the crowd at the Biltmore seems to consist of young people who have been told that their admission to the upper echelons is simply assumed. Dick, always more hardworking than Anthony, is captivated by Bloeckman. Meanwhile, the women either disappear from the social scene or draw negative attention by tending to or neglecting their appearances.



Anthony valorizes Gloria's ephemeral beauty as the organizing principle of his spiritual existence, demonstrating once again his inability to accept the constraints of time. Anthony appears to win out over Bloeckman for Gloria's attention by placing himself in the position Bloeckman had hoped Gloria would occupy next to him. However, Gloria's redirection of Anthony's attention to Muriel suggests that Anthony might be deluding himself about the strength of his own connection to her.



Gloria enjoys teasing Bloeckman and denigrating him as a middle-aged, "blockheaded" man who provides contrast to her own youthful attractiveness and whimsy. When he utters a line that suggests that Gloria, as a woman, speaks for "posterity," he threatens her ability to think of herself as fixed in time, never to become a mother or pass the baton of youth to a later generation. While Anthony uses the moment as an opportunity to deride Bloeckman's dedication to his career, Gloria is uneasy until Bloeckman reverts to his previous air, as if he never said anything.



Alcohol is already a recurring element of the social scene upon which Anthony and Gloria are forging their relationship. Only the most ambitious characters seem to be abstaining from it. As he drinks, Anthony's interest in Gloria is increased by the possibility that she may be "taken" by Bloeckman.



At ten, Gloria dances with Anthony out of earshot of the others and tells him she wants to go to the drugstore. She needs gum drops so she will stop nervously biting her fingernails. They leave the party and find a drugstore, where Gloria looks at the perfume counter and finally buys her gum drops. Anthony suggests riding around in a cab. Once in the cab, Anthony kisses Gloria. She remains silent as Anthony contemplates her beauty. The narrator writes, "Her eyes appeared to regard him out of many thousand years: all emotion she might have felt, all words she might have uttered, would have seemed inadequate beside the adequacy of her silence, ineloquent against the eloquence of her beauty..." When Gloria finally speaks, it is to tell Anthony to have the cab take them back to the party.

Back in the supper room, Muriel asks Gloria where she has been. Gloria tells her she went to call her mother. Bloeckman, meanwhile, fixes Anthony with a strange glance. When Gloria goes by, Bloeckman rises and then resumes his conversation with Dick about literature's influence on film. The narrator comments that Anthony will reflect on this moment many years later.

In the morning, Anthony sits in his apartment and reflects on his kiss with Gloria. She strikes him as different from other women in that she has not "submitted to any will of his nor caressed his vanity." He decides they will be able to separate their reality from the game of entanglement, and so he calls her at the Plaza Hotel. He is affronted to find that Gloria is out. He worries that he is at a disadvantage for expressing interest first and that he will seem like the other men who chase her.

The narrator interjects that it does not occur to Anthony that it isn't Gloria influencing him but rather some omnipotent photographer taking snapshots of Gloria who is using Anthony as the sensitive plate. Anthony imagines Gloria moving through her day and decides that he must kiss her again. He goes to Dick's reading of his novel but resumes calling Gloria at six in the evening. When he finally reaches her at eight, he finds, "climax of anticlimaxes!" that she is unavailable until Tuesday.

Gloria seems mostly interested in Anthony insofar as he will pay attention to her and buy things for her. Anthony, believing that he is purchasing a romantic attachment to Gloria, willingly complies. It is important to note that it is Anthony who kisses Gloria, and that Gloria never responds until the moment when she asks to end the private outing with him. The narrator's comment about the "thousand years" behind the look Gloria gives Anthony, along with the "eloquence of her beauty" recalls the scene in which Beauty was sent to Jazz-Age New York for a stay of fifteen years. If not the single personification of this ancient Beauty, Gloria at least embodies elements of her.



Gloria wants to keep her outing with Anthony a secret, but Bloeckman appears to guess that Anthony and Gloria have been away together. The fact that his attention turns to Anthony rather than on Gloria suggests that he reciprocates Anthony's feeling that Gloria is a beauty object most desired when others desire her as well.



Anthony's desire for Gloria is not only motivated by Bloeckman's rivalry but also by her apparent disinterest in him. Most of all, it seems that he wants her because he cannot have her. He thinks that because of her independence, they will be able to spend time with one another without falling prey to society's romantic script, to which he feels superior. However, he almost immediately slips into this same script when he calls her and begins to worry what she will think of him.



Fitzgerald suggests that in contrast to the mythological siren who traps men like Homer's Odysseus, Gloria is caught in the same trap as Anthony. By describing the trap as a photographic apparatus focused on Gloria but making use of Anthony, Fitzgerald intimates that while beauty itself may not be inherently dangerous, society's obsession with beauty is damaging to both beautiful people and the people who get caught up with them. Photography was a rapidly evolving technology at the time Fitzgerald was writing. He seems invested in the idea that the dangers of beauty have something to do with modern society's treatment of beautiful objects.



Tuesday is freezing cold. Anthony meets Gloria at the Plaza and wonders whether he dreamed their kiss. He asks if they can go somewhere alone, not at a tea table. She says yes, but not today. Today she wants to walk. Once on the walk, they are both distracted by the cold and barely talk. Finally, Gloria tells Anthony she would rather go home. She comments on his self-absorption, and Anthony tries not to express his annoyance.

Back at the Plaza, Gloria insists that Anthony come upstairs. He at first despises himself for letting her take control this way, but he soon talks himself into “sophistic satisfaction” by reflecting that he had wanted to come up in the first place and only refused out of propriety. Anthony inquires about Bloeckman and whether he is in love with Gloria. Gloria tells Anthony that Bloeckman doesn’t like him either. She also admits that she told Bloeckman where she actually went during the dinner party. Anthony tries to disguise his jealousy by turning the conversation into one in which they reveal parts of their pasts to one another.

The narrator interjects that the growth of intimacy is like the creation of a painting with more and more details until it is impossible to conceal the flaws to sell an ideal image. “We must be satisfied,” the narrator writes, “with hoping that such fatuous accounts of ourselves as we make to our wives and children and business associates are accepted as true.”

Anthony tells Gloria of his difficulty in finding a suitable career, and Gloria expresses disinterest in what he or anyone else does. Just as Anthony thinks he hates her, she looks at him, and the hate vanishes. He begins alternately kissing her and begging her to ask him to leave so he does not fall in love. Suddenly, she does ask him to leave. After his departure, Gloria stares into the fire and says, “Good-by, you ass!” Later, Anthony is unsure whether or not Gloria enjoyed the kisses.

Anthony is overtaken with panic at the realization that he is “not so much in love with Gloria as mad for her.” He wants her all the more for her rejection of him. He wanders aimlessly through the streets, thoughts of Gloria distracting him even from dealing with his hunger. He revels in the intense jealousy that makes him want to kill Bloeckman, taking it as a sign that he is finally in love.

As soon as Anthony finds himself in Gloria's presence, she disappoints him. This scene demonstrates that Anthony is more invested in the idea of Gloria than in Gloria herself. Just like his false starts at a writing career, Anthony's dream of romance sours as soon as he attempts to bring it to fruition and is faced with reality.



The narrator's use of the phrase “sophistic satisfaction” reminds the reader that Anthony's self-satisfaction in this scene and others is based on false reasoning (sophistry is fallacious reasoning). Anthony believes he is in control of Gloria and the situation, but his rapidly changing emotions in reaction to the things Gloria tells him reveal otherwise—he cannot even control his own responses.



The narrator's commentary presents a cynical view of human nature that seems to suggest that neither Anthony nor Gloria will be able to maintain their desirable images as they grow closer to one another. Additionally, Anthony's lack of self-awareness in the preceding scene, combined with his idealized self-image, suggests that he is poised to undergo a disillusioning “growth of intimacy” with himself, by which he will begin to see his many flaws.



Alone in Gloria's parents' apartment, Anthony and Gloria are occupying the most intimate space they have thus far in the novel. However, both of them are entirely self-absorbed throughout the interaction. Gloria fails to communicate to Anthony what she wants, and Anthony fails to notice Gloria's dissatisfaction until after the fact. They are both more intent on the drama in their own heads than on the reality they are living.



Despite the fact that Gloria has just rejected Anthony, his thoughts continue to dwell on her. Anthony is consumed by the fantasy of a seemingly-impossible relationship with Gloria, to the extent that he neglects bodily functions like hunger. He also conflates love with the insecurity he feels in his fantasized relationship. Dangerously, Anthony is both naïve and unable to escape his naïve mind.



After another day, Anthony has calmed down and decides to devise a plan to deal with his love for Gloria and her rejection of him. Memory is short, he decides, so if he waits six weeks before calling her again, they should be able to start fresh. He begins the six-week hiatus by falling asleep. As the six weeks roll on, Dick's manuscript is accepted for publication. Anthony feels a growing distance between himself and his friends. He feels that he wants only what Gloria can give him.

Anthony tries to pass the time with Geraldine the usher, who lets him kiss her as much as he wants. However, he is driven to the brink of madness again by two incidents: one in which he sees Gloria walking with a strange man, and one in which he runs into Joseph Bloeckman waiting for Gloria in a restaurant. In the fifth week, Anthony gives in and calls Gloria. When Mrs. Gilbert answers, he refuses to identify himself.

The first thing Anthony says to Gloria when he finally sees her is that she bobbed her hair. The narrator interjects to note that the style will not be fashionable for another five or six years. The pair walks through the Zoo and around the city, talking little but enjoying the sights and the warmer weather. Gloria tells Anthony that she wants to escape south to Hot Springs, where a million robins sing. Anthony says that all women are birds and that Gloria is a sparrow, and sometimes a bird of paradise. Anthony is flattered to hear Gloria say he is a Russian wolfhound. They decide to spend a whole day together next Sunday.

On Sunday, Anthony and Gloria spend the day on his lounge. He tells her that he loves her, and she says she is glad. In the morning, after a night of reflection on their day together, Anthony calls Gloria and in "a sheer cry, a rhapsody," tells her again that he loves her. Again, she says she is glad. "Handsome then if never before, bound for one of those immortal moments which come so radiantly that their remembered light is enough to see by for years," Anthony goes the Plaza and knocks on Gloria's door. She answers in a pink dress, "starved and fresh as a flower," and they embrace.

Anthony continues to operate under the delusion that Gloria will fall in love with him if he only waits long enough. His disconnection from reality grows as he lets his desire consume him, cutting him off from the people who do figure prominently in his life. Once again, Anthony demonstrates his sense of entitlement by sleeping the days away while Dick works on his writing. Anthony remains convinced that what he desires will come to him if only he waits passively.



Anthony's pursuit of Geraldine for her unrestrained kisses seems at odds with his pursuit of Gloria, the withholder of kisses. Anthony does not appear to know what he actually wants, and once again his desire for the idea of Gloria increases when he sees that her affection may be monopolized by another man. Despite the strength of his desire, the phone call indicates that Anthony struggles even to carry out his plan of passive waiting to achieve his goals.



Anthony is focused first and foremost on Gloria's physical appearance. The narrator's interjection suggests that Gloria's cultivated looks are extremely fashionable: she is as invested in her appearance as Anthony is. The pair finds each other much more tolerable when they are both comfortable, which foreshadows the strain their relationship will suffer under financial pressure later in the novel. It is also important to note that Anthony and Gloria find the idea of more time together agreeable only after having a conversation in which they imagine each other as animals. Their relationship relies heavily on fantasy and dreams.



Gloria goes along with Anthony's plans and impulses, but she never responds in kind to his professions of love. Anthony does not seem to notice this lack of reciprocity, though. Indeed, he seems invested in the burgeoning relationship for the beauty and vitality it helps him see in himself as much as for Gloria herself. He appears able to conceive of Gloria in no other terms than beauty, envisioning her as an inanimate flower rather than as a complex person.



