This Side of Paradise, Book One, Chapter One, Part 1

F. Scott Fitzgerald · 1920

Amory Blaine's inheritance, his mother Beatrice and her education abroad, the private car from Coronado to Mexico City, the liner that turns back to New York, Minneapolis, and Myra St. Claire's bobbing party.

LISTEN FOR

— How long the chapter stays with Beatrice before Amory does anything on his own: the first half is her education, her illnesses, her hotels, her priests.

— Amory's green eyes: the text names them four times, and twice he turns them on someone on purpose.

— The numbers the narrator keeps: four specialists, fourteen attendants, three butlers, sixty reproachful eyes, twenty-five places on Myra's list.

— The two voices Amory speaks in: the drawl the boys mock in history class, and the 'fella' and 'awful' he rehearses on Myra's doorstep.

THE PEOPLE, AS THE BOOK NAMES THEM

Amory Blaine	the son
Stephen Blaine	his father · Chicago money, Bar Harbor
Beatrice O'Hara Blaine	his mother · Lake Geneva, Rome, Vienna
Monsignor Darcy	once a pagan young man in Asheville
Myra St. Claire	thirteen · the bobbing party
Mr. Reardon	senior French class
A Butler	one of the three in Minneapolis
Froggy Parker	twenty-sixth
Mrs. St. Claire	Myra's mother · a lorgnette

THE PLACES

Chicago · Bar Harbor · Lake Geneva · Rome · England · Vienna · Coronado · Mexico City · New York · Minneapolis

CHAPTERS, WITH THEIR TIMES IN THE VIDEO

0:00	Amory Blaine inherited from his mother
1:10	But Beatrice Blaine! There was a woman!
2:46	When Amory was five
6:32	The Blaines were attached to no city
9:42	Amory became thirteen
11:01	Minneapolis: a bobbing party
13:41	On Thursday, therefore
14:39	A butler, one of the three in Minneapolis
19:19	Thick dusk had descended

21:38 The little den

25:42 Casey Jones

WORDS AND THINGS, FROM THE MARGIN

Bar Harbor Mount Desert Island, Maine — the summer colony of the very rich.

The Sacred Heart Convent The Society of the Sacred Heart schooled the daughters of Catholic society; its Roman convent stood at Trinità dei Monti, above the Spanish Steps.

Ninety-six 1896 — the year of Fitzgerald's own birth, in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Coronado Coronado, California — the Hotel del Coronado, opened 1888, the grand seaside resort across the bay from San Diego.

Her line Nineteen-twenties slang for a person's practised patter. Fitzgerald flags the anachronism himself: 'in a later generation.'

Swinburnian · Asheville After Algernon Swinburne, 1837–1909 — the scandalous poet of pagan sensuality. Asheville: the North Carolina mountain resort where the Vanderbilts built Biltmore, 1895.

Monsignor An honorific for a priest distinguished by the Pope. Darcy is drawn from Fitzgerald's own mentor, Father Cyril Sigourney Fay.

A bobbing party A bob-sled party — a winter outing on the long sleds.

Doncherknow · lawgely · clawses The boys mock Amory's affected English drawl.

Trade-lasts A compliment overheard about you, offered in exchange for one about the teller: 'I've got a trade-last for you.'

PASSAGES TO HEAR AGAIN

"Amory Blaine inherited from his mother every trait, except the stray inexpressible few, that made him worth while."
The first sentence: what is credited to the mother, and what is held back.

"All in all Beatrice O'Hara absorbed the sort of education that will be quite impossible ever again; a tutelage measured by the number of things and people one could be contemptuous of and charming about; a culture rich in all arts and traditions, barren of all ideas, in the last of those days when the great gardener clipped the inferior roses to produce one perfect bud."
The close of the portrait of Beatrice: how her education is measured, and what it is barren of.

"Amory's penetrating green eyes would look out through tangled hair at his mother. Even at this age he had no illusions about her."
In the hotel bedroom, between her two speeches to the boy.

"You will admit that if it was not life it was magnificent."
After the great ship wheels around and returns to New York; the narrator turns to the listener.

"He had been two months in Minneapolis, and his chief struggle had been the concealing from "the other guys at school" how particularly superior he felt himself to be, yet this conviction was built upon shifting sands."
The opening of A Kiss for Amory, just after he reads the invitation.

"Sudden revulsion seized Amory, disgust, loathing for the whole incident. He desired frantically to be away, never to see Myra again, never to kiss any one; he became conscious of his face and hers, of their clinging hands, and he wanted to creep out of his body and hide somewhere safe out of sight, up in the corner of his mind."
In the den, the moment after the kiss and before Myra asks for another.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Stephen Blaine gets one paragraph and Beatrice gets several. List what the text actually tells us about the father. What does Amory get from each parent, in the book's own words?

2. Beatrice's education is described at length. What does she know, who knows her name, and what does the text say her culture is 'barren of'?
3. Amory calls his mother 'Beatrice,' and the narrator says 'she encouraged it.' What else does she encourage in him in the hotel scene? Keep to what she says to him.
4. The apricot cordial 'horrified Beatrice' and also 'secretly amused her.' What does she do with the story afterward, and what do the women who hear it do that night?
5. The narrator says 'Even at this age he had no illusions about her.' Find a moment where Amory sees through Beatrice, and a moment where he goes along with her anyway.
6. Compare the French class with the history class. Why does showing off work in one and not the other, according to the text? What do the boys say back to him?
7. Read Myra's invitation and Amory's reply side by side. What does he copy from her letter, and what does he add to it?
8. On the doorstep Amory rehearses 'but my maid—' and stops. What does he realize, and what does he put in its place?
9. The butler 'was unaware that his failure to be cockney was ruining his standing.' Whose standing is being ruined? What did Amory expect of the butler, and what does the butler do instead?
10. In the limousine Amory invents an auto accident, a 't'bacca heart,' and a burlesque show. Which of these does Myra take up, and how does the text tell us what she pictures?
11. What does Amory feel in the minute before the kiss, and what does he feel in the minute after? Compare the sentences on each side of 'Then their lips brushed like young wild flowers in the wind.'
12. Myra threatens to tell mama. When her mother appears, 'none came.' What does Myra say instead, and what does the text compare her voice to?

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