

PETER TAYLOR

Je Suis Perdu

L'ALLEGRO

THE SOUND of their laughter came to him along the narrow passage that split the apartment in two. It was the laughter of his wife and his little daughter, and he could tell they were laughing at something the baby had done or had tried to say. Shutting off the water in the washbasin, he cracked the door and listened. There was simply no mistaking a certain note in the little girl's giggles. Her naturally deep little voice could never be brought to such a high pitch except by her baby brother's “being funny.” And on such a day as this, the day for packing the last suitcases and for setting the furnished apartment in order, the day before the day when they would really pull up stakes in Paris and take the boat train for Cherbourg—on such a day, only the baby could evoke from its mother that resonant, relaxed, almost abandoned kind of laughter . . . *They* were in the dining room just sitting down to breakfast. *He* had eaten when he got up with the baby an hour before, and was now in the *salle de bain* preparing to shave.

The *salle de bain*, which was at one end of the long central passage, was the only room in the apartment that always went by its French name. For good reason, too: it lacked the one all-important convenience that an American expects of what he will willingly call a bathroom. It possessed a bathtub and a washbasin, and it had a bidet, which was wonderful for washing the baby in. But the missing convenience was in a closet close by the entrance to the apartment, at the very opposite end of the passage from the *salle de bain*. Altogether it was a devilish arrangement. But the separation of conveniences was not itself so devilish as the particular location of each. For instance just now, with only a towel wrapped around his middle and with his face already lathered, he hesitated to throw open the door and take part in a long-distance conversation with the rest of the family, because at any moment he expected to hear the maid's key rattling in the old-fashioned lock of the entry door down the passage. Instead, he had to remain inside the *salle de bain* with his hand on the doorknob and his gaze on the blank washbasin mirror (still misted over from the hot bath he had

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just got out of); had to stand there and be content merely with hearing the sound of merriment in yonder, not able—no matter how hard he strained—to determine the precise cause of it.

At last, he could resist no longer. He pushed the door half open and called out to them, “What is it? What’s the baby up to?”

His daughter’s voice piped from the dining room, “Come see, Daddy! Come see him!” And in the next instant she had bounced out of the dining room into the passage, and she continued bouncing up and down there as if she were on a pogo stick. She was a tall little girl for her seven years, and she looked positively lanky in her straight white nightgown and with her yellow hair not yet combed this morning but drawn roughly into a ponytail high on the back of her head.

And then his wife’s voice: “It’s incredible, honey! You really must come! And quick, before he stops! He’s a perfect little monkey!”

But already it was too late. The maid’s key rattled noisily in the lock. As he quickly stepped backward into the *salle de bain* and pulled the door to, he called to them in a stage whisper, “Bring me my bathrobe.”

Through the door he heard his wife’s answer: “You know your bathrobe’s packed. You said you wouldn’t need it again. Put on your clothes.”

His trousers and his shirt and underwear hung on one door hook, beside his pajamas on another. His first impulse was to slip into his clothes and go and see what it was the baby was doing. But on second thought there seemed too many arguments against this. His face was already lathered. He much, much preferred shaving as he now was, wearing only his towel. But still more compelling was the argument that it was to be a very special shave this morning. *This morning the mustache was going to go!*

Months back he had made a secret pact with himself to the effect that if the work he came over here to do was really finished when the year was up, then the mustache he had begun growing the day he arrived would *go* the day he left. From the beginning his wife had pretended to loathe it, though he knew she rather favored the idea as long as they were here, and only dreaded, as he did, the prospect of his going home with that

brush on his upper lip. But he had not even mentioned the possibility of shaving the mustache. And as he wiped the mist from the mirror and then slipped a fresh blade into his razor, he smiled in anticipation of the carrying on there would be over its removal.

