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THE FABULOUS LIFE OF SCOTT
FITZGERALD

By Hendrik Bruwer

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NOTE:

This is a work of fiction and certain liberties have
at times been taken regarding locales and events.

His talent was as natural as the pattern that was made by the dust on a butterfly's wings. At one time he understood it no more than the butterfly did and he did not know when it was brushed or marred. Later he became conscious of his damaged wings and of their construction and he learned to think and could not fly any more because the love of flight was gone and could only remember when it had been effortless.

Ernest Hemingway on F. Scott Fitzgerald, *A Moveable Feast*

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PART ONE:

The fabulous life of Scott Fitzgerald

CHAPTER ONE

It was morning and Ernest felt terrible. Still sleepy, he looked around for pants and he started to scream and curse for not finding it while the birds were singing gloriously outside his window. It was already a beautiful day, and the mountain looked surprisingly peaceful behind a fairy city and its neat stack of manmade structures.

Ernest makes his bed, part of his fickle morning ritual, and slowly walks to an enormous bedside mirror. There he carefully inspects a rugged face, a face that hasn't grown up one bit. Ernest sighs unsatisfactorily and glances up and down the mirror of his naked body to see whether he still got the

charms. He realizes that he does. It was a responsive mirror that one.

Meanwhile, a merry dove makes the most tranquil of noises outside Ernest's window. The noises were so tranquil, Ernest cursed at it for being so tranquil and then it stopped. Ernest was feeling troubled... he was rather moody that morning. This was not surprising; consider a fruit and then consider Ernest.

Ernest is swiftly but carelessly dressed in sleepy trousers with a good to go and everyday also shirt. He contemplates shaving, as well as brushing his teeth, but... he doesn't. Instead he makes a cup of coffee that tastes like nothing and he feels a little refreshed, although he thought that he would've felt even more refreshed had he had a bit of sugar in his kitchen. It was only a fleeting kind of thought that and it wasn't in his ritual repertoire for sure.

Ernest quickly slams the apartment door behind him and slowly descends the block of apartment stairs in despair. There was not a cloud in sight that morning and the sun was shining violently. This impacted the character of Ernest greatly, who, was not feeling too well. Nevertheless, the friendly janitor, in good

spirits after a splendid weekend, warmly greets Ernest.

'Morning mister. How do mister feel?'

'Ah, terrible... terrible as always my fellow communist. My life's a curse I swear. I swear I'm cursed to be like this. Say, you don't have a smoke for me, do you?'

'Yeah I have old tobacco, but you English people I figure don't like it as much.'

'Just give me some. Tasteless tobacco might just cheer me up.' And it does cheer Ernest up, if only for a little while.

'Enjoy your day,' the janitor said, but Ernest didn't reply to the janitor's friendliness. He merely gave a woeful wave, confirming his sorry status that morning.

Yes, it was morning and the trees were beautiful beyond any singing of it and the grass was green and splendid. Matted too. Autumn leaves were being lofted to and fro gently by the westerly breeze. Little squirrels were climbing the singing trees in no hurry until a jumpy Ernest cursed at them for doing so. It was a tranquil day except for Ernest,

who was storming the city streets for no good reason, causing mayhem to its seemingly peaceful inhabitants. One of them was the happy seagull who unknowingly terrorized Ernest whilst Ernest was walking the city streets. Unfortunately, the happy seagull got too close to the big swaying fists of big Ernest and took a sharp blow on its marred wing. The happy seagull fell down on the tar road in all its splendour and it was a terrific sight, even for Ernest, who couldn't believe his luck, flooring a seagull with his bare hands. Boy, the now unhappy seagull lay panting in the middle of the road like a little squealer. Its panting only stopped when a ten-ton truck drove the consciousness out of its wing-marred existence.

Yes, and along the way a lonesome beggar begged and Ernest almost trampled the lonesome beggar to death in a rage of fury when the beggar approached him.

'Damn you!' he screamed when the scoundrel tried to get a hold of his leg. 'Let go of my leg... damn... damn all of you no-good-for-nothing beggars!' Ernest released himself from the beggar with one hefty roundhouse kick and he was off and away again and the beggar was nowhere to be seen. Ernest was moody for

sure, despite the morning bliss of nature and its surrounding pleasantries.