CHAPTER 4

Two weeks later, Anthony and Gloria begin discussing marriage. Anthony insists that Gloria does not love him as much as he loves her. She responds by suggesting that their souls are made for each other, at which Anthony scoffs. They have a brief spat, which is resolved when both admit to having been mean. The narrator notes that Anthony “felt often like a scarcely tolerated guest at a party she was giving.” As the engagement continues, Anthony finds it irritating that Gloria does not get jealous the way he does, a fact about which she is proud. Whenever they disagree they apologize and become affectionate once more, but each takes a certain pleasure in goading the other.

One day, Anthony asks Gloria why she likes Muriel. She says she doesn’t much but socializes with her out of convenience. She likes men better because, she says, she has a man’s mind. Anthony says she has a mind like his, which is genderless. Gloria tells Anthony about meeting Bloeckman the first time when he was having luncheon with her father. He asked her to marry him within a month and wouldn’t take no for an answer. When she told him about her engagement to Anthony, she attempted to make him hate her to cushion the blow. Anthony reflects that Gloria’s main appeal is her indifference.

On a later, sunny afternoon, Gloria and Anthony ride around on top of a bus. Anthony complains that the city is artificial. Gloria sees a police officer helping a woman cross the street and remarks what fools police officers must think people for being “frightened and inefficient and old.” Gloria abruptly tells Anthony that she should be getting home, to which he replies that he wishes they were married. The couple begins to daydream together about their life when they are married and have inherited Adam Patch’s fortune. They imagine a magnificent estate with private swimming pools. The narrator remarks that their sweetest moments are when some artificial barrier is keeping them apart from each other and from this future that is approaching in “Sixteen days now – fifteen – fourteen – ” The section ends mid-countdown.

Anthony and Gloria’s fairy tale romance leads naturally to the discussion of marriage. However, the prospect of marriage crystallizes the relationship into something real, which incites conflict. Gloria’s insistence that they are soulmates still does not include the statement, “I love you,” which Anthony begins to notice. There is a spirit of competition that animates their relationship. Anthony seems to wish the unpleasant experience of jealousy upon Gloria, and Gloria seems glad that Anthony is jealous because it allows her to demonstrate superiority over him.



Gloria and Anthony both demonstrate derision toward women and treat Gloria as exceptional in contrast to women like Muriel, who are openly promiscuous and outwardly uninterested in intellectual pursuits. Anthony also thinks of himself as an exceptional man and considers himself and Gloria as existing somewhere outside the social constraints of gender roles. He is naïvely unable to see that he, Bloeckman, and Gloria are caught in a classic love triangle as coded by society’s gender roles.



Anthony claims dissatisfaction with the artificiality of modern consumerist society even while he spends the day as a consumer, not even working to make the money he spends on sightseeing bus rides. He also seems to gain a sense of superiority by positioning himself physically above the crowd and remarking on their artificiality. Likewise, Gloria separates herself from the reality of her own mortality by looking down upon other victims of mortality. The couple requires separation from reality to be content. By counting down to Anthony and Gloria’s wedding, the narrator imposes an impending expiration date on the daydream that sustains them during their courtship.



Anthony goes to Tarrytown to tell his grandfather he is getting married. He is insulted when Adam Patch expresses skepticism about his and Gloria's ability to get by on their current income given Anthony's foolish spending habits. As Anthony turns to leave, Adam asks him if he would like to get married there at the house, like Anthony's father did. Anthony corrects Adam – in fact, his father got married in Boston. Adam Patch concedes that this was in fact the case. He tells his grandson that he has been thinking a great deal about the afterlife and that he thinks Anthony ought to think more about it himself. Anthony leaves the house feeling both elated and sorry for the forgetful old man.

Wedding plans are interrupted by the debut of Dick's novel and the attention he receives from it. He remains an usher in the wedding party, but Anthony and Gloria decide he is a bore. They are also unsatisfied with many of the gifts they receive, especially the check for \$5000 from Adam Patch. Mrs. Gilbert plans the arrangement of a hypothetical house for Anthony and Gloria. Adam Patch does not warm to Gloria or her mother, but he moves ahead in having his house prepared for the wedding. Again, the section ends mid-countdown, this time at three days left to go.

Alone in her room, Gloria pores over her diary, reminiscing about the list of men who are now in her past. She rereads the entries of April, during her courtship with Anthony. In one entry, she has enumerated the four different types of husbands: the one who stays in, has no vices, and works; the "atavistic master," "the worshipper," "And Anthony – a temporarily passionate lover with wisdom enough to realize when it has flown and that it must fly. And I want to get married to Anthony." Gloria also looks back at old entries, dating back to her first kiss at sixteen. Remembering the smells of rain, flowers, and damp grass that accompanied the kiss, she begins weeping and writes, at the end of the diary, "FINIS."

Alone in his apartment after the bridal dinner, Anthony climbs into bed, "feeling impersonal and fragile as a piece of china waiting on a serving table." He reflects that his youth was hollow and that he did not realize that his soul's union with Gloria's awaited him. He begins listening to the city and hears a woman's laughter mixed with a man's low voice. He gets out of bed and goes to the window, suddenly feeling horrified and disgusted by life for the first time in four months. He wishes he were outside, elevated above and detached from the city, able to live in the corners of his mind. He yells, "Oh, my God!" then buries his face in the pillows and rehearses details of the wedding tomorrow.

Anthony's elation when he leaves his grandfather seems due to the fact that Adam Patch is showing signs of age (a failing memory and preoccupation with death) that might mean Anthony will come into his inheritance soon. However, Anthony betrays his own youthful naïveté by celebrating his grandfather's impending death while scoffing at Adam Patch's concern about preparing for death. Anthony desires mortality insofar as it applies to his grandfather but is unable to reconcile himself with the fact that he is also aging and, indeed, running out of money.



Anthony and Gloria demonstrate that they are not satisfied with marriage to one another, but rather desire a showy wedding. In fact, they treat their wedding as a source of income, a job not to be overshadowed by Dick's career advancement. Mrs. Gilbert condones Gloria and Anthony's daydreaming by daydreaming a future on their behalf. Adam Patch, the social reformer, is wary of such fantasies but allows the wedding to proceed anyway. Again, the narrator counts down to let the reader know that Anthony and Gloria's romance is on the clock.



This scene is a rare moment in which the reader witnesses Gloria alone, not as an object of beauty but simply a character. Gloria's diary shows that her desire to marry Anthony is paradoxical, born out of an impulse to render permanent the temporariness of their love affair. She reflects on the sensory experience of her sexual awakening. On the brink of marriage, she does not feel as though she is beginning a life with Anthony, but rather as though the story of her life is over. Her own narrative of herself contrasts with Dick's notion of a woman's biography, starting with "the first kiss that counts" and ending with motherhood.



Anthony's moment alone starkly contrasts with Gloria's. Unlike her, he feels that his relationship with Gloria is the start of a new phase of life. However, his emotions are volatile, and his compulsion to compare himself to the rest of the world results in his thinking more about his detachment from society than about his impending marriage. He even feels like a "piece of china," or an object of social ritual which might either function as intended or be dropped or thrown by those who would use it. The idea of the wedding becomes a touchstone he must force his mind to dwell upon instead of his social anxiety.



Anthony wakes up early and envies that unlike Gloria, he cannot cover up his tired face with makeup. Looking at Gloria's wedding ring and their honeymoon tickets to California, he worries that he might have underestimated how much it will cost to constantly buy the gifts Gloria expects. Soon, however, he is distracted from his thoughts by the thought of how soon he will be married.

Fitzgerald uses the format of a scene in a play to present a conversation among six ushers in the wedding, including Dick and Maury. The men are all drinking in Adam Patch's library and jump quickly from one topic to the next. They discuss Dick's book, their surprise that Anthony's prohibitionist grandfather would host a wedding with alcohol, and Muriel Kane's inappropriate social conduct before asking each other trivia questions about biology. Their conversation halts when organ music begins in the background.

During the wedding, Anthony has trouble being excited and focuses more on the clergyman's gold teeth than on Gloria. He finally gets excited at the end of the wedding, when the weight of marriage settles upon him. Gloria, meanwhile, feels the importance of the wedding throughout. She looks at her weeping mother and feels that finally she is safe and secure. The narrator flashes forward to a night on the honeymoon when the clerk refuses to admit the young couple to their hotel because "He did not think that anything so beautiful as Gloria could be moral."

Over the course of the honeymoon and during the first few months of marriage, Anthony and Gloria find themselves less enamored of each other the more they get to know one another. Anthony begins talking to Dick more again, and Gloria finds herself attracted to other men. Anthony turns out to be a coward, which perplexes the fearless Gloria. One night in California, he jumps out of bed and phones the front desk because he is convinced he has heard a noise. Gloria pretends not to notice because she is ashamed. She placates herself by dwelling on his occasional recklessness, which she finds dashing.

Anthony again shows his vanity, which Fitzgerald genders feminine by associating it with Gloria. Fitzgerald also suggests that vanity and beauty are tied up in consumer culture by referring to Gloria's makeup, which covers up her flaws at a monetary cost. Anthony is aware that Gloria expects him to support her financially and that he does not have the means to do so in the long term, but he pushes off consideration of this reality by once again dwelling on his idealized dream of marriage.



This scene, which gives readers a glimpse into Anthony's social circle in his absence, shows that although Anthony is a flawed character, his propensity to sit around drinking all day, his tendency to judge others, and his short attention span are all rooted in a social scene that normalizes such behaviors. Fitzgerald's choice to format the scene like a play emphasizes the building drama leading up to Anthony and Gloria's wedding. It also marks Fitzgerald's work as part of the modernist tradition, which experimented with mixing generic forms such as the novel and theater.



After all the dramatic buildup to the wedding, the moment itself lets down Anthony, Gloria, and the reader by failing to resolve all of the couple's problems and being anticlimactic in general. As usual, Anthony is easily distracted by his compulsion to judge others. Gloria's focus on her mother, who is technically secure but also unhappy in her marriage, foreshadows Gloria's own future unhappiness. In fact, she might not even expect happiness in marriage. Even Gloria's feeling that marriage will make her safe and secure proves false by the vignette in which the hotel clerk refuses to believe that she is married. Her beauty curses her to a lifetime of social insecurity.



Anthony and Gloria's expectations for marriage are disappointed once their marriage transitions from far-off dream to reality, demonstrating that both of them have trouble realistically conceptualizing what they want and putting work into achieving it. Anthony's rekindled friendship with Dick shows that his initial all-consuming fascination with Gloria has worn off. Even as Anthony shows sides of himself Gloria does not like, she continues trying to convince herself that he is the unique husband she wants. She is purposefully deluding herself.



Meanwhile, Anthony finds that Gloria has a temper. For example, she throws a tantrum at a restaurant over the fact that she has been served chicken, which she has decided she does not want. She yells for several minutes and then, without warning, begins calmly eating. Anthony does not react. In another instance, when he confronts her about the fact that he is always the one to send the laundry out, she distracts him by asking to go to dinner. Later, when confronted again about the laundry, Gloria angrily begins shoving items in the laundry bag. Anthony again does not react but finds that similar occurrences begin happening with increasing frequency.

On their way home from the honeymoon, Anthony and Gloria stop in Washington and visit General Lee's old home in Arlington. The place has been turned into a tourist destination. Gloria has an outburst about how she doesn't want a renovated, up-kept version of the historical site. She would prefer to walk on the same gravel as Lee, weathered by the intervening years. "There's no beauty without poignancy," she says, "and there's no poignancy without the feeling that it's going – men, names, books, houses – bound for dust – mortal –" And a young boy appears and throws a handful of banana peels into the Potomac.