In the passage now there was the clacking sound of the maid's footsteps. He could hear her taking all her usual steps—putting away the milk and bread that she had picked up on her way to work, crossing to the cloak closet, and placing her worn suede jacket and her silk scarf on a hanger—just as though this were not her last day on the job; or rather, last day with *them* in the apartment, because she was coming the following day, faithful and obliging soul, to wax the floors and hang the clean curtains she herself had washed. Their blessed, hardworking Marie. According to his wife, their having had Marie constituted their greatest luck and their greatest luxury this year. He scarcely ever saw her himself, and sometimes he had passed her down on the boulevard without recognizing her until, belatedly, he realized that it had been her scarf and her jacket, and his baby in the carriage she pushed. But he had gradually assumed his wife's view that their getting hold of Marie had been the real pinnacle of all their good luck about living arrangements. Their apartment was a fourth-floor walkup, overlooking the Boulevard Saint-Michel and just two doors from the rue des Écoles; with its genuine *chauffage central* and its Swedish kitchen, and even a study for him. It was everything they could have wished for. At first they had thought they ought not to afford such an apartment as this one, but because of the children they decided it was worth the price to them. And after his work on the book got off to a good start and he saw that the first draft would almost certainly get finished this year, they decided that it would be a shame not to make the most of the year; that is, not to have some degree of freedom from house-keeping and looking after the children. And so they spoke to the concierge, who recommended Marie to them, saying that she was a mature woman who knew what it was to work but who might have to be forgiven a good deal of ignorance since she had not lived always in Paris. They had found nothing to forgive in Marie. Even her haggard appearance his wife had come to speak of as her "ascetic look." Even her reluctance to

try to understand a single word of English represented, as did the noisy rattling of the door key, her extreme consideration for their privacy. Every morning at half-past eight, her key rattled in the lock to their door. She was with them all day, sometimes taking the children to the park, always going out to do more marketing, never off her feet, never idle a moment until she had prepared their evening meal and left them, to ride the Métro across Paris again—almost to Saint-Denis—and prepare another evening meal for her own husband and son.

Yet this maid of theirs was, in his mind, only a symbol of how they had been served this year. It was hard to think of anything that had not worked out in their favor. They had ended by even liking their landlady, who, although she lived but a block away up the Boulevard Saint-Michel, had been no bother to them whatever, and had just yesterday actually returned the full amount of their deposit on the furniture. Their luck had, of course, been phenomenal. After one week in the Hôtel des Saints-Pères, someone there had told them about M. Pavlushkoff, “the honest real-estate agent.” They had put their problem in the hands of this splendid White Russian—this amiable, honest, intelligent, efficient man, with his office (to signalize his greatest virtue, his sensibility) in the beautiful Place des Vosges. Once M. Pavlushkoff had found them their apartment they never saw him again, but periodically he would telephone them to inquire if all went well and if he could assist them in any way. And once in a desperate hour—near midnight—they telephoned him, to ask for the name of a doctor. In less than half an hour M. Pavlushkoff had sent dear old Dr. Marceau to them.

And Dr. Marceau himself had been another of their angels. The concierge had fetched round another doctor for them the previous afternoon, and he had made the little girl’s ailment out to be something very grave and mysterious. He had prescribed some kind of febrifuge and the burning of eucalyptus leaves in her room. But Dr. Marceau immediately diagnosed measles (which they had believed it to be all along, with half her class at L’École Père Castor already out of school with it). Next day, Dr. Marceau had returned to give the baby an injection that made the little fellow’s case a light one; and later on he saw them through the children’s siege of chicken pox.

Both the children were completely charmed by the old doctor. Even on that first visit, when the little girl had not yet taken possession of the French language, she found the doctor irresistible. He had bent over her and listened to her heart not through a stethoscope but with only a piece of Kleenex spread out between her bare chest and his big pink ear. As he listened, sticking the top of his bald head directly in her face, he quite unintentionally tickled her nose with the pretty ruffle of white hair that ringed his pate. Instantly the little girl's eyes met her mother's. From her sickbed she burst into giggles and came near to causing her mother to do the same. After that, whenever the doctor came to see her, or to see her little brother, she would insist upon his listening to her heart. It would be hard to say whether Dr. Marceau was ever aware of why the little girl giggled, but he always said in French that she had the heart of a lioness, and he always stopped and kissed her on the forehead when he was leaving.