Along the way, just a few yards further down Main Road, Ernest comes across a friendly looking orphan, resembling that Nkosi Johnson kid. Ernest immediately mistook the orphan's identity for a worthless AIDS victim, for he resembled the Nkosi Johnson kid image in his mind too. It was not good though, for the boyish orphan came up to a raging Ernest with an innocence and sweetness in his face, with lots of tender and care and tears in his eyes.

'Good morning sir. Sir, if you don't mind...'

'Do not touch me you AIDS infected rat!' was the curse from Ernest and the poor boy almost got a smack in the face when he nearly did. 'Heh, you want a piece of me, you stupid brat, eh?'

'But sir...'

'Jesus Christ, you AIDS no-goods are all the same. You're better off in the gas chambers for all I care. Damn you.'

'But sir...'

'If there's a hell, take your swimsuit along. You might need it. Ha.'

Ernest strolls away with a skip, laughs in a fit of hysteria and didn't see a young boy crying his socks off. That Ernest was a nutcase to the extremity. He was a complete nut that earthworm. He was taking anti-depressants for sure, I mean, at one time it was his maple syrup, but clearly it helped very little in the case of Ernest. 'No AIDS would trouble me today. I feel much better to shit on charity anyway today.' All his life Ernest had a quick temper.

Right then the strangest thing happened. Sure, many strange things happened with Ernest around. But hear, with the young orphan far from his incestual mind, Ernest probably took a leaf out some presidential booklet, for he started to sing the national anthem as if it was some random Christmas carol. Ernest loved that national anthem song.

Strange old Ernest wasn't finished that morning, for a peace loving nun walked patiently along a busy Main Road, right into the path of this... now... seemingly dangerous man. The nun of love and peace was all dressed up in a blue and white nun cloak, looking neat and tidy, as only a morning nun can look

like. She was silently humming her own Christmas carol.

'Get out of the way quaker!' screams an offended Ernest and pushes the humming nun out into the dirty sidewalk. The frightened nun loses her balance and was about to fall heavily, but... through an intervening miracle she regains her footing and doesn't fall down unto the dirty pavement road.

'Excuse me sir. That was rude.'

'You're welcome quaker,' replies an unconcerned Ernest, doing a hopscotch past the Jewish Community Church, cursing at its Jewish nature in the process. The gasping nun turns away.

Ernest arrives at his beloved Dingo bar. He was smack on time as always, and, whilst making himself comfortable at the far corner of his beloved bar, his quick eyes searched for the old Jew, and he felt like cursing for not seeing him. When he did, the Jew was almost invisible behind his own counter, who in his turn appeared to be looking for someone else.

'In the name of Christ!' yells Ernest and stares wicked eyed at the bewildering old Jew, who was also called Hemingstein by his respected peers.

'Yes... one breakfast coming up there. Eh... Rosemary?' Hemingstein queried. Through the blink of an eye Hemingstein is gone. Like that. Dingo bar was shaking inside and outside, but a pretty woman named Rosemary, dressed with sufficient morning taste, takes up the challenge to greet and serve Ernest.

'Hmm... morning Ernest... shall I bring you the newspaper while you wait...?'

'Please-please do, do that before I strangle you this very second. Then bring me some juice and eggs before I eat you for breakfast. Then, if you'd be so kind dear, lift up that skirt of yours.'

'Uh... anything else?'

'Then you can leave me alone in peace you worthless woman. Now go.'

'Uh...'

'Yes go.'

'One... one moment Ernest... eh here's the letter you forgo to take yesterday. Here you go.'

Ernest silently grabs the letter and demands solitude. A few seconds later, he sees it being a handwritten letter from his most handsome Scott. Ernest frowns in earnest at the letter and snorts to

himself, Why don't you typewrite the letter you incompetent fool? He nevertheless starts reading the letter selfishly, expecting some worthwhile information.

Just another Saturday

DEAR ERNEST,

There was a time when I was sick and mad and I wanted to die, but I met a girl who made me happy for a while and I thought she could make me happy for good. She was young and care-free and made me feel better and I wanted to get married and spend the rest of my life with her. But she was also mad and I found out only after I fell in love with her and I felt guilty. So I kept on loving her despite and she broke my heart but I didn't care because I felt to have her. I don't know why but I felt so lonely I wanted to die so I took her back and we both were miserable and got drunk often and we were fools. She was miserable and tried to kill herself and I hated her for doing that but I kept on loving her because I was lonely like hell and didn't want anyone else that I would make miserable too. I felt worthless being miserable and I blamed her for everything, but she kept on trying

to kill herself and I tried too but I'm worthless and couldn't do it so I tried to kill Zelda instead for she was pretty and young and carefree. I tried to kill you too and I failed in that too. Forgive me.