Anthony finds that discussions with Gloria are difficult because they have been educated differently based on their gender, and Gloria is not used to being challenged on her viewpoints. However, when she finds an interesting subject, she tires of it less easily than Anthony. They are equally matched at making each other sentimental. One day Gloria laments that they will never return to the two little beds in which they had been sleeping in Coronado on their honeymoon. They will always share a bed, but never again these beds. Later, Anthony returns to the hotel to find Gloria curled up with one of his shoes. Anthony interprets these two moments as signs that he and Gloria are "somewhere near the heart of love."

Anthony is likewise dissatisfied with Gloria for her temper. Mirroring her self-delusion about him, he fails to confront her. It seems that he hopes she will eventually get over her temper, but he has no realistic idea of how this will happen and no long-term plan for dealing with the frustration her temper ignites in him. Anthony's dissatisfaction with Gloria's failure to be demure in the restaurant and to willingly take care of the laundry shows that he has an image of the perfect wife, and that Gloria does not match this image as well as he thought she would.



Gloria again demonstrates that for her, beauty's poignancy depends on its ephemerality. This feeling is a problem for her character because she longs to be beautiful forever, something that is impossible if beauty depends on impermanence. Gloria's philosophy of beauty also seems at odds with the cultural context in which she exists. Modern society as Fitzgerald shows it believes that everything can be renewed through endless consumption, and individual beauty is thus as disposable as the banana peels the boy throws into the river.



Anthony's former belief that he and Gloria both have genderless minds proves false. Rather, it seems, they have both been more conditioned by their social upbringings than he would like to believe. However, he frames their trouble reconciling arguments as entirely Gloria's fault for being a woman. Fitzgerald emphasizes Anthony's shortsightedness in this assumption by showing the sentimentality of both Anthony and Gloria, which feminizes Anthony, marking his gendered distinctions false.



At twenty-three and twenty-six, Gloria and Anthony are beginning to be like the organ grinder who, at thirty, becomes “a more or less moth-eaten man who grinds an organ.” They dream of what they ought to do and where they ought to live. The narrator writes that, “It was vaguely understood between them that on some misty day he would enter a sort of glorified diplomatic service and be envied by princes and prime ministers for his beautiful wife.” At Dick’s suggestion, they look at houses in the country. Gloria insists that they must have one, but they are too expensive. Anthony decides they will purchase a car, so they can look further out in the country at cheaper houses. The couple gets into a fight when Gloria insists on driving recklessly. She crashes the car into a fire hydrant near a town called Marietta.

Immediately after having the car towed, Anthony and Gloria see a realtor’s sign at the garage. They rent a little gray house in Marietta. They envision Anthony working on his history book there in between trips to the golf club and kisses with Gloria. They will have a servant to prepare tomato sandwiches and lemonade. They argue over how often they will have guests. Gloria thinks Anthony’s desire to host guests indicates boredom with her. Anthony wants a dog, but Gloria wants a cat. They fall asleep without reaching an agreement but wake up thinking only of the house before their “dazzled eyes.”

Despite their many moments of disagreement, Anthony and Gloria also share serene moments. One night, they lie awake speaking of the men Gloria has kissed. Anthony says he would only be jealous if Gloria had done more than kiss them. He marvels that Gloria is not jealous on account of his relationship history. She says that just as the men she has kissed have left no mark on her, Anthony has never lived with another woman for a long period of time. Gloria changes the subject to ask for water with a “little” piece of ice. Anthony finds it endearing that she often uses the word “little” when asking for favors to make them seem less cumbersome.

Anthony and Gloria’s youthful dreaming quickly becomes a habit, so that they seem not to be working toward any particular future except more youthful dreaming. They both expect a glorious future but have no concept of how they will reach it. Additionally, they are unable to see that time is passing them by. They are still young, but there is nothing to stop them from becoming old without accomplishing anything should they continue in their current pattern. Despite knowing that he cannot afford it, Anthony caves easily to the pressure from society and from Gloria to find a country house to rent. The couple’s fight on the way to look at houses demonstrates that they can daydream together but fall into conflict as soon as they must carry out the work of bringing a daydream to fruition.



Anthony and Gloria demonstrate their inability to make thoughtful, responsible decisions together by renting the house in Marietta on impulse; they only manage to realize this dream when it falls into their laps. Additionally, their means of resolving arguments about owning the house is to fall asleep and forget their disagreements. They consistently fail to understand how to act as mature, married adults by avoiding every conflict until it disappears—at least temporarily.



Anthony and Gloria do seem to find some of each other’s flaws endearing. However, they still notice each other’s flaws, and Fitzgerald seems to be setting up possible points of frustration that may arise for the couple later on. The discussion of jealousy in particular foreshadows Anthony and Gloria’s difficulty with fidelity later on in their marriage.



One day, Anthony and Gloria begin joking about their disparate parts that could combine to make up their hypothetical baby or babies. Gloria cries when Anthony teases her about her short neck. He immediately backtracks, and she stops crying. He presents two possibilities: the “best” baby, with Gloria’s body and intelligence, and Anthony’s eyes and mind, or the “worst” baby, with Anthony’s body and irresolution, and Gloria’s disposition. Gloria says she likes the worst baby. Anthony goes on to propose two sets of triplets, raised in different countries and brought together at age twenty-three. Gloria jokes that they should all have her neck.

Social life in Marietta is disappointing. Gloria vents to Anthony about how simultaneously boring and anxiety-inducing it is to visit other young married women who all seem to be having children. There are few other social activities available, especially since neither enjoys golfing at the country club. Anthony is annoyed when Muriel Kane comes to visit, and Gloria is annoyed when Dick comes to visit. Anthony is relieved to hear Dick discuss his own trouble with motivation to continue writing after his early success. The novel’s epigraph can be found in this scene, when Anthony advises Dick, “Don’t let the victor belong to the spoils.”

In November, Anthony and Gloria move back to Anthony’s apartment in the city, where their social life is much more exciting. Anthony manages to complete a chapter of his history, and they are planning to go abroad when Mrs. Gilbert suddenly dies. Anthony and Gloria travel instead to Kansas City for the funeral. Gloria is inconsolable. Likewise, Mr. Gilbert is made entirely pathetic by the loss of the woman whose character he has broken for the purpose of waiting upon his body and mind.

Gloria has stated that she does not want children, but she seems to waver in this conviction when discussion turns to the perpetuation of her beauty in a child. Anthony is insensitive both to Gloria’s prior stated maternal ambivalence and to her sensitivity about her physical appearance, despite his own vanity. The couple seems to dream of children who would satisfy their own vanity or intellectual curiosity—they don’t discuss any desire to actually care for children. Anthony’s idea of having triplets raised in different countries even pushes off the responsibility of parenthood onto abstract, far-away people. Both Anthony and Gloria thus fail to understand the real implications of parenthood.



Gloria proves to have conflicting desires: on the one hand, she doesn’t really want to be a mother, but on the other, she feels displaced from her social circle because she doesn’t have children. Isolated in Marietta, Gloria and Anthony are unsatisfied with only each other’s company. Dick’s warning to Anthony proves too little too late as Anthony, born a privilege “victor,” appears already to have been taken by the “spoils” by desiring his friend’s and even his wife’s unhappiness so that he can appear comparatively successful in life.



Temporarily giving up the disappointing dream of the country house, Anthony and Gloria have a brief period of success—Anthony even completes some work. However, their ability to lead life as adults is derailed by the death of Gloria’s mother, which reinstates her childlike anxiety at separation from her mother. Mr. Gilbert serves as a mirror for Anthony, who might become dangerously dependent on Gloria should he “break” her into the mold of the ideal wife as he seems to want to do. Fitzgerald ensures that the reader sees this reflection, but it isn’t clear that Anthony does.



CHAPTER 5

After another spring traveling around California and socializing with other bourgeois couples, Gloria and Anthony realize they have spent too much money and decide to go into “retirement” in the little gray country house. There they are more aware than ever that other couples before them have walked the halls, and Gloria begins to panic about her advancing age – she will be twenty-four in August, which is just six short years from thirty. One day, Gloria says that it is a good thing she wants only Anthony because if she wanted something she would simply take it. Anthony is concerned by this statement and says that he could see himself wanting another woman but would never act on the impulse. What if Gloria were to take a fancy to someone else? She responds that this would be utterly impossible.

Anthony and Gloria hire a new servant named Tanalahaka, a Japanese man who lives with them in the country house. They call him Tana because he will respond to almost any summons. When he first arrives, he shows Anthony an array of collectible Japanese and American objects he keeps in his trunk. They have difficulty communicating because of their language barrier, which persists throughout Tana’s employment. The narrator describes the appearance of Tana as a “radical change in ménage” and characterizes him as a poor speaker of English and a fan of comic strips. Anthony’s fascination with Tana is followed up by a scene in which he attempts to take Gloria on an anniversary “date,” knocking on the door before sitting with her on the couch and exchanging pet names. However, neither is particularly sad to see the night end.

One day in June, Anthony and Gloria spend the afternoon at the beach. Anthony is in the midst of a conversation over Scotch when Gloria abruptly tells him they must leave. He follows her but decides that for once, he is going to assert his will over her. He demands that they go see Rachael Jerryl, who is now Mrs. Barnes. When Gloria fails to comply, they get into a heated argument. Anthony grabs Gloria’s arms, and Gloria shouts on the train platform and finally bites Anthony’s hand. Anthony forces her into a taxi cab to return to Marietta with him. At home, he passes out drunk. Later, Gloria flings herself on the bed and says that while she will always love Anthony, something has been irrevocably changed. Nevertheless, the narrator states, Gloria knows she will forget the incident in time. The couple never speaks of it again.

Rather than get rid of their second home, Anthony and Gloria move into it to save money. They have been relying on their social life for happiness, so their decision to save money by isolating themselves seems impractical and unlikely to last long. Indeed, being alone in the house leaves them ample time to reflect on and panic about the temporariness of their situation. Anthony worries that the marriage will not last, and Gloria worries that her beauty is fading. Imagining her beauty to be her only asset, she helplessly succumbs to oncoming age—Fitzgerald emphasizes her foolishness by stating that she isn’t yet twenty-four. Gloria is still young enough that she can’t imagine being attracted to another man, even though she has already experienced such extra-marital attraction. Still, she is so focused on her advancing age that she is unable to appreciate her youth while she has it.



It doesn’t necessarily seem that Fitzgerald is indicting Anthony for his racism in particular. In fact, the narrator describes Tanalahaka’s arrival as a change in “ménage,” the French word for furniture; although the narrator could be speaking in free indirect discourse, narrating the thoughts of Anthony rather than expressing Fitzgerald’s own sentiments, nowhere is there a direct contradiction to this objectification of Tanalahaka. Still, Anthony’s decision to hire a servant and subsequent racist treatment of that servant demonstrates that he desires to surround himself with people who make him feel superior. Ironically, Tanalahaka’s fascination with comic strips seems to echo Anthony’s childlike fascination with his stamp collection. Indeed, Anthony and Gloria demonstrate childlike behavior by playing pretend on their anniversary date, but they struggle to maintain their fantasy once back inside the house they cohabit.



In this scene, Anthony and Gloria play out the dynamic of Gloria’s parents’ marriage. Anthony is unable to dominate Gloria in the way Mr. Gilbert seems to have dominated Mrs. Gilbert. Gloria speaks as though the physicality of the encounter disturbs her deeply, but the narrator lets the reader know that she fails to be permanently shaken by the incident. Once again, Anthony and Gloria deal with their disagreement through avoidance.



Once Anthony has pointed out Gloria's fierce independence, she adopts it as a moral code. On the front porch of a neighbor in Marietta, she proclaims that she will never do a thing for anyone except herself and, by extension, Anthony. She passes out and must be brought home by the neighbor woman. Gloria wonders whether she is pregnant. She tells Anthony that she is not worried about the pain but rather about the loss of beauty her pregnancy would entail. When asked if he wants her to have the baby, he says he will be with her whatever she does as long as she is a sport about it. She says she will go see a friend the following day, and Anthony says he will go see his grandfather.