That's what the whole year had been like. There was *that*, and there had been the project—the work on his book, which was about certain Confederate statesmen and agents who, with their families, were in Paris at the end of the Civil War, and who had to decide whether to go home and live under the new regime or remain permanently in Europe.

As far as his research was concerned, he had soon found that there was nothing to be got hold of at the Bibliothèque Nationale or anywhere else in Paris that was not available at home. And yet how stimulating to his imagination it was just to walk along the rue de l'Université in the late afternoon, or along the rue de Varenne, or over on the other side of the Seine along the rue de Rivoli and the rue Saint-Antoine, hunting out the old addresses of the people he was writing about. And of course how stimulating to his work it was just being in Paris, no matter what his subject. Certain of his cronies back home at the university had accused him of selecting his subject merely as an excuse to come to Paris . . . He couldn't be sure himself what part that had played in it. But it didn't matter. *He had had the idea, and he had done the work.*

With his face smoothly shaven, and dressed in his clean clothes, he was in such gay spirits that he was tempted to go into the

dining room and announce that he was dedicating this book to M. Pavlushkoff, to Dr. Marceau, to Marie, to all his French collaborators.

He found the family in the dining room, still lingering over breakfast, the little girl still in her nightgown, his wife in her nylon housecoat. At sight of his naked upper lip his wife's face lit up. Without rising from her chair, she threw out her arms, saying, "I must have the first kiss! How beautiful you are!"

The little girl burst into laughter again. "Mama!" she exclaimed. "Don't *say* that! *Men* aren't beautiful, *are* they, Daddy?" She still had not noticed that the mustache was gone.

It was only a token kiss he got from his wife. She was afraid that Marie might come in at any moment to take their breakfast dishes. Keeping her eyes on the door to the passage, she began pushing him away almost before their lips met. And so he turned to his daughter, trying to give her a kiss. Still she hadn't grasped what had brought on her parents' foolishness, and she wriggled away from him and out of her chair, laughing and fairly shrieking out, "What's the matter with him, Mama?"

"Just look!" whispered his wife; and at first he thought of course she meant look at him. "Look at the baby, for heaven's sake," she said.

The baby was in his playpen in the corner of the dining room. With his hands clasped on the top of his head and his fat little legs stuck out before him, he was using his heels to turn himself round and round, pivoting on his bottom.

"How remarkable!" the baby's daddy now heard himself saying.

"Watch his eyes," said the mother. "Watch how he rolls them."

"Why, he *is* rolling them! How really remarkable!" He glanced joyfully at his wife.

"That's only the half of it," she said. "In a minute he'll begin going around the other way and rolling his eyes in the other direction."

"It's amazing," he said, speaking very earnestly and staring at the baby. "He already has better coordination than I've *ever* had or ever *hope* to have. I've noticed it in other things he's done recently. What a lucky break!"

And presently the baby, having made three complete turns to the right, did begin revolving the other way round and rolling his eyes in the other direction. The two parents and the little girl were laughing together now and exchanging intermittent glances in order to share the moment fully. The most comical aspect of it was the serious expression on the baby's face, particularly at the moment when, facing them and stopping quite still, he shifted the direction of his eye rolling. At this moment the little girl's voice moved up at least one octave. She never showed any natural jealousy of her baby brother, but at such times as this she often seemed to be determined to outdo her parents in their amusement and in their admiration of the baby. Just now she was so convulsed with laughter that she staggered back to her chair and threw herself into it and leaned against the table. As she did so, one of her flailing hands struck her milk glass, which was still half full. The milk poured out over the placemat and then traced little white rivulets over the dark surface of the table.