Congrats on your book. We all here loved it. Say hi to Pauline.

Your most handsome Scott

XXXXXXX

P.S.

You're right, I'm a gloomy letter writer and shouldn't make a career out of it. Will write no more of this. Watch out for the loins, uh, I mean lions.

CHAPTER TWO

When Ernest had finished reading the handwritten letter from his most handsome Scott, he looked very calm, surprisingly so. Staring through the naked windows of his beloved bar, his blue eyes becalming a buzzing Main Road, Ernest reflected back to his good old friend Scott, a friend whom he had shared a great deal with in the past. He only reflected good things about Scott that morning, for Ernest hasn't seen Scott for a long while, and Scott was one of his best friends when sober. Ernest missed Scott a great deal. He considered his friend to be his only equal of intellectual matters, matters that meant the world to Ernest. He was still pondering widely over his friend Scott when the Dingo bar breakfast arrived in decorative fashion, just the way Ernest liked it.

Due to his surprising calmness, Ernest commended Rosemary on a scrumptious looking breakfast. He said thank you to Rosemary and all was well. Ernest was smiling, and so too those around him.

Whilst eating in solitude, a calm but also solemn Ernest reflected again back to Scott, and again, and of how much Scott impressed him, especially here at Dingo bar where the two of them spent so much time together chattering away and laughing, just being themselves for a change.

'You really gonna marry her? You really that stupid Scott? After all these years, after all the things she did to you, you still gonna marry that cupcake?'

'I'm sorry Ernest,' Scott said and looked down at the table, playing with the sugar sachets. 'I can't look at anyone else. I really can't. I love her. She's put a spell on me. I really want to marry her. I mean... there's like ten guys after her. I need to prove myself to her.'

'She'll make you miserable,' Ernest said.

'I'm miserable either way Ernest. At least I'll have a beautiful woman. I guess it will boost my self-esteem, with Zelda around.'

'She's a beautiful woman make no mistake about it. But I don't trust her. She's never been faithful for a week to you Scott. She's gonna push you over the edge that woman. I never trusted her. I don't like her eyes. And I don't like her tone of voice. She's a drunkard, a hawk, a leech, you'll never get any work done with her around. Don't marry her Scott. You need a wife that respects you, loves you, takes care of you. But no, you... you want this perfect glamour woman Scott. You're such a messed up romantic you know that? Such a charming worthless gent. Get an ordinary woman. Don't be so damn picky.'

'My name is not Ernest. I don't just point and say, 'There... there is my wife! You... yes you, be my wife!' That's not my style. I don't beat them like you do. I don't make them obedient. I want someone I can share my life with.'

'Damn Scott,' Ernest said and scratched his hairy chin and pointed to his empty glass. 'You're such a handsome and good-looking guy. I know loads of girls that'll drop any guy for you. You're just so depressed with Zelda making you unhappy, you don't see these girls. Boy Scott, look at you. You need a

stiff drink. That deranged girl will drive you into a nutter.'

'I love her. The unexpectedness in her ways is to be expected. That's what I love about her.'

'Scott... Scott. You're mad you know, always have, always will be. You're gonna end up with nothing. Go back and live life like you used to. Zelda is not worth it. Ah, stiff drink would help.'

Ernest and Scott frequented so many times at Dingo bar, few found it surprising that the old Jew Hemingstein almost went out of business when they didn't frequent there. It was their regular spot for lively conversation, and it consisted of all matters. They frequented there for many years, supplemented by alcoholic beverages, beverages that made them cheerful and inhospitable at the same time. Yet, they were still rich and playful with their sayings, and usually expressed a general concern for each other's well being.