At Adam Patch's house, Anthony is discouraged to find that his grandfather does not recall reading the essay he recently sent over. Adam suggests that Anthony pursue a career as a war correspondent, which Anthony says he will have to consider. For one thing, it would entail separation from Gloria. On the train on the way home, Anthony runs into Joseph Bloeckman, who looks more dignified than he did a year ago. They discuss the adaptation of Dick's novel for the screen and discover that they now live only five miles apart. Anthony extends an open invitation to Bloeckman, indicating that Gloria would surely love to see an old friend. Bloeckman also asks after Anthony's grandfather, and Anthony says he is doing very well. Bloeckman calls Adam Patch a fine American.

At home, Anthony finds Gloria eating a tomato sandwich and drinking lemonade in the hammock, talking to Tana. Anthony reflects that Tana sounds as though he learned his information about Japan in a children's primer. Once Tana has left, Gloria tells Anthony that there is no chance she is pregnant. Anthony then tells her about his grandfather's proposal that he become a war correspondent. When asked, he lies and says he would not want to go without Gloria. They begin to discuss Anthony's need to work. They argue again, Gloria feeling as though Anthony blames her for his lack of productivity, and Anthony feeling that Gloria refuses to recognize the little work he has done on his writing.

The narrator has feminized Anthony, and here it seems that Gloria is trying to act masculine by representing herself and her husband outside the house. While the modern reader might not see a problem with this reversal of traditional gender roles, Fitzgerald is signaling that Anthony and Gloria's marriage is abnormal. The narrator never states that Gloria is going to have an abortion, but Anthony's question suggests that it is a consideration, and perhaps even takes place and isn't directly discussed. Their lack of desire to actually have a baby is both taboo and telling of their self-delusion in past conversations about children.



Anthony's dissatisfaction in his marriage is evident from the fact that he finds time away from Gloria desirable, even if it means working in a dangerous job, and from the fact that he no longer seems hostile toward Bloeckman. Although Anthony has inwardly celebrated the decline of his grandfather's health, he is reluctant to tell others of Adam Patch's increasing memory problems; he disagrees with most of the principles on which Adam Patch has the title of "fine American," but he does not dispute Bloeckman because he reaps the benefits of good social standing by relation if others continue to respect his grandfather.



Anthony once again finds a sense of superiority by infantilizing Tana. He seems to think that his grandfather's simple suggestion that he work as a war correspondent constitutes an adult accomplishment. It is uncertain whether or not Gloria has had an abortion, and Anthony moves quickly from that topic onto discussion of his own affairs. The characters use each other as scapegoats so they can avoid blaming themselves for their own unhappiness.



Joseph Bloeckman appears unannounced at the house one day. While he and Gloria discuss setting up a screen test for her to become an actress, Anthony wonders in amazement that both he and Bloeckman used to be so taken with Gloria. He looks forward to having Tana bring them alcohol. "Even Gloria's beauty," he reflects, "needed wild emotions, needed poignancy, needed death..." After Bloeckman leaves, Anthony says he hates actors and that no matter how bored Gloria is sitting on the porch all day, if she goes into the movies, he will go to Europe as a war correspondent. Gloria dissolves into tears. After sentimentally comforting one another, Gloria writes a letter to Bloeckman while Anthony writes one to his grandfather. "It was a triumph of lethargy," the narrator writes.

One day in July, Anthony comes home to find only Tana at the kitchen table, making a typewriter out of odds and ends. Tana says that Gloria is out with Bloeckman. Furious, Anthony plans what he will say in his outburst upon her return and even worries that she has run off to California with Bloeckman. When she finally shows up and says that she and Bloeckman were driving all over New York, Anthony fails to say anything at all.

On the morning of February 22, Anthony and Gloria must have Bounds remind them what day it is when they awake. They are just back from a two-day revel that was planned as a grand gesture before Anthony begins his new job on the 23rd. Anthony, who once used to argue with Maury over who would pay for dinner with Dick, now has less money than Dick. He and Gloria have decided to forego California this year and have discussed being more careful with money. Adam Patch has arranged for Anthony to work at this new desk job. Still, Anthony goes to borrow money from his broker on the 22nd. He must walk part way because he does not have enough money for the full cab ride and wouldn't dream of riding the subway. Late in the afternoon, he returns home to find Gloria asleep, clutching a child's doll.

Anthony's inability to appreciate Gloria manifests in disgust with Bloeckman, because Anthony cannot recognize his own shortcomings. No longer finding Gloria's beauty intoxicating, Anthony now turns to alcohol for entertainment. He feels that her beauty is not enough, but he also threatens to leave the country should she try to upstage him with a career in the movies. They see each other as rivals instead of partners. By comforting each other but continuing with their respective career plans, they lazily avoid the real confrontation necessary to a marriage, condoning each other's childlike resentment while clinging to their individual fantasies.



The narrator once again offers a racist portrayal of Tanalaha in which, like a child, he plays pretend with found objects. He serves as a foil for the childlike Anthony, who seems to judge Tanalaha while failing to see that he too is playing pretend by living the life of a successful man without actually working or accomplishing anything. Although Gloria may be trying to make Anthony jealous as she pursues life outside their marriage, it is Anthony who falls into infantile speechlessness upon her return, failing to confront her about his unease.



Anthony and Gloria know that their finances are rapidly draining, and they at least have enough wherewithal to plan for less spending and more income. However, they can only think of this plan in the abstract. It seems like an end to their life as they know it, and it seems so impossible that the first day of Anthony's new job will actually arrive that they lose track of the days. They demonstrate their inability to bid farewell to their childish impulsiveness, and dream of freedom from responsibility by marking the start of their adulthood with more irresponsible partying and spending. Anthony's image of Gloria in a childlike position, clutching a doll, underscores his ironic inability to recognize his own childish actions.



From this point onward, Gloria commits even more to her philosophy of doing only what she desires. Anthony tries to be excited about his new job but soon loses his ambition to work his way up the bureaucratic ladder. He frequently shows up to work hungover and finally quits, telling his boss that he is not cut out for the work. He is depressed after this, but Gloria comforts him and draws him back to the party scene. They come to be known as the color of every party. Wives dislike Gloria, and husbands love her. One day, Anthony and Gloria realize that during a drunken revel they re-signed the lease on the country house they had decided they could no longer afford. They discuss how they will have to give up Anthony's apartment, but they never arrange it with the realtor.

The following summer finds Anthony and Gloria hosting an endless stream of guests at the country house. Gloria moves into Anthony's room because she finds that her own room reminds her too much of the women who once occupied it but have now aged. She detests Tana ever since she found him lounging on Anthony's bed one day. The feeling is mutual, although Tana seems to like Anthony. The couple fails to dismiss Tana but rather "endures" him "as they endured all things, even themselves."

One evening, Dick and Maury come to the house with a stranger named Joe Hull. Gloria does not trust him and tells Anthony that she wishes he would use Tana's bathtub. Over the course of the evening, Dick and Maury repeatedly tell Gloria to cheer up. Dick picks her up against her will, and Hull does the same. Gloria escapes to an upstairs bedroom, where she listens to the rain for two hours. Suddenly, Hull appears in the doorway. Gloria runs out of the house and toward the train tracks. Anthony comes after her. She tells him she wants to go away, alone, but he insists on staying with her. Dick and Maury catch up with them. Hull, they say, is asleep in the house.

Gloria persuades the three men to at least stay outside by the train tracks if they insist on keeping her with them. Maury launches into the story of his education. He concludes that while writings such as the Bible endure the test of time, humans can only hope to make the world a better place by living in it but have no lasting existence on earth. Everyone falls asleep in the early morning except Maury. He stares out over the train tracks and reflects on the fact that everyone, including him, will soon return to the daily business of living.

As on previous occasions, Anthony and Gloria fail to follow through on their plans to manage their finances. Anthony rationalizes to himself and to his boss that he is simply not suited to this particular job. Rather than encourage him to continue trying, Gloria seconds his self-delusion. Meanwhile, Gloria rationalizes her own selfishness and irresponsibility by telling herself that they are consistent with her philosophy of life. The couple continues to talk about responsibility without ever backing up their talk with actions. Their retreat into drinking and partying to deal with their frustration feeds back into their poor decision-making in a vicious cycle.



Despite their dwindling finances, Anthony and Gloria maintain the image of wealth in the country house and parade their "success" in front of their friends, revealing that they prioritize their short-term image over their long-term prospects. The narrator has previously described Tanalahaka as piece of furniture in Anthony and Gloria's house, and the way Anthony and Gloria keep him around despite their dislike of him is symptomatic of their inability to rid themselves of the trappings of the wealth into which they were born.



It seems that Gloria narrowly avoids sexual assault in this scene. Certainly, she endures sexual harassment from not only Joe Hull but also from Dick and Maury, confirming that the men in her life see her as an object of desire rather than as a person. Gloria's complaint to Anthony reveals her continued racist disgust with Tanalahaka, but his neglect to respond reveals that he is oblivious and unresponsive to Gloria's troubles. They share a residence and a room but are alone in their marriage. Anthony reveals his inability to understand or respect anyone's desires but his own when Gloria asks to be alone, and he follows her anyway.



Maury's melancholy speech on his resignation to the meaninglessness of life reveals that unlike the others, he understands that he is bound to the daily schedule of productive society. Fitzgerald does not necessarily glorify the system that demands such a daily schedule. However, Maury at least recognizes its existence, while Anthony and the others demonstrate their continued ignorance by falling asleep exactly when they should be rising to go to work.



CHAPTER 6

The chapter opens in the format of a scene from a play. The narrator sets the scene in the country house, which is in disarray. A man named Frederick E. Paramore, one of Anthony's Harvard classmates, shows up looking for Anthony. Tana tells him that Anthony and Gloria are out with friends they are hosting. Paramore, a subscriber to National Geographic, is interested in what Tana has to say about Japan. The phone rings but goes unanswered. Maury shows up at the front door. Paramore greets him, but Maury does not remember him. When Anthony and Gloria show up with their entourage, Anthony pretends to remember Paramore, who says he just learned Anthony lived nearby.

Paramore says he does not drink alcohol, but by the end of the evening, even he is partaking of the revelry. Gloria complains to Anthony that he is paying too much attention to Rachael Barnes, née Jerryl. She drunkenly says that if his attention can wander, hers can too. Suddenly, Adam Patch and Shuttleworth show up. Shuttleworth says he phoned ahead and left a message. Adam Patch says only, "We'll go back now, Shuttleworth," and the pair leaves. The scene ends.

For some time, Anthony and Gloria have been increasingly capable of indifference and even hatred toward one another. At 26, Gloria is afraid of her advancing age. It seems increasingly unlikely that they will achieve the dream of happiness they have long thought will come with money. They are nervous about the looming "money problem" and are beginning to realize that they are dependent upon alcohol. The August morning after Adam Patch's appearance at the house, they awake to find that their anxiety has crossed over into fear.

Anthony and Gloria discuss what to do. They wish Adam Patch had died a week ago, before witnessing the party. Anthony decides to go speak to his grandfather. In the midst of this conversation, Gloria says that if Anthony ever acts around a woman the way he acted around Rachael Barnes, she will leave him. Anthony ignores her. His visit to his grandfather is unsuccessful – Shuttleworth tells him that Adam is ill. Later, Gloria and Anthony write an apology letter to the old man, but it goes unanswered.

Paramore's exoticization of Tanalahaka is consistent with the novel's racist treatment of the Japanese man, but his interest in what Tanalahaka has to say instead of in what his presence says about Anthony and Gloria's social status demonstrates that the couple has been deluding themselves with their performance of wealth. Neither Maury nor Anthony remembers Paramore, but Anthony's insistence upon pretending to know who he is shows Anthony's continued investment in maintaining the image of being socially well-connected.