Both parents pounced upon the child at once: "Honey! Honey! Watch out! Watch what you're doing!"

The little girl crimsoned. Her lips trembled as she said under her breath, "*Je regrette.*"

"If you had drunk your milk this wouldn't have happened," said the mother, dabbing at the milk with a paper napkin.

"Regardless of that," said the father with unusual severity in his voice, "she has no business throwing herself about so and going into such paroxysms over nothing." But he knew, really, that it was not the threshing about that irritated him so much as it was the lapse into French. And it was almost as though his wife understood this and wished to point it out. For, discovering that a few drops of milk had trickled down one table leg and onto the carpet, she turned and herself called out in French to the maid to come and bring a cloth. His own mastery of French speech, he reflected, was the thing that *hadn't* gone well this year. After all, as he was in the habit of telling himself, *he* hadn't had the opportunity to converse with Marie a large part of each day, or to attend a primary school where the teacher and the other pupils spoke no English, and he hadn't—with his responsibilities to his work and his family—been able

to hang about the cafés like some student. It was a consoling thought. Righteously, he put aside his irritation.

But now his little daughter, sitting erect in her chair, repeated aloud: "*Je regrette. Je regrette.*" This time it affected him differently. It was impossible to tell whether she was using the French phrase deliberately or whether she wasn't even aware of doing so. But whether deliberate or not, it had its effect on her father. For a time it caused him to stare at his daughter with the same kind of interest that he had watched his son with a few moments before. And all the while his mind was busily tying the present incident to one that had occurred several weeks before. He had taken the little girl to see an old Charlie Chaplin film one afternoon at a little movie theater around the corner from them on the rue des Écoles. They had stayed on after the feature to see the newsreel, and then after the newsreel, along with a fairly large proportion of the audience, they had risen in the dark to make their way out. The ushers at the rear of the theater were not able to restrain the crowd that was waiting for seats; and so there was the inevitable melee in the aisles. When finally he came out into the lighted lobby he assumed that his little girl was still sticking close behind him, and he began getting into his mackinaw without even looking back to see that she was there. Yes, it was thoughtless of him, all right; but it was what he had done. As he tugged at the belt of the bulky mackinaw, he became aware of a small voice crying out above the noise of the canned music back in the theater. What interested him first was merely the fact that he did understand the cry: "*Je suis perdue! Je suis perdue!*" Actually he didn't recognize it as his daughter's voice until rather casually and quite by chance he glanced behind him and saw that she was not there. He threw himself against the crowd that was still emerging from the exit, all the while mumbling apologies to them in his Tennessee French which he was sure they would not understand (though himself understanding perfectly their oaths and expletives) and still hearing from the darkness ahead her repeated cry: "*Je suis perdue!*" When he found her she was standing against the side wall of the theater, perfectly rigid. Reaching down in the darkness to take her hand he found her hand made into a tight little fist. By the time he got her out into the light of the lobby her hand in his felt quite relaxed.

Along the way she had begun to cry a little, but already she was smiling at him through her tears. "I thought I was lost, Daddy," she said to him. He had been so relieved at finding her and at seeing her smiling so soon that he had not even tried to explain how it had happened, much less describe the chilling sensations that had been his at that moment when he realized it was the voice of his own child calling out to him, in French, that she was lost.

Now, in the dining room of their apartment, he was looking into the same flushed little face and suddenly he saw that the eyelashes were wet with tears. He was overcome with shame.

His wife must have discovered the tears at the same moment. He glanced at her and saw that she, too, was now filled with pity for the child and was probably thinking, as he was, that they were all of them keyed up this morning of their last day before starting home.

"Oh, it's all right, sweetie," said his wife, putting her hand on the top of the blond little head and pointing out the milk to Marie. "Accidents will happen."

Squatting down beside his daughter, he said, "Don't you notice anything different?" And he stuck his forefinger across his upper lip.