'No Ernest,' Scott said displeasingly. 'You can tell me about your mistresses, your wives, and all those other people whom you fuck but you don't care for. I have that too, but see, when they lie beside me at night, I only think about Zelda, for Zelda is

the only woman I care and love. You won't understand Ernest because you've never been in love. You don't know that when a man who loves truly he loves truly only one person. He may love others too but not like her. For he remembers the days they went walking on the beach, or when they play hopscotch together, or when they read poetry into each other's eyes, or how they sat on the benches at sea holding hands, staring at Robben Island and all its desolation. They would look into each other's eyes and no words need to be spoken. They would go the seaside and countryside and smell the fresh air together. They would go on trips and need not to make violent love, yes need not to make violent love Ernest, for what they feel and share transcend any violent lovemaking of that kind. That is the only love I feel for anyone, and no woman ever came close to Zelda. I don't think any woman will. I've tried to love other women, I tried hard to forget about Zelda I really did, but only one woman captivates me Ernest. Those days when she's happy and when she makes me happy too, those days when we are sober, those are the best. Those days in the countryside and the seaside, when we go away into our own dream, a dream of two star-crossed lovers

that are young and carefree, fighting the odds but still trying. Away from the nightmares of the city, there... there in the open spaces we truly love because we don't need to face our fears. We don't need to speak, or to pretend, or to get drunk, because we are as we are. For those few moments we are truly free and I pinch myself for it being real. But then, and this is the tragedy of our existence Ernest; as we return home, back to the city and all its splendour, our nightmares return too, and once home we pretend that nothing ever happened. I regret then that I ever pinched myself, for I begin to feel that it was indeed only a dream. That... that is all I have to say to you, but... but I don't think you understand, do you? See Ernest... Zelda and I are not only a love affair, but it's also a love story, a story that has twisted and turned for so many years. She's worth it, because the story is so beautiful, for I remember all of it like it was yesterday. Things like that stick for a lifetime. No Ernest, I'm not a madman like you think I am. I'm just stuck, stuck because Zelda and I will never find happiness together. For that we are too scared and fearful. We fear happiness because we never experienced it. And when

the impression arrives that we're indeed experiencing happiness, it delights us yes, but it also scares the hell out of us. We don't know what to do with those moments, and that's why we always come back to the rotten city, back to our nightmares. It's only here where we feel safe, in our nightmares, where we belong. That's all I have to say. Yes, you're a success and all that, but you'll never experience love Ernest. For that,' Scott said with a straightened finger, 'I say you are the madman and drunk.'

Scott slowly lowered his straightened finger and for a change felt powerful, in control, superior to his self-proclaimed hero. He knew he wounded his best friend, he knew his friend's swords (balding fists) meant little right now, and, picking his nose in triumph, looked up into the clear blue African sky.

'Uh... Jesus Christ Scott,' Ernest said and now took up scratching his crotch area.

'That's all I have to say Ernest,' Scott said.

'Scott...'

'I have nothing to add.'

'That... that was an impressive speech. I mean... gosh Scott. You... you do have your moments Scott.'

You really do have your moments. Boy, some poet you are my friend. You are gifted. Christ, Jesus, your words, the way you talk, I just like to beat you up now, eh? You make me jealous Scott. You're good after all. Gee, I need a drink. Let's have a drink. You haven't had a decent drink yet Scott.'

Ernest points to the empty glasses on the table in an inferior-like manner, and, feeling depressed, collected them greedily. He glanced up at Scott and remembered that characteristic twinkle in his friend's eyes, the mark of a gifted man with words. Ernest admired Scott at times. Scott spoke as if he had just attained a scholarship to Cambridge. He spoke with the authority of success at times; he spoke of his ideas, his ideals, his hopes, his dreams, all that success stuff. It all came together for Scott on a sober day. Ernest commented on this as well, saying that a sober Scott is like an electricity machine, nuclear energy pumped with sobriety and funniness. At such times just being in his presence is enough to make ones heart miss a beat. He shone with brilliance on such days and Ernest said he loved that most about Scott. He was a wasted talent through and through, but no one could

intimidate a sober Scott, when his mind was as crystal clear as the definition of crystal clear allows it to be. Even Ernest admitted, on rare occasions, on this quality. No wonder he encouraged Scott's drinking. No wonder Zelda encouraged Scott's drinking.

'No Ernest, that's not gonna work,' Scott said, still holding strong. 'You see... whenever I want to pick myself up, whenever you feel threatened by the possibility of a sober Scott, you become frightened, for you know Scotty hear is as every bit as good as you are. No, I don't want to drink. I'm finished with drink. But thanks anyhow.'

'Screw you Scott,' Ernest said. 'I just say good things about you and now you turn sour. You always want to compete with me. I don't know why, but you always want to compete. Let's have a drink and get this nonsense over with. I get your point. You're a nutter. Now... what about that drink, eh?'