Anthony and Gloria's lifestyle proves tempting and dangerous even to Paramore, who claims not to drink. This representation of the seductive dangers of alcohol recalls Fitzgerald's own struggles with alcoholism, as well as Adam Patch's crusade for prohibition, foreshadowing his dramatic arrival and departure. Anthony and Gloria's mistrust of one another grows and drives them apart in the moments before the threat of reality comes crashing down: the man who holds their purse strings and disapproves of their lifestyle now knows exactly what his money has been financing.



Even as Anthony and Gloria wake to their financial reality, they continue to misunderstand the realities of time and aging. If they are to achieve happiness, it seems they must uncouple this dream from the spoiling dream of wealth. Gloria in particular falls back upon her beauty as the basis of happiness, but she spoils her own chance at happiness by worrying about her fading beauty during the days when she could most enjoy her youthful appearance.



Anthony and Gloria are so caught up in their selfishness and in their childish inability to imagine working to support themselves that they actively wish death upon Anthony's grandfather. This wish is even more extreme in light of Anthony's own phobia of death; the fact that the thought of his grandfather's death does not make him feel fragile as well demonstrates his feeling that he is somehow immune to the disasters that befall others.



In September, Anthony and Gloria leave the country house. Gloria scolds Anthony for packing his **stamp collection**. He says he was looking at it the day they left the apartment last spring and decided not to store it. Gloria suggests that he sell it, to which he responds only, "I'm sorry." Gloria exclaims that she hates the country house.

On the train back to the city, Anthony and Gloria continue to quarrel. Anthony asks Gloria not to be cross because they have only each other. They fall silent, and he reminisces about their experiences in the countryside as they pass through it. Gloria interrupts his thoughts by wondering aloud where Bloeckman has been over the summer.

Anthony is now twenty-nine, and he is beginning to feel as though he has wasted his youth. Shortly before leaving the country house, he read a bulletin detailing some of his Harvard classmates' careers. Compared to them, he has done very little since graduation. He resolves that in the absence of great success, he will make himself as safe and comfortable as possible. To this end, he tries to renew the lease of his old apartment. It is far too expensive, and the neighbors' complaints about noise the previous winter make the building owner wary to re-rent to Anthony.

Anthony reveals to Gloria that their income is down to \$600 a month after all their spending over the last few years. They must move out of the Ritz, even if not to the old apartment. They find a more modest apartment and hire an Irishwoman to fill the place of Bounds or Tana. Anthony decides to appeal to his grandfather once more when he hears that the old man has fallen gravely ill.

Shuttleworth refuses to let Anthony see Adam Patch. Irritated, Anthony returns to New York, where he and Gloria spend a tense week. One night, he tells her of a time he yielded to his urge to kick a cat. When Gloria begins sobbing, he tries to tell her he made the story up. She does not believe him and goes on weeping until she falls asleep that night.

Anthony and Gloria's disagreement over the stamp collection shows their inability to communicate about what is most important to them. At the same time, Anthony's refusal to sell the stamp collection reveals a childish attachment. Once again, he demonstrates an infantile failure to verbalize his feelings.



Both Anthony and Gloria prefer to daydream rather than coming up with real solutions to their distressing situation. However, they have different daydreams that demonstrate their irreconcilable desires. Gloria's verbalization of her daydream is probably motivated by an immature desire to hurt Anthony.



Anthony is still young enough to build a career for himself, but he sets himself up for failure by assuming that he is too old and so deciding to put off his career even longer. The landlord's hesitation to let Anthony back into the comfort and safety of his apartment, which he thinks of as his sanctuary, signals that his immaturity is beginning to lead to life-altering consequences.



Even while accepting some of the consequences of their foolish over-spending and immature lifestyle, Anthony and Gloria reduce their expenses only minimally, still insisting upon having a servant to signal their social status (and because they're incapable of taking care of themselves). They think of their situation as temporary and still cling to the idea that they must receive a large inheritance because society has promised it to them.



Emotionally stunted by his sheltered upbringing, Anthony does not know how to deal with his frustration except by taking it out on others, such as Gloria and the unsuspecting cat. Gloria's deep upset might signal that she identifies with the cat as the object of Anthony's abuse.



Adam Patch dies in November. Anthony and Gloria attend the funeral nervously. After a week of not hearing anything about the will, Anthony finally calls his grandfather's lawyer. When he hangs up the phone, he says to Gloria, "He did it. God damn him!"

Anthony goes to see a lawyer, Mr. Haight. They discuss how it was only in August, after the party, that Adam Patch disinherited Anthony. Of the forty million dollars comprising the estate, most has been willed to Shuttleworth, and the remainder is to be divided among two distant cousins in Idaho and about twenty-five other beneficiaries. For a fee of fifteen thousand dollars, Mr. Haight signs on to contest the will on Anthony's behalf.

As the lawsuit gets underway, Anthony and Gloria continue their partying habits. They keep meaning to work come Monday, but it never happens. Rumors begin to circulate about them. Even Muriel Kane tells them that they need to settle down and have a baby. Anthony and Gloria have as many marital problems as ever, but this confrontation temporarily unites them against a common enemy, Muriel.

Anthony begins to associate himself with the night elevator operator, who never seems to leave the apartment building and who has the air of someone above his station. One night he is killed by robbers. His replacement is a black man from Martinique. Anthony reacts to the story of the elevator operator as Gloria reacted to his story about the kitten.

Anthony finally tries in earnest to write. He criticizes Dick for the fallen quality of his writing, but when Anthony does finish a short story, the editor to whom he submits it thinks Anthony has written an "abominable" piece. Anthony writes six stories, and every last one is rejected.

Whereas Gloria was affected by her mother's death to the point of childish displays of grief, Anthony is so blinded by his desperation for money that he's unable even to display the proper amount of grief. Ironically, his desire to maintain his social status leads him to social faux pas.



Anthony feels so strongly that he deserves the inheritance that he goes in search of a loophole, and society affords him the possibility of this. Instead of shocking him into responsibility, the legal processes surrounding inheritance string Anthony along, enticing him to spend additional money on a treasure hunt that is unlikely to yield a successful outcome.



Anthony and Gloria's unstable marriage, which has led them both to their current financial woes, is steadied in the wake of society's pressure to conform to a standard timeline of adulthood. They are thus trapped in a cycle that drives them deeper into an unhappy marriage and deeper into an untenable lifestyle. Again, their lack of parental desire marks them as outsiders in a society where they desperately want to excel.



Anthony identifies with the elevator operator the same way Gloria identified with the kitten, feeling as though the victimization of the man reverberates onto Anthony himself. The incident confirms the fragility of Anthony's position in society. The replacement elevator operator's status as a racial "other" and an immigrant demonstrates how easily Anthony could slip into identification with an outsider.



Rather than put in the work to edit his pieces until they are ready to publish, as Dick did with his novel, Anthony abandons each rejected attempt and starts over. His history of being handed opportunities on a platter has conditioned him to believe that success happens instantaneously rather than after invested time and effort.



In mid-January, Gloria's father dies. She and Anthony travel to Kansas City for the funeral, but Gloria thinks this whole time not of her father but of her mother. She tells Anthony she is a Bilphist, which he finds ridiculous. Gloria is equally disgusted by Anthony's failure to get any of his stories published. Out of inertia, they stop really trying to curb their expenses. They cycle between spending sprees and moroseness over how untenable their situation is. Gloria says that at least she will have seized the day in her youth. Meanwhile, Mr. Haight assures them that the lawsuit is likely to go to trial by summer.

Gloria is increasingly attached to her deceased mother as her marriage begins more and more to resemble that of her parents. The couple once again fails to change their spending habits because they are accustomed to an upper-class lifestyle, and this failure directly threatens their status among the upper class. Gloria's justification for her spending does not hold water because, although she is spending money while young, she is hardly enjoying her youth, and instead mostly dreading its decline.



Bloeckman pays Gloria a few more visits. Anthony is outraged by the idea of Gloria becoming an actress and making money. Gloria tells him he should make some of his own money in that case. They have one of their most intense fights over this subject, neither stating the fact that they both know Anthony is jealous of Bloeckman's interest in Gloria.

Gloria and Anthony have become so accustomed to disagreeing over money and their respective careers (or lack thereof) that they use this old argument as a surrogate for their other marital problems. Their illusive confidence early on in their marriage that they would never be unfaithful to one another has given way to increasing feelings of jealousy on both their parts, nearly as unfounded as their fantasy of eternal happiness together.



In April, war is declared with Germany. Anthony takes on "a new glamour" as military service is glorified, and he, Dick, and Maury submit applications to go to officer training camps. However, Anthony fails a blood-pressure test, and the doctor refuses to recommend him for officer training.

Anthony, Dick, and Maury's glorification of military service is symptomatic of their dangerous susceptibility to societal trends and ideologies. The absurdity of Anthony's belief that he has the strength of will to be an army officer stands out when he fails to pass even the preliminary test to determine that he has the physical strength to try.



In July, they lose the lawsuit. Mr. Haight immediately files an appeal. As Anthony and Gloria plan what they will do once they finally win, Anthony is drafted. No doctor fails to recommend him this time. He tells Gloria disinterestedly that he hopes he will die. They decide that she will stay in the apartment while he is at the southern camp. When he leaves, she barely makes it to the train station in time to see him across the crowd. They remain too far apart to see each other's tears.

By establishing that Anthony is physically too weak for military training and then having him drafted anyway, Fitzgerald reminds the reader that despite all of Anthony's flaws, society is also at fault for his demise. Anthony is so downtrodden by the broken promise of the lawsuit that he surrenders to the possibility of death. Depressed, he and Gloria can only dredge up feelings for one another when they are torn apart.



CHAPTER 7

On the train to the training camp, Anthony sits next to a Sicilian man who doesn't talk much. The men are told not to smoke, but a moment later this instruction is rescinded. Anthony smokes along with all the others. He reads a newspaper for a time. In the midst of an article about a debate in Shakespeareville, Kansas, over what to call the American troops, his mind wanders to Gloria and why she might have been late to the train station. He returns to the paper and reads that the Shakespeareville Chamber of Commerce settled on "Liberty Lads."

By the end of the train ride, everyone is overheated. Anthony doesn't like the food but must get used to it. The camp smells of garbage, and Anthony must get used to an exhausting routine of physical examinations and drills. The only part of his daily routine he enjoys is calisthenics, when he feels he is doing something worthwhile. He thinks it is ridiculous that the blood pressure problem that prevented him from becoming an officer does not prevent him from being a private.

After a week's quarantine, Anthony is allowed to go into town. An officer yells at him to salute as he passes. Anthony hates the indignity of his position. A girl in a lilac dress and her friend witness the encounter and laugh. Anthony approaches her afterwards and walks both girls home. He is mesmerized by the girl in lilac, whose social status he can't tell from her southern accent. He convinces her to go to a movie with him.

The girl in lilac turns out to be named Dorothy Raycroft. Anthony embarks on an affair with her not because he finds her more captivating than Gloria but because she represents a rest from his daily routine at the training camp. After that first evening together, he kisses her. Reminded momentarily of his former passion for Gloria, he returns to the camp to write her a letter.

Anthony is out of place among the other recruits and seems to follow along with whatever they are doing. Anthony's difficulty fitting in, which he has always been able to pass off as a kind of superiority, seems as though it might cause problems at a military training camp. However, Fitzgerald also criticizes the military as a "patriotic" institution by emphasizing the arbitrariness of the rules and the names of the troops. They are only "Liberty Lads" insofar as everyone has agreed to call them by this name.



Now that he is confronted with the reality of the training camp, Anthony no longer glorifies the military lifestyle. The blood pressure problem that initially humiliated him now seems appealing, demonstrating that Anthony's desire to be in the military has always been self-serving rather than born of any deep-seated patriotism.