"Oh, Mama, it's gone!" she squealed. Placing her two little hands on his shoulders, she bent forward and kissed him on the mouth. "Mama, you're right," she exclaimed. "He *is* beautiful!"

After that, the spilled milk and the baby's gyrations were events of ancient history—dismissed and utterly forgotten.

A few minutes later, the little girl and Marie were beside the playpen chattering to the baby in French. His wife had wandered off into the bedroom, where she would dress and then throw herself into a final fury of packing. She had already asked him to make himself scarce this day, to keep out of the way of women's work. *His* duties, she had said, would begin when it came time to leave for the boat train tomorrow morning. Now he followed her into the bedroom to put on a tie and a jacket before setting out on his day's expedition.

She had taken off her housecoat and was standing in her slip before the big armoire, searching there among the few dresses that hadn't already been packed for something she might wear

today. He stopped in front of the mirror above the chest of drawers and began slipping a tie into his collar. He was thinking of just how he would spend his last day. Not, certainly, with any of his acquaintances. He had said goodbye to everyone he wanted to say goodbye to. No, he would enjoy the luxury of being by himself, of buying a paper and reading it over coffee somewhere, of wandering perhaps one more time through the Luxembourg Gardens—the wonderful luxury of walking in Paris on a June day without purpose or direction.

When he had finished with his tie, he discovered that his wife was now watching his face in the mirror. She was smiling, and as their eyes met she said, “I’m glad you shaved it but I shall miss it a little, along with everything else.” And before she began pulling her dress over her head she blew him a kiss.

IL PENNEROSO

The feeling came over him in the Luxembourg Gardens at the very moment he was passing the Medici Grotto at the end of its little lagoon. He simply could not imagine what it was that had been able to depress his spirits so devastatingly on a day that had begun so well. Looking back at the grotto, he wanted to think that his depression had been induced by the ugliness and the triteness of the sculpture about the fountain there, but he knew that the fountain had nothing to do with it. He was so eager to dispel this sudden gloom and return to his earlier mood, however, that he turned to walk back to the spot and see what else might have struck his eye. Above all, it was important for it to be something outside himself that had crushed his fine spirits this way, and that was thus threatening to spoil his day.

He didn’t actually return to the spot, but he did linger a moment by the corner of the palace, beside a flower bed where two workmen—surreptitiously, it seemed to him—were sinking little clay pots of already blooming geranium plants into the black soil, trying to make it look as though the plants honestly grew and bloomed there. From here he eyed other strollers along the path and beside the lagoon, hoping to discover in one of them something tragic or pathetic which he might hold responsible for the change he had felt come over him. He would have much preferred finding an object, something

not human, to pin it on, but, that failing, he was now willing to settle for any unhappy or unpleasant-looking person—a stranger, of course, someone who had no claim of any kind on him. But every child and its nurse, each shabby student with satchel and notebooks, every old gentleman or old lady waiting for his terrier or her poodle to perform in the center of the footpath appeared relatively happy (in their limited French way, of course, he found himself thinking)—as happy, almost, as he must have appeared not five minutes earlier. He even tried looking farther back on the path toward the gate into the rue de Vaugirard, but it availed him nothing. Then his thoughts took him beyond the gate, and he remembered the miserable twenty minutes he had just been forced to spend trying to read his paper and enjoy his coffee in the Café Tournon, while a bearded fellow American explained to him what was wrong with their country and why Americans were “universally unpopular” abroad.

But even this wouldn't do. For he was as used to the ubiquitous bearded American and his café explanations of everything as he was to the ugly Italian grotto; and he disliked them to just the same degree and found them equally incapable of disturbing him in this way. He gave up the search now, and as he strode out into the brightness of the big sunken garden he quietly conceded the truth of the matter: the feeling was not evoked by his surroundings at all but had sprung from something inside himself. Further, it was not worth all this searching; it wasn't important; it would pass soon. Why, as soon as it had run its course with him he would not even remember the feeling again until . . . until it would come upon him again in the same unreasonable way, perhaps in six months, or in a few days, or in a year. When the mood was not on him, he could never believe in it. For instance, while he had been shaving this morning he truly did not know or, rather, he *knew not* that he was ever in his life subject to such fits of melancholy and gloom . . . But still the mood *was* on him now. And actually he understood the source well enough.