'No, I'm finished with drinking. From now on I'm keeping it straight. In fact Ernest, I'd like to terminate our friendship for good. A sober Scott and a selfish Ernest can never be friends. You don't like a successful Scott see. You like worthless

people, people with no character, people whose worthlessness you find amusing, people you can abuse and beat the crap out of. People like me. Drunkards. But I've had it with you Ernest. You may have money and women and all that. But I have Zelda, and I plan to marry her.'

Ernest waved his hands in protest. 'Don't... don't start with Zelda now again. That woman is mad. The day I met her Scott. The day I met her I knew something wasn't right with her. Yes, she's beautiful and full of grace, but so is the average whore. I tell you Scott, the reason why you are what you are is not because of you and your drinking, it's because of that Zelda bitch and her telling you have a larva penis. She's jealous because you're smart and talented with words, that's why she makes you feel like a damn castrated character. You have a gift Scott. You can persuade people, tell stories, make people laugh. She's jealous because of that, a half-lesbian on top of it, and now you want to marry her? See Scott, I may love no woman, but I have my work and that's more important. All that love crap you've been telling means nothing if you don't get satisfaction from work. I'm not a Marxist Scott, not

by a long shot. But Marx had some good points regarding work. It's irreplaceable... work that is. Your Romeo & Juliet love story is merely ephemeral, but my work is life, my mission. No relationship can replace that. Look... look at me Scott. I've been your best friend for how long now? Two years? Three years? That Zelda is jealous of that brilliant Harvard mind of yours. That's the honest truth. Listen to me Scott. I'm telling you this as a friend. Stay away from her.'

'No. Damn you Ernest. You think I shouldn't marry Zelda, eh? You think she's the person that's dragging me down? You're suppose to support me. Damn you. You're only saying this because Zelda doesn't like you. You're saying this because you cannot seduce her, that's why.'

'Why would I want to seduce my best friend's woman? I don't stab people in the back Scott. That's your territory. I stab people in the front, there where they can feel it most.'

'I... I love Zelda,' Scott said. 'I love Zelda.'

'I swear to you Scott, Zelda's a slave to lust, and not even yours. She sold her soul to the devil nymph a long time ago. You, you on the other hand

Scott, you should go back to the newspapers and start writing crap again, that's where you belong. You're wasting your talent with her. Jesus Christ Scott. Gosh, this is very upsetting. I've been your friend. I've seen you at work. Don't let Zelda destroy your life too.'

The wounded fell silent, both evaluating this ailing friendship. Both felt frustrated, unable to communicate any true feelings. Pity, these men.

'Gee,' Scott finally said, 'didn't know you feel that way. I'm sorry you know. I mean, Zelda and I haven't seen eye to eye for I long time. And that affair she had with that stylish sailor wasn't good for our relationship at all. She's a difficult woman, I admit. But you're crossing the line here you know, Ernest? She's my woman.'

'Screw you again,' Ernest said, banging his ruffled his fists on the battle. 'Enough. I don't want to discuss this anymore. I've said what I wanted to say for a long time now. Now it's finally out, and you can hate me for that if you want to Scott, but everything I say is the truth, including 'and' and 'the'.'

If the fence-sitter had to choose between Zelda and Ernest, the person who ruined Scott most, the fence-sitter would probably choose both when threatened with a rusty old musket. Ernest may say what he likes about how he helped Scott, but he messed him up too, just like Zelda did. See... Ernest was a drunk, but a good drunk. In fact, Ernest could drink and not get drunk. Scott well, the man had many diseases. His heart, his lungs, his liver, he... wasn't a well conditioned man. On top of that, Scott, he was a timid fellow. He drank to be in control, to get rid of his shyness, to get rid of his problems with an extravagant Zelda. Ernest drank for other reasons, mostly to feed his ego, an ego built on lies, lies and more lies on top of the old and built lies. Ernest had so many lies he didn't know where to tie them all back together. He drank to get perspective like Scott, but Ernest, he also knew when to stop. Scott didn't. Scott only stopped when he passed out. He was ailing, and Ernest, along with Zelda, was just pushing him merrily along, over the edge, to a mere fool.

'Gee,' Scott said and felt a tear form in his left eye.

'Yes Scott. You hurt me real bad. You really do at times you know. Apologize or don't, I don't care. In fact, I'd like to terminate our friendship now, for I've been so good to you, and now you tell me I've been nothing but trouble. I don't like this Scott, I don't like you treating me like dirt. Boy, you make me itchy Scott. Real itchy.'