One of Anthony's primary struggles with his military position is the expectation that he will defer to superior officers. He is drawn to the girl in lilac not simply because he finds her sexually attractive but, moreover, because she is of a mysterious social class. He seems determined both to find out her social class and to prove that he is of a higher standing than the officer she sees yell at Anthony.



Despite the sour terms on which Anthony departed from Gloria, his infidelity is not motivated by his dissatisfaction in his marriage. Rather, he sees Dorothy as a diversion from the training camp. She is an opportunity to escape from the disciplined work that is finally being forced upon him. In fact, in Gloria's absence, he begins to idealize her once more.



Dorothy Raycroft is nineteen. She graduated high school in the lowest quarter of her class two days before the death of her father, a relatively unsuccessful shop owner. Everyone in town knows the story of how she slept with a store clerk who immediately moved away to New York. She has since flung herself into affairs with two other men. She has kissed others but maintains a “trio” of past sexual partners. When she meets Anthony, he reminds her of her own tragedies. The first night they meet, she whispers, “Do you love me?” and he just kisses her.

Anthony realizes that for the first time in his life, he is in the same ranks as the men who have always served him. He barely talks to any of them, and they are suspicious of him as a member of the leisure class on account of his profession being listed first as “author” and then as “student.” Each week he goes into town to get drunk. He feels that he is “pulling one over” on the government by doing so. As the weeks go by, he watches a few of the other men get on the captain’s bad side through such infractions as neglecting to shave often enough.

By December, Anthony and Gloria’s briefly passionate correspondence has dropped off. She updates him on such affairs as the lawsuit, which has been pushed back to spring again. Anthony reflects that he does not want Gloria to come South for a number of reasons, but mostly it is because of his attraction to Dorothy. He spends nearly every night with her. He likes that unlike Gloria, who is his equal, to her his caresses are a “boon.” She sometimes dreams that he will divorce Gloria. She has forgotten her former lovers and constantly tries to get him to profess his love to her. He never enunciates the phrase, “I love you.”

Anthony receives a promotion to corporal. He thinks about the fact that he is now a soldier instead of a civilian and realizes that the world is divided into two classes: “their own kind – and those without.” It has never occurred to him before that he is among a privileged class in every way. During this period, he continues to receive letters from Gloria that express more and more regret for how things have turned out. In June, she suddenly stops writing.

Dorothy Raycroft’s social reputation mirrors Anthony’s, but she has gained hers from her low social standing and a series of missteps, whereas he has gained his from his high social standing and blind fall from grace. Their relationship echoes Anthony and Gloria’s early relationship, when Anthony professed his love and Gloria failed to respond. This time, Anthony is the one who fails to respond. Unable to see the ways in which they are similar, Anthony doesn’t seem to think of Dorothy as a person deserving of either his love or the respect of leaving her alone.



Anthony’s sudden realization that he is among the working class not only reveals his obliviousness to his own privilege, but it is also false. The class divisions beyond the training camp hold true enough that Anthony is isolated from the rest of the camp on account of his self-identification as an academic. What’s more, Anthony feels secure enough in his social position that he feels proud to frame his illicit drinking as a thwarting of authority, whereas others might be afraid of losing their jobs.



Dorothy is desirable to Anthony because he feels that he is desirable to her in a way that he is not to Gloria. However, Anthony and Dorothy seem to miscommunicate about their relationship in a way that recalls Anthony and Gloria’s many misunderstandings. While Anthony thinks he is living a dream, Dorothy dreams of a permanent life with Anthony. Anthony does not reciprocate the intensity of Dorothy’s feelings and fails to take them into account.



Anthony’s realization of social stratification arrives late, but it emphasizes the fact that his promotion to corporal is the first concrete advancement Anthony has ever achieved through all of his false career starts. He takes the promotion as confirmation that he is indeed one of “their own kind,” deserving of all the privilege he has. He even takes for granted that Gloria will always be there, sending letters, until she abruptly withdraws.



As spring passes into summer, Anthony continues enjoying his days with Dorothy while other men fare far worse at the camp. The Sicilian who Anthony initially sat next to on the train is tasked with fitting shoes to horses, despite his great fear of horses. The captain does nothing to help him, and the Sicilian eventually has his skull crushed by a rearing stallion.

In mid-July, Anthony must tell Dorothy that the camp is being relocated to Mississippi and that he is leaving. She breaks down in tears, accusing him of returning to Gloria and telling him that she will die if he leaves. Her tone frightens him, and he invites her to come with him when he leaves.

Mid-September at Camp Boone, Mississippi, Anthony tries and fails to write a letter to Gloria. He worries about her silence and wonders if she, like him, has found a new lover. He remembers her remark that if she ever wanted something she would simply take it, but comforts himself by recalling that she eventually realized her own capacity for jealousy regarding him. Having applied and been denied for a furlough to go see her, he is attempting to write her to come visit him.

Meanwhile, Anthony has been keeping Dorothy in a boarding house in town. In the midst of his letter writing, he eagerly takes a phone call that he hopes is Gloria but that turns out to be Dorothy. She tells him she must see him and threatens suicide if he does not come immediately. He rushes off to the boarding house and stays with her for a few hours. Upon his late return, which he knows is forbidden, he gives a fake name to the guard so that his record will not be marred. However, the guard recognizes him a few days later. He is stripped of the rank of corporal and sentenced to three weeks in the guard-house.

During his sentence in the guard-house, Anthony has an increasingly paranoid sense that he is being watched. He attempts to exhaust himself with the physical labor of spreading gravel so he can just fall asleep at the end of the day. He grows physically weaker and eventually collapses. When he comes to, he finds a terse letter from Gloria asking him to come to New York for the trial in November, along with a tear-stained, incoherent letter from Dorothy. At noon, he is sent to the hospital with influenza. He recovers just in time for the regiment to go to New York in November.

Anthony has carved out a space of exception for himself even at the training camp, where all the recruits are supposed to learn to conform to military standards. The death of the Sicilian represents not only Anthony's avoidance of commonness but also of death. In this instance, commonness and death are conflated as inextricable threats to his sense of superiority.



Dorothy's reaction to the news that Anthony's camp is relocating shatters the illusion under which Anthony has been operating. His relationship with her threatens to have real ramifications for him should he dissolve it.



Anthony's interest in Gloria is renewed now that he has realized that Dorothy does not offer the uncomplicated relationship about which he has fantasized. But in a way, his current relationship with Gloria is more of a fantasy than his relationship with Dorothy, because they have not seen each other, have ignored each other's letters, and seem unlikely to see each other again any time soon. Anthony's worries about Gloria's fidelity betray his guilt about his own infidelity.



Anthony's pursuit of Dorothy as an escape from camp and from his relationship with Gloria fully backfires in this scene. He is now spending extra money he does not have on her housing and he must deal with her suicide threats. The resultant loss of his rank is not only an inconvenience but also robs him of the advanced standing he so coveted. Again, Anthony's renewed interest in Gloria is directly related to his disenchantment with Dorothy.



The fact that Anthony's punishment makes him physically ill underscores how unsuited he is to the military. His physical weakness recalls his feminization in relation to Gloria and his infantilization in relation to Tanalahaka. He has completely lost control of the course of his life, strung along by Gloria, Dorothy, and the regiment wherever they will have him go.



By the time the regiment reaches Long Island, an armistice is imminent. However, troops are still being sent to France. The thought of being shipped to France as a replacement sickens Anthony, and he tries immediately to get a furlough to go see Gloria in the city. He is disappointed to learn that no private is allowed to leave the camp on account of influenza quarantine. However, within a day, the regiment is disbanded as Germany surrenders. After the captain's lecture about how the troops shouldn't count the war as over yet, Anthony runs off base, clicking his heels.

It seems to take years to get through the city and back to the apartment where Anthony hopes to find Gloria. She is out at the Armistice Ball when he arrives. He rifles through her things for a sign that she is having an affair and breaks down in sentimental tears when he discovers a pile of his own letters tied together with a blue ribbon. "I'm not fit to touch her," he says. "I'm not fit to touch her little hand." He leaves the apartment for the Astor, where the ball is being held. He sees her across the room and makes his way through the crowd to her. They reunite with a kiss.

CHAPTER 8

A year ago, when Anthony left for the officer training camp, Gloria walked through the crowd away from the train station a shell of her former self. She has been unhappy with Anthony for a year but nonetheless loves him. She writes him a letter expressing her love as soon as she gets home, then falls asleep. She realizes that she has few friends and is very lonely without Anthony, even though she does not enjoy his company. She keeps meaning to go see him in the South, but the lawyer keeps telling her the lawsuit is about to go to trial. After a time, she reconnects with Rachael Barnes. A few drinks in, she decides she likes Rachael and forgives her for her flirtation with Anthony and for witnessing the disastrous arrival of Adam Patch at the party in Marietta.

Rachael invites Gloria to dinner with two military captains. After dinner, they all retire to Rachael's house, where each captain picks a woman with whom to flirt. Gloria's captain tells her she should stop drinking, and she defiantly takes another drink. She shivers when she sees Rachael kissing the other officer. Rachael offers Gloria a room to stay overnight with the officer who has been flirting with her, but Gloria declines. In the cab on the way home, she feels indignant that the officer did not even try to get her to come home with him.

Anthony's desire for Gloria appears to be at its height when reaching her would mean abandonment of another commitment. Although Fitzgerald has demonstrated skepticism about the military's project, it also appears that Anthony's fear of death and feeling that he should be exempt from common obstacles makes him unpatriotic and a poor citizen.



While Anthony is touched to realize that the indifference he imagined on Gloria's part was a false assumption, finding the letters does not snap him back to reality so much as allow him to spin a new fantasy in which Gloria is the perfect wife. Indeed, Anthony sets his fantasy up to fizzle out by claiming that Gloria is intangibly perfect, then rushing off to touch her anyway. The chapter ends triumphantly, but Fitzgerald includes two more chapters to spoil this potential "happy ending."



Aside from the chapter in which Gloria sits alone in her room before the wedding, this is one of the first instances the reader gets a glimpse into Gloria's inner mind. Despite constantly surrounding herself with people, Gloria is profoundly lonely with or without company. This loneliness is indicative of the way Anthony and others treat Gloria—not as a person with thoughts and feelings in which they are interested, but rather as a "society girl," an object of beauty to be gazed upon and desired. Gloria's forgiveness of Rachael suggests that her upset after the party in Marietta has less to do with Rachael and more to do with her feelings of abandonment within the marriage she entered with the hope of being "safe and secure."



Gloria is torn between the desire to feel wanted and the desire to remain loyal to Anthony, who after all is supposed to be the partner who will solve her loneliness in the long term. Gloria's insistence on drinking is no doubt partly indulging a habit, but this scene also reveals that many of her behaviors, including drinking, are motivated by a desire to defy authority figures who tell her what is good for her.



In February, an old flame comes to New York with the Aviation Corps and calls upon Gloria. She had once intended to marry him. She finds that she loves him not at all, although he still seems to love her just as much as ever. She sentimentally kisses him one evening and is glad to have done so, because the following day, his plane is shot down over Minneola.

When the trial is postponed again to fall, Gloria decides to try becoming an actress without telling Anthony. As time passes, she realizes from his letters that he does not want her to come visit, so she starts to think less about him. She passes the time with a series of suitors. She tells her friends that Anthony has been made corporal, but no one seems to care. When his letters grow more frequent for a time and then drop off entirely, she begins to worry and must restrain herself from going to Mississippi. A telegram tells her that he was in the hospital with influenza but has recovered and will shortly be in New York.

A week after Anthony and Gloria's reunion at the Armistice Ball, Anthony's regiment must return to Mississippi to be officially discharged. Anthony is relieved not to run into Dorothy there. He can think only of Gloria now. He is unmoved by the captain's emotional speech about honor and duty. He returns eagerly to New York.