It sprang from the same thing his earlier cheerful mood had come from—his own consciousness of how well everything had gone for him this year, and last year, and always, really. It was precisely this, he told himself, that depressed him. At the

present moment he could almost wish that he hadn't finished the work on his book. He was able to wish this (or almost wish it) because he knew it was so typical of him to have accomplished just precisely what he had come to accomplish—and so American of him. Generally speaking, he didn't dislike being himself or being American, but to recognize that he was so definitely the man he was, so definitely the combination he was, and that certain experiences and accomplishments were now typical of him was to recognize how he was getting along in the world and how the time was moving by. He was only thirty-eight. But the bad thought was that he was no longer *going to be* this or that. He *was*. It was a matter of *being*. And to *be* meant, or seemed to mean at such a moment, to *be over with*. Yet this, too, was a tiresome, recurrent thought of his—very literary, he considered it, and a platitude.

He went on with his walk. The Jardin du Luxembourg was perfection this morning, with its own special kind of sky and air and its wall of flat-topped chestnuts with their own delicate shade of green foliage, and he tried to feel guilty about his wife's being stuck back there in the apartment, packing their possessions, trying to fit everything that had not gone into the foot lockers and the duffel-bags into six small pieces of luggage. But the guiltiness he tried for wouldn't materialize. Instead, he had a nasty little feeling of envy at her packing. And so he had to return to his efforts at delighting in the singular charm of the park on a day like this. "There is nothing else like it in Paris," he said, moving his lips, "which is to say there is nothing else like it in the world." And this pleased him just as long as it took for his lips to form the words.

It wasn't yet midmorning, but the little boys—both the ragged and the absurdly over-dressed-up ones—had already formed their circle about the boat basin in the center, and, balancing themselves on the masonry there, were sending their sailboats out over the bright water. This was almost a cheering sight to him. But not quite. For it was, after all, a regular seasonal feature of the place, like the puppet shows and the potted palm trees, and it was hardly less artificial in its effect.

He was rounding the lower garden of the park now; had passed the steps that led up toward the Boulevard Saint-Michel entrance and toward that overpowering monster the Panthéon.

(There were monsters and monstrous things everywhere he turned now.) He was walking just below the clumsy balustrade of the upper garden; and now, across the boat basin, across the potted flower beds and the potted palms, above the heads of the fun-loving, freedom-loving, stiff-necked, and pallid-faced Parisians, he saw the façade of the old palace itself. It also loomed large and menacing. There was no look of fun or freedom about it. It did not smile down upon the garden. Rather, out of that pile of ponderous, dirty stone, all speckled with pigeon droppings, twenty eyes glared at him over the iron fencing, which seemed surely to have been put there to protect the people from the monster—not the monster from the people. It was those vast, terrible, blank windows, like the whitened eyes of a blind horse, that made the building hideous. How could anyone ever have found it a thing of beauty? How could . . . Then suddenly: “Oh, do stop it!” he said to himself. But he couldn’t stop it. Wasn’t it from one of those awful windows that the great David, as a prisoner of the Revolution, had painted his only landscape? That unpleasant man David, that future emperor of art, that personification of the final dead end to a long-dying tradition! “Oh, do stop it!” he said again to himself. “Can’t you stop it?”