'Gee, sorry,' Scott said concerned and reached out his hand to Ernest, suggesting comfort. 'I didn't know... I didn't know I upset you like that. Just don't get angry with me Ernest. Don't.'

'I'm your friend Scott,' Ernest said and took Scott's outstretched hand. 'I care for you.'

'Thanks Ernest. You're a good friend. I care for you. I love...'

See... most of the time Ernest was just another petrifying bull out of Pamplona, Spain, cursing and swearing many a quaker to the despair of successful suicide. There was this one disturbed quaker who had nothing going for him. His wife left him, he lived on the streets, but he was nevertheless an optimist about life and all. He really had a thing about that Bible figure Paul, and quoted him left, right and centre. Of course, when Ernest got hold of the

quaker, it all changed. Delicately spelling out that Paul is the father of all whoremongers who invented the syph, had a relationship with traitor Judas, the quaker became violent.

'And I do too...'

'Eh serious... Ernest?'

It all happened very quickly, but Ernest, a former amateur champion, took the quaker to the cleaners with a classic left hook, and then a couple more to put the guy out of his misery. See... Ernest was a southpaw and the quaker never really got hold of Ernest at the early excursions of the fight. The quaker was a style-puncher, but Ernest was still strong and fresh when he knocked the quaker out. Hey... I never saw that quaker since, but... but I've also read a few obituaries after that, and it seems that he was a much loved quaker.

'Go to hell,' Ernest said, letting go of Scott's hand with a girlish jerk. 'We're being silly again.'

'I suppose,' Scott said and stare first at Ernest, then at his Swiss watch, and then down to his empty glass.

'Now-now..., ' Ernest said. 'I'm gonna get myself a good and strong whisky. Ah, I feel I deserve one.'

Sober up if you like, but I'm drinking. After a long day of thinking and fighting and talking crap I need a whisky.'

'Hmm... I guess one whisky will freshen me up too, don't you think Ernest? I haven't had a drink this whole day. Gee, I've been pretty emotional.'

'I'm not pushing you Scott. I'm your friend. You said you'd stop drinking. I respect you for not drinking. I respect you Scott. Now... where's that damn waiter, that no-good Hemingstein or Rosemary. I need a good old whisky.'

'Ernest wait...' Scott's voice now hailed despair. He locked Ernest's strong blue eyes with his own. 'See... I have great recuperating powers you know. One drink will freshen me up too. I mean, we've just been talking and talking and arguing and all. It's not good for our friendship. No good.'

'You sure Scott? You sure about that drink? You're a good friend and I don't want feel like the guy who gets you back off the wagon again. I like you when you're sober too you know. You can be a great conversationalist.'

'I know Ernest, I know, but gee, we've been too chattering eh? We need a drink you know... just to put it all into perspective.'

'You sure Scott. You sure about that drink?'

'Damn yes! I'm sure about that drink. Go get me that drink Ernest. And be quick, just be quick will you. I need a drink, a whisky will do fine.'

'Hey, that's my Scott,' Ernest said triumphantly, restoring *status quo*. He gave Scott a pat on the back and said, 'Like the good old days, eh?' Scott didn't say anything, but his eyes twinkled. He laughed and smiled handsomely. He looked young and fabulous then Ernest thinks, staring across into a buzzing Main Road. Boy, that Scott Fitzgerald.

CHAPTER THREE

'Anything else Ernest?' Rosemary asked in her usual tenderly fashion.

'Uh?'

'You all right?'

'Heh... it's just this damn Scott,' Ernest said, not looking at Rosemary. 'Oi, he's not doing great.'

'The letter?'

'Yeah, it's a real crack-up letter. Scott's cracking up. I wish I could be there for him. Damn Scott.'

'We all liked Scott,' Rosemary said and took Ernest's devoured breakfast plate. 'Charming boy, tremendously good-looking.'

It's no secret what spoiled the great friendship Scott and Ernest had going. Since the whole fairy thing came out in the open, Ernest more than Scott made the decision to spend less time together. The fairies spoilt it and it was interesting to see how negative it affected Scott, how it wrecked him was interesting to observe, the wrecking part. The crack-up people say. When Ernest's travel book became so successful you know, he discarded the credit Scott gave in helping to polish his work. Scott wasn't mentioned once in the travel book, something that hurt Scott a great deal. That just added the tension between the two great fairies.