By February, two months after Anthony's return, he and Gloria are back to quarreling and spending more money than they have. They can no longer afford their apartment. One day, when Anthony comes home drunk, Gloria laments that she can't afford a fur coat. Anthony says of course she can, and Gloria tells him she is sick of relying on bonds to finance their lifestyle, which they always say they will change but never do. For example, Anthony told her earlier that he was not going to drink today, but now he is drunk. Gloria feels resentful and hopeless.

Anthony considers writing for newspapers but is unable to find a suitable job. One day, when perusing the paper, he finds an ad for a salesman position. He answers the call and finds himself in a room full of prospective salesmen, listening to a man extoll the virtues of pamphlets called "Heart Talks." These pamphlets, which the salesmen would be tasked with pedaling, profess to be about "the principal reasons for a man's failure and the principal reasons for a man's success."

Gloria's feeling before her wedding that her story is "fnis" seems temporarily contradicted by the appearance of the former lover, who likely made an appearance earlier in her diary. However, this hope is shattered by his sudden death, which confirms Gloria's utter aloneness. The fact that he is a military man and dies a hero's death both emphasizes Anthony's cowardice, previously criticized by Gloria, and serves as a reminder that Anthony could die in the military as well.



Gloria's infidelities during the time Anthony is away, and the drop-off in the flow of her letters to him, is motivated not by lack of interest but by a concerted effort to feel less lonely when he seems to have little interest in her. Not only does she feel abandoned by him, but her real pride in Anthony's promotion gets her little attention from her friends after several years of boasting about Anthony's career plans that never go anywhere. Gloria is frustrated but remains invested in Anthony's wellbeing. She truly seems to love him.



Rekindled romance with Gloria still remains just out of Anthony's grasp while he travels back to Mississippi. Once again, Anthony is excited about what he has almost achieved and is glad to avoid the reality he knows might await him in Mississippi.



Like clockwork, Anthony and Gloria are back at each other's throats the minute there is a sense of permanence to their reunion. They also fall easily back into financial trouble now that Anthony once again has no real income and is not being supported by the training camp. Their reliance on bonds is hypocritical, because to purchase bonds is to buy into a financial system from whose rules they wish to be exempt. For all Gloria claims to want to change her lifestyle, she only wants to change it so that she can purchase more lavish, beautiful items, like a fur coat.



After Anthony's former vague justifications for his own failure, the reader should be skeptical of his assessment that none of the newspaper jobs listed are suitable. On the contrary, the ever-lazy Anthony is likely not suitable for the jobs. No more does he seem suited to sell pamphlets about reasons for success and failure. In fact, he seems to be the target audience for the Heart Talks.



Anthony reports back to Gloria about Heart Talks, laughing at the ridiculousness of the salesmanship scheme. She tells him he can't give up again and convinces him to go back to buy in as a salesman. Anthony is one of only a handful of men to sign up as salesmen. They are all encouraged to be "pushers" and to buy stock in the pamphlets to increase their personal interest in the matter.

Anthony's first attempt at selling the pamphlets is a disaster. To get his foot in the door of an architect named Weatherby, he tells the man's assistant that he is there on a personal matter. When it becomes clear to Weatherby that Anthony is a salesman, he strides into his inner office and shuts the door in Anthony's face. Anthony spends the next hour bolstering his confidence with whiskey. He thinks of his next sale attempt as a success. Although he fails to sell the plumber anything because the man is off to lunch, he tells himself that he would have made a sale were the man not hungry. Time after time, he politely takes no as an answer from his marks. He gets progressively drunker as he tries to sell pamphlets to a series of bartenders.

Very drunk, Anthony decides once and for all that he is going to make a sale at a delicatessen. He tries to parrot the speech he was pitched when he answered the ad from the paper, but he can barely get his words out. When the proprietor threatens to call the police, Anthony stumbles out to the street and takes a cab home.

When prohibition passes in July, Anthony counterintuitively finds alcohol even more readily available than before, because it is now a badge of honor to have it on offer. He becomes increasingly argumentative with not only Gloria but also with Maury. He often has hazy memories of these arguments.

Anthony has not laid a hand on Gloria in anger since the incident on the train platform after the day at the beach. However, their relationship is volatile. He hates her as much as he loves her. Gloria continues to want a squirrel fur coat, and their inability to afford it is a constant reminder of their growing financial anxiety, which is mounting to panic. Gloria resents that one week, during which they are thrown out of a theater because Anthony begins removing his clothing, they spend as much money partying as they would have spent on the coat.

Anthony's derision of the Heart Talks salesmanship scheme demonstrates his own lack of self-awareness, given that he himself appears to create a market for them. Gloria finally works to motivate Anthony to work instead of to give up work, but the result promises to be just as financially disastrous, given that the pamphlet makers use his position as salesman to dupe him into buying stock in the pamphlets.



Anthony demonstrates more determination at salesmanship than we have seen in any other career endeavor, but he is still a poor salesman. Like with his short stories, he repeats the same mistakes over and over again instead of using each failure as a learning opportunity. Anthony's use of alcohol to get through the working day shows not only that he is developing a serious drinking problem but also that, as ever, he is able to spin elaborate self-delusions about the reality of his situation.



Anthony's drunkenness has reduced him to the same infantile speechlessness he has demonstrated on occasions fraught with emotion. His retreat from salesmanship is also a retreat into the comfort and safety of his home, where he can hide from all adult responsibility.



Anthony's drinking problem causes him to become ever more disconnected from his social circle. In an ironic and sad way, Anthony is achieving his lifelong desire of existing among people but simultaneously removed from them.



Anthony and Gloria frequently act like martyrs to their own dire straits, but the fact that they spend as much as Gloria's coveted fur coat on partying in one week demonstrates that they could have the items they deny themselves if they only changed their lifestyle. The reader thus sees that they are entirely incapable of impulse control and that they self-sabotage in order to feel sorry for themselves.



In November one night, Gloria tosses and turns and asks Anthony for ice water. She reflects uneasily that she did not try hard enough to find love in her youth, feeling only that her beauty must be flung at a lover while she still had it. She knows that she never wanted children, but even without them she is losing her beauty. She keeps thinking that she will be twenty-nine in February. She decides to go see Bloeckman the following day to audition for a movie. The next day, she collapses on her way to the elevator. She returns to the apartment and waits for Anthony on the bed, unable even to get undressed. She is diagnosed with influenza, which develops into double pneumonia as winter progresses. Gloria feels that she wants only to be a little girl.

Gloria rants feverishly one day about how she would sacrifice the millions of people swarming around the city for a palace. The Irish serving woman isn't quite sure what Gloria said she would sacrifice a million of. She supposes dollars, but that does not seem quite right.

In February, a week before her birthday, Gloria calls Joseph Bloeckman to schedule a screen test. She finds that he has changed his name to Joseph Black. He eagerly helps her, bringing her in to read for the part of a flapper who faints upon receiving a phone call informing her of her husband's death in a car accident. Gloria hopes she does not still look too ill. She enjoys the screen test and feels that she has done very well. She does not tell Anthony what she has done.

Gloria is anxious over the next few days while she waits to hear back about the screen test. The third day, she bites the inside of her mouth raw and quarrels with Anthony until he leaves the apartment. Gloria goes for a walk to pass the time until the mail arrives. She tries to distract herself by people-watching but counts down the minutes until three o'clock, when the mail should be delivered. Arriving eagerly at home at the that hour, she finds a letter from Bloeckman informing her that the director wants a younger actress for the part of the flapper. She is being considered for the role of a rich widow instead. Gloria laments that it is her 29th birthday and that her beautiful face is aging. She sinks to the floor in tears in "the first awkward movement she had ever made."

Gloria's collapse parallels Anthony's earlier collapse from influenza. Like him, the moment both feminizes and infantilizes her. After her failure as a woman to want children, collapsing from influenza almost seems to answer her desperation to feel like she has been successful at femininity. Gloria's worry over her impending birthday in February is important, given that previously the narrator stated that her birthday was in August. Gloria's continued anxiety over her age, inextricable in her mind from her femininity, has devolved into self-delusion: she frets so much that she gives herself an extra six months of being twenty-eight.



Gloria's feverishness leads her to a confession of extreme selfishness that amounts to misanthropy. She feels she deserves a palace more than the rest of the world deserves to live. The extremity of this confession goes unchecked by the other characters because even when saying something horrible, Gloria remains a largely unheard character.



Still laboring under the delusion that she is not yet twenty-nine, Gloria seizes the last week before her fake birthday, this artificial mark of youth's end, to pursue her dream of acting. The part she seeks is that of a flapper—it seems that she wants to play herself. Should she succeed, her youth will be immortalized on film. Gloria does the screen test for herself, not because of lingering feelings for Bloeckman, but she nonetheless does not tell Anthony about it because she knows he will be jealous.



While waiting to hear back about the results of this audition for immortality, Gloria ironically feels every minute go by as slowly as she would like them to do on a regular basis to slow her aging. When she reads that she has been decided already too old to play the flapper, she is devastated, because it seems she has missed the chance to play herself on screen. Her life, as she has always imagined it, is already over. Gloria's flair for the dramatic and determination to fit the events of her life into a tragic narrative are evident in her reflection that it is now her 29th birthday, the original false date of which she had set one week after the audition, while now it has been only a few days.



CHAPTER 9

Anthony and Gloria have moved once more to an apartment with lower rent. Muriel Kane visits one day. Anthony, who is steadily gaining weight and often drunk, offers her a drink. She says she no longer drinks. When Anthony tells her that the lawsuit is still dragging out, she asks why he doesn't go to work. He says that even if he does, there is little hope of making enough money to finance an aristocratic lifestyle. Muriel claims that it is not money but integrity that defines the aristocracy over the middle class. Anthony begs to differ. Gloria agrees that she and Anthony should not pretend to belong to the same social class as their former friends, who no longer welcome their company.

The conversation turns to Maury Noble, who has been avoiding Anthony since one of Anthony's recent drunken outbursts. Anthony begins to tear up, and Gloria says it is his fault that his best friend no longer speaks to him. Muriel says that Maury is marrying a girl from Philadelphia and has gotten rich since the war. Anthony recalls that the last thing Maury said to him was that he was going to work to forget the existential pointlessness of working. Muriel says maybe Anthony should do the same so that he and Gloria can rejoin their friends in society instead of "economizing." Gloria scoffs that Anthony just bought an expensive barrel of whiskey. Anthony storms out.

Muriel is shocked at Anthony's behavior. She is more shocked to hear Gloria say that Anthony is drunk – he did not show it at all. He never appears drunk anymore, Gloria says, unless he gets excited. Muriel asks if Anthony storms out often, and Gloria says that he does. He will come back around midnight, weeping and asking for forgiveness.

Muriel and Gloria sit together, Gloria thinking but not saying aloud that she wishes Anthony would take her out somewhere she could show off her new dress. After Muriel leaves, Gloria takes a walk through the city. She wants to sit somewhere with coffee and rolls but has barely any change in her purse, so she returns home to have dinner there. She reads a magazine with disinterest and pours herself one drink and then another for something to do. Soon she realizes she is weeping and shaking her head. The narrator comments that although Gloria does not realize it, this gesture "of denial, of protest, of bewilderment" is "years older than history."

Even Muriel Kane, who used to be the butt of all the jokes at parties, has cleaned up her act, demonstrating that Anthony's drunkenness and unemployment are both embarrassing and a childish holdover from days past. The question of whether it is money or integrity that defines the aristocratic class is discouraging to Anthony and Gloria, who are realizing that they have neither.