But still he couldn’t. The palace *was* a tomb. The park was a formal cemetery. He was where everything was finished and over with. Too much had already happened here, and whatever else might come would be only anticlimactic. And nothing could be so anticlimactic as an American living on the left bank of the Seine and taking a morning walk in the Jardin du Luxembourg. He remembered two novels whose first chapters took for their setting this very spot. Nothing was so deadening to a place as literature! And wasn’t it true, after all, that their year in that fourth-floor walkup had been a dismal, lonely one? Regardless of his having got his work done, of his having had his afternoons free to wander not only through the streets where his heroes had once lived but also through the Louvre and the Musée Cluny and through the old crumbling *hôtels* of the Marais? Regardless of the friends they had made and even of the occasional gay evening on the town. Wasn’t it really so that he had just not been willing to admit this truth until this moment? Wasn’t it so, really, that he had come to Paris too late?

That this was a city for the very young and the very rich, and that he, being neither, might as well not have come? What was he but a poor plodding fellow approaching middle age, doing all right, getting along with his work well enough, providing for his family; and the years were moving by . . .

Suddenly he turned his back on the boat basin and the palace, and started at a brisk pace up the ramp that leads toward the great gilded south gate. And immediately he saw his daughter in the crowd! She was moving toward him, walking under the trees.

He saw her before she saw him. This gave him time to gather his wits, and to recall that his wife, as soon as she got *him* out of the apartment, was determined to get *them* out, too, so that there would be no one to interfere with her packing. And now, during the moment that *she* did not see him, he managed to find something that he could be cross with her about. She was ambling along, absent-mindedly leaning on the baby's carriage—that *awful* habit of hers—and making it all but impossible for Marie to push the carriage. She had come out from under the trees now, and as she skipped and danced along, her two bouncing blond ponytails, which Marie had fixed, one directly above each ear, were literally dazzling in the sunlight. "Daddy," she said, as she came within his shadow on the gravel path. Her eyes were just exactly the color of the park's own blue heaven. His wife's mother had said it didn't seem quite normal for a girl to have such "positive blue" eyes. And her long little face with the chin just a tiny bit crooked, like his own!

He took her hand, and they went down the ramp toward the row of chairs on their left. "If we sit down, you'll have to pay," she warned him.

"That's all right," he said.

"I'll sit on your lap if you'll give me the ten francs for the extra chair."

"And if I won't?"

"Oh, I'll sit on your lap anyway, since you've shaved that mustache."

The old woman who collected for chairs was hot on their heels. He paid for the single chair and tipped her the price of another.

"I saw how much you gave her," his daughter said reproachfully. "But it's all right. She's one of the nice ones."

"Oh, they're all nice when you get to know them," he said, laughing.

She nodded. "And isn't it a lovely park, Daddy? I think it is."

"It's too bad we're going home so soon, isn't it?" he said.

"Daddy, we just *got* here!" she protested.

"I mean going back to America, silly," he said.

"I thought you meant to the apartment . . . But we're *not* going back to America *today*."

"No, but tomorrow."

"Well, what difference does *that* make?"

He saw Marie approaching with the carriage. "Let's give our chair to Marie, since I have to be on my way," he said.

"Then you have to leave now?" she asked forlornly.

He gave her a big squeeze with his arms and held her a moment longer on his knee. He was wondering where his dark mood had gone. It was not just gone. He felt it had never been. And why had he lied to himself about this year? It *had* been a fine year. But still he kept thinking also of how she had interrupted his mood. And as soon as she was off his knee, he began to feel resentful again of the interruption and of the mysterious power she had over him. He found that he wanted the mood of despondency to return, and he knew it wouldn't for a long while. It was something she had taken from him, something she had taken from him before and would take from him again and again—she and the little fellow in the carriage there, and their mother, too, even before they were born. They would never allow him to have it for days and days at a time, as he once did. He felt he had been cheated. But this was not a mood, it was only a thought. He felt a great loss—except he didn't really feel it, he only thought of it. And he felt, he *knew* that he had after all gotten to Paris too late . . . after he had already established steady habits of work . . . after he had acknowledged claims that others had on him . . . after there were ideas and truths and work and people that he loved better even than himself.