'You heard Zelda talk about us, you know...?'

'Heh?'

'The whole fairy...'

'Yeah, I heard that Scott and it makes me itchy. Real itchy. I mean she's jealous of our great friendship. Everybody are. Now they think we have a damn homosexual affair. I mean, two guys being good friends and all. What happened to all that great

confederacy between friends, eh? We're getting stabbed in the back like always.'

'I don't know Ernest,' Scott said. 'I love you, you know.'

'I love you too. I love you like I love my sister, but we're not a bunch of fairies, ok?'

'No... no I understand Ernest. We're just friends who love each other. Just... friends.'

'And that's we'll ever be Scott,' Ernest said and looked over his shoulder. 'Best friends, best... Screw them all Scott. Screw them all. You mean more to me than all these people out here, even my stupid women whom I don't care for. I just collect and stare at them. They mean nothing to me Scott. Honest.'

'Thanks Ernest. Appreciate it.'

'Now drink up that beer. They'll think we're a bunch of fairies. Drink that beer or else I'll have to beat you. And I really don't feel like beating anyone today. I've got a reputation to look after.'

'I'm trying Ernest.'

'Drink up Scott. They'll think you're a damn fairy drinking so slow. Oh boy Scott, drink up. Eh... I still say Scott. You need a real wife.'

'I love Zelda to bits,' Scott said and emptied his glass. 'Ah, damn whisky. Strong stuff this.'

'You need a w-i-f-e Scott.'

'You mean a servant, someone that can do the dishes, keep the house tidy, that you like, eh Ernest?'

'And, what's the problem?'

'That's not marriage Ernest, not by a long shot. I mean, look at that mute you had.'

'Hey, I loved that mute. She was a good woman.'

'You don't know love. Ha-ha,' cracked Scott proud. He gulped down mouthful whisky and said, 'Before Zelda, I felt even more love you know. Yeah, real l-o-v-e. John Lennon love. That's the one. What was her name again? Ah, Cherie. She's Frenchwoman. I find Frenchwoman irresistible you know. They have a splendid physique. Anyway, she was happy. I was miserable. I hated religion. She embraced it. I despised living. She embraced it. Did I say embrace? Anyway, long time ago. Frenchwoman. Now I have Zelda.'

'Was Cherie a whore?'

'On the contrary. She was a social worker.'

'Good God!'

'That's what I said. The problem was you know... I had no self-esteem, I'm pretty much a suicidal character in general. Didn't know if you've noticed by now.'

'Go on.'

'Well, yeah, I'm just proving a point about my affinity for love and how it improves character.

You have no clue about this Ernest. No clue. Uh... damn whisky. You sure like whisky, eh?'

'Damn you Scott' said Ernest. 'Me? No clue? Christ, I loved once. I was lying in hospital. There was this beautiful nurse. Gee, she nursed me back to health. She spent many a night on top of me. My legs were broken but she had a golden touch that nurse. Nursed me back to health all night long.'

'Oi, what happened to her?'

'Gosh Scott. Fell right in love with her. Can you believe that Scott? I fell in love with a woman. It's a damn shame.'

'What's wrong with that?'

'The... the emotion. It was too much. I couldn't deal with it. I felt suffocated by all the love that was flowing out her silky skin. I was floating on air. I couldn't think straight. Ah, that tingly

feeling inside ones tummy. A real tingly feeling, eh? That's love they say. One feels like dying. So... so I left the hospital a.s.a.p. and I never saw her again. Never. I didn't even leave her a note Scott. Yes-yes Scott. Now that's what I call being a man, eh?'

Scott really thought Ernest would take to him from the beginning because they were both talented with words and good at it too. Ernest looks strong and impressive Scott said and could beat the hell out of anyone on his day with that strong arms and big shoulders of his. Yes... he was a big and proud man that Ernest character, although he hardly ever showed his true self.

'But that was about the only time I ever cried Scott. The only time. I felt so damn ashamed of myself, leaving that nurse just like that. Ah, she was most tender, strong-minded too. But beautiful.'

'Tough break Ernest,' Scott said and started with another whisky. 'Tough...'