Unable to accept responsibility for the strain in his and Maury's relationship, Anthony acts as though the falling out was a tragic twist of fate. He and Maury seem to agree on the pointlessness of working, but Maury's way of dealing with this existential realization has unequivocally worked out better for him. In order to deal with his frustration over the matter, Anthony digs himself even deeper into poverty and inability to work by spending large amounts of money on alcohol. Gloria has stopped supporting his irresponsibility, which even the socially inept Muriel can identify.



Anthony's drinking has become such a part of his character that his drunkenness is no longer visible to acquaintances. Anthony and Gloria's dysfunction has settled into a routine that is disturbing to Muriel but completely normal to Gloria, who knows no other reality.



Left alone, Gloria does not have the means to buy things on credit the way Anthony can, but must rely on only the change in her purse. She must therefore sink deeper into her loneliness, isolating herself at home. Despite seeing the increasing problem of Anthony's alcoholism, Gloria drinks out of boredom. The narrator's comment about the age of Gloria's gesture once again recalls the idea that Gloria is a representation of something beyond her individual self. She is beauty, but she is also countless victims of society.



Anthony gives up his membership to all his clubs because the dues are too cumbersome. He begins spending time with new friends who do not know him as well as Dick and Maury. He is drunk every day. Although he finds himself taunting Gloria about her increasingly frantic use of beauty products when he is drunk, he is nice to her when he is sober—but he hates being sober. It makes him dwell on his hopeless financial situation. Sometimes he thinks that if he can't exist among the wealthy elite, he might as well exist among the poorest of poor. Drinking provides escape into such sentiments as “the old illusion that truth and beauty were in some way entwined.”

One day, Anthony meets Richard Caramel for the first time in months. Dick tells Anthony that he has been hearing stories about his and Gloria's exploits and that they should calm down. Anthony tells him that they are simply in the public light because of the lawsuit. Dick tells Anthony that he is surprised at the fact that Maury has become a “tightfisted aristocrat” while Anthony has fallen on hard times and neglected to publish writing. Of the three of them, Dick would have thought himself least likely to achieve literary success, but he has.

Anthony and Dick go back to Dick's house, which is full of books. Anthony tells Dick that beauty can't be developed any further in poetry, only through the novel. Dick, on the other hand, is skeptical of the novel. Anthony notices that displayed between Mark Twain and Dreiser are the works of Richard Caramel. He feels a comforting sense of his old disgust for Dick, even though he knows his contempt is not fair. That night, Dick works away on his writing while Anthony lies passed out in the back of a cab.

As winter approaches, Anthony seems to be seized by “madness.” He and Gloria are both aware that his drinking is a problem, but it is only tolerable to either of them when he is drunk. Aside from drinking, he reads a lot. Contrary to what she has always wished for herself, Gloria begins adopting the habits of a housewife. The only thing the couple discusses is the pending lawsuit. Gloria is very lonely and worries about both her age and her continued maternal ambivalence.

Anthony's solution to his dwindling finances is further social isolation as well. His drinking causes friction with Gloria and makes them both lonelier in their marriage, but he cannot bring himself not to drink because it snaps him back into reality. Anthony is becoming disillusioned about the importance of beauty, but he does not want this disillusionment. His mocking of Gloria for her obsession with beauty products is hypocritical for this reason.



Dick's concern demonstrates how far behind Anthony has been left by his friends as they have advanced into adulthood. Dick, once the least successful of the three friends, now looks down upon Anthony as a childish, extravagant spender. Anthony resists criticism by making fun of Maury in the way he and Maury used to make fun of Dick. Dick uses the opportunity to once again reflect on his own comparative success.



Anthony does everything he can to rationalize his own position in life. His attempts rely on his ability to demonstrate himself as superior to Dick, which is difficult now that Dick has made a name for himself. Anthony settles for disgust at Dick's self-satisfaction, but he can't deny that Dick has far more reason than Anthony for self-satisfaction. Dick's continued hard work, even after a modicum of success, contrasts with Anthony's pathetic drunkenness in the back of the cab.



Anthony and Gloria have habitually been trapped by their own inertia, but every time they think their situation can get no worse, they seem to find a way to dig themselves into a deeper hole. As the time passes and they sink deeper into unhappiness, the only thing sustaining them is the hope of the lawsuit they are by no means guaranteed to win.



Gloria comes home from an errand to buy beauty products one day to find Anthony pacing, agitated that his bank account has been closed because it was empty. He works Gloria up into a panic as well by ranting about how they will have to start selling things they own. She says that an income of two hundred a month is “worse than nothing.” Should they lose the lawsuit, she suggests, “we can live in Italy for three years, and then just die.” It is the first flush of emotion Gloria has felt in days. Anthony responds that even if they lose, they will have to pay the lawyer.

Anthony should not be surprised that his bank account has been closed, but he acts as though it is a horrible shock because he has been in denial over the true state of his finances. Growing older without the material trappings of aristocracy is such a terrifying prospect to Gloria that she would rather die young than cut back on expenses. Anthony also vocalizes the reality that the huge investment in the lawsuit may have been foolish. The panic the couple feels is not necessarily an acceptance of reality but rather the creation of another fantasy, one of melodrama, that is a welcome interruption to their usual depressive routine.



Anthony and Gloria begin listing to each other people they might ask for a loan. There seems to be a problem with asking each candidate. When Anthony suggests Bloeckman, Gloria tells him about the fiasco of the screen test. Anthony exclaims that it was insolent to mistake Gloria for thirty. She tells him that regardless, they are almost out of food and need to find money. Anthony says he is going to sell his watch. Gloria asks him to leave some money behind, but he pretends not to hear her on his way out the door. He spends the evening drinking with his new friends.

The couple's persistence in their youthful ways this far into adulthood has cut them off entirely from the friendships they once forged through these selfsame youthful ways. Anthony makes a show of being protective over Gloria, but when she asks for money for the basic necessity of food, he proves unable to resist retreating into the illusion of safety that drinking offers him.



After several rounds, Anthony feigns having forgotten his pocketbook, and one of his friends pays for his drinks. He does not want to go home, so he stumbles drunk through the streets. He runs into Maury Noble with his fiancée and attempts to ask him for a loan. Maury seems embarrassed and brushes Anthony off. Anthony decides to go into the Biltmore hotel, for reasons of which he is not sure. It occurs to him that he might place a phone call. He calls the operator to find out where he might find Joseph Bloeckman, now Black.

Still believing himself deserving of everything he wants, including alcohol, Anthony finds ways to obtain it at the expense of good social conduct. Anthony's interaction with Maury demonstrates just how far Anthony has fallen out of social grace, ironically achieving the separation from the masses he has always coveted. Anthony's decision to go after Bloeckman rather than do something more useful to Gloria, such as provide food, shows that his protectiveness over her is rooted in performativity and the desire to prove himself.



Anthony finds Bloeckman at a dancing club. He attempts to confront Bloeckman about Gloria's film rejection. Surmising that Anthony is drunk, Bloeckman asks him to leave. When Anthony insults Bloeckman for being Jewish, Bloeckman hits Anthony. Bloeckman then gets several waiters to throw Anthony, bodily, out onto the sidewalk. A passerby attempts to help him, and Anthony boasts that his grandfather is Adam Patch. When asked where he lives so that the passerby can help him home, Anthony feels that his address is incongruous with his boast about his grandfather and asks for a taxi instead. It becomes clear that Anthony has no money to pay the driver. The helpful passerby gives up and leaves Anthony on the sidewalk once more. He stays there until he is nearly sober.

In the midst of Anthony's disgraceful display of public drunkenness, he fails to see that he is the one who is acting deplorably, not Bloeckman. The more he embarrasses himself, the more he feels the need to assert his social superiority to Bloeckman by pointing out such things as Bloeckman's Jewishness and Anthony's own connection to Adam Patch, even though Adam Patch effectively severed this connection before his death. Anthony's refusal to give his address shows that he is worried that he will be found out as a fraud. He would prefer to sit on the sidewalk, in complete social disgrace, than let it be known that he lives in a middle-class apartment.



Three weeks later, in March, the trial comes to an end after four and a half years of legal red tape. The trial has involved a great deal of character attacks on Shuttleworth and other beneficiaries of Adam Patch's will. Anthony wakes a nervous mess the day the verdict is to be read. He plans to meet Gloria, who is spending the day with Dick, at the courthouse. After Gloria leaves the apartment with Dick, Anthony finds a letter from the American Legion asking for his dues. He throws the letter away. If they win the lawsuit, he thinks, they will go to Italy. He remembers Italy nostalgically, which makes him begin ruminating on his age. He is thirty-three and looks forty. Just as he resolves that things will be different if they win the lawsuit, Dorothy shows up at the door of the apartment.

Dorothy tells Anthony that she tracked him down through a newspaper story about the lawsuit. She pleads with him in earnest to be with her. She believes she will die if he does not reciprocate her love. Anthony tells her that she must leave. She sits down and starts telling him to hit her. He begins yelling repeatedly, "I'll kill you." In his mounting panic, he grabs a heavy chair and throws it at her. As he lets it go, a cloud closes in around him, and he passes out.

Gloria and Dick come in later to find a smashed chair, the smell of perfume, and Anthony on the **bathroom** floor clutching his **stamp collection**. They tell him that they have won the lawsuit. He tells them they must leave, or else he will tell grandfather, and then he throws a handful of stamps up in the air and lets them fall around him.

On the deck of a ship, two onlookers stare at Anthony, who is sitting in a wheelchair. One tells the other that he must be thinking of the millions of dollars he has recently inherited. It is said that he is "mad" following the lawsuit and Shuttleworth's subsequent suicide. The second onlooker asks after Gloria. The first says that she was recently on deck but is now nowhere to be seen. The narrator states that Anthony is in fact not thinking about his money, but rather he is reminiscing about his trials and tribulations. He feels that he has endured all of them alone, even in Gloria's presence. He tears up as he whispers to himself, "I showed them...It was a hard fight, but I didn't give up and I came through!"

Anthony's reflection on the distasteful events of the trial show that he knows he has cornered himself into either financial ruin, social disgrace, or both. He clings to the hope that if he and Gloria win the lawsuit, he can make an exile of himself and start fresh—but even his idea of starting fresh involves a retreat to the nostalgic landscape of his youthful European jaunt with Maury. Although Anthony and Gloria's concern over their advancing age has seemed foolish up to now, it seems that Anthony's age actually is catching up to him because he has lived so recklessly. It might be too late to set his life back on course for the future, so he will instead try to live in the past. This nostalgic longing also proves dangerous when Dorothy shows up, bringing his past into violent collision with his present.



The fact that Dorothy was able to track Anthony down via the news indicates the extent of the disgraceful scandal he has created around himself. Dorothy's pleas with Anthony to hit her reveal her own psychological pain, but they also raise the question of whether or not Anthony can hit her. It is not clear during the scene whether Dorothy is actually there or whether the scene takes place in Anthony's tortured mind.



The lingering smell of perfume when Gloria and Dick arrive seems to suggest that Dorothy was in fact in the apartment. However, her absence and the evidence that Anthony simply threw the chair on the ground indicates that the conflict was less between Anthony and Dorothy than between Anthony and himself. The altercation has left Anthony completely unable to communicate, trapped in the sanctuary of his bathroom and repeating his youthful attempts at escapism by thumbing through his stamp collection.



Anthony has achieved his goal of becoming a public figure, but he is regarded with pity and derision instead of awe and respect. He has also ruined not only his life but also Shuttleworth's life. Gloria is mysteriously absent from the scene. Her disappearance (eight years after meeting Anthony, and fifteen years after the scene in which the narrator introduced Beauty as a character) confirms that she has functioned throughout the novel as the embodiment of beauty, always destined to disappear after fifteen years in Jazz-Age New York. Anthony's final line is not inaccurate. He is a victor, having finally won the appealed lawsuit. However, to echo the novel's epigraph, the spoils of victory have destroyed his chance at real happiness and success.





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