'Later I went to some bar to get drunk and there was this prettiest girl sitting alone at a table drinking martinis. I just sat there with this girl looking like a train wreck and we didn't say

anything. She... the girl... she didn't mind my train wreck status you know, so... I took her home, just for the effort. When I found out her being a mute and all, shoot, I married her through the internet. It was a good marriage. She knew when I wanted to be left alone. The nurse, being in love and all, it was just a hassle.'

'You're a brave man Ernest.'

'Please don't tell this to anyone Scott. You know what will happen if you do.' Ernest again looked around his shoulder and saw Hemingstein staring away from the counter. Ernest felt threatened by the two shifty Jewish eyes and said, 'Gosh, I actually despised that nurse, that... that whore! She meant nothing to me. Ha! Drink up Scott. These people will think you're a damn fairy, drinking so slow. You must drink, like a man.'

CHAPTER FOUR

Ernest now sat in a reflecting mood at Dingo bar, arranging his thoughts impressively. His face and mouth looked somewhat bewildered, sheepishly smiling, but then solemnly detracting. It was still early in the morning and apart from Ernest, only a 90-year old man was present, wishing his time away, staring with lonesome eyes at radiant Rosemary. Rosemary was getting more and more beautiful as the morning progressed. She was a lively woman at best, who had the capacity to cheer up even remote people such as Ernest.

'What does the letter say Ernest? Is Scott in trouble? Is he coming back?'

'Ah, I loved that boy,' Ernest said and looked at Rosemary as if she was an agreeable marriage counsellor. 'He was a good boy at times Rosemary. He really had a thing for that Henry James writer you know. It's funny, for James is such an old-fashioned kind of writer. I mean... he never used swear words in his entire life. But that's Scott. A damn romantic, always on about Zelda.'

Ernest was right. Scott was always on about Zelda for some reason, despite everything she did to him. Of course, Scott took her back. He always did. He was a kind man above all else and had a good sense of humour when sober. That's why he couldn't leave Zelda. Because of the drink. That Zelda of his was crazy, Ernest said that from the first moment. Ernest was right all along. But she was pretty to look at. Hah, more than pretty to look at. She was the most beautiful and sought after woman in Sea Point at the time. No question. And there was money coming in from the parent's side, so Scott was in a way lucky like hell to have her in the end, despite her quirks at suicide and trying to kill Scott and all that. Scott hit her back too. He was damn lucky

with having that girl all to himself, if only for a while.

'Some people you met you forget. But Zelda, and... and she reminds of that book eh... Daisy Miller. Henry James wrote that book you know.'

'Uh-uh,' Ernest said. 'Your sure like that stinking fairy writer. He's hateful.'

'Listen... some people you met you forget, but Zelda like that Daisy Miller, you met but don't forget. They only come once in a lifetime Ernest. You either let them go, or you hold on for dear life and face the music. She's a whirlwind, but worth it.'

'She's a hawk that will destroy you. This ballet dancing of hers. What's that?'

'Gee, she's an artistic girl Ernest. I told her she's losing her creative edge in her singing, so I encouraged her to go into the ballet industry. It's a flourishing industry Ernest. Ballet.'

'Oi...'

'I really love her. It just... it just seems that we have been drifting apart lately. I haven't touched her for a while. I don't even smell her anymore. It's my fault.'

'Eh...'

'So I hit her.'

'You did?'

'Yeah, just like you told me Ernest. I hit her, gave her a good smack on the cheek. And now she doesn't want to see me. What's up with that Ernest? You said she'll come round, get all obedient and stuff. Well, she's not obedient. On the contrary...'

'Christ, you sure you gave her a good smack? You sure she felt it Scott?'

'Felt it? My fingerprints are a damn feature of her glamour face. She felt it all right.'

'Hmm... that's strange, very strange Scott. It works for me all the time. You beat them. Maybe Scott... maybe you should beat her harder next time. Beat the crap out of her next time.'

'Gee, I'm not a wife-beater Ernest, I don't get myself involved in messy politics. Zelda and I are soul mates, till death to us part. Even if we break up, we'll still be together in our hearts and minds. She's so beautiful Ernest, oh so beautiful. Whenever I see her I... I get scared. I think I'm scared of women Ernest, especially the pretty women. I haven't sunk my teeth into a piece of woman flesh for months. Zelda is very overwhelming, her presence is like that

of a butterfly that's taking flying lessons. She doesn't even drink or do chemicals anymore. Christ, she's so happy without me. I'm just miserable altogether. I... I have to find a way to get her down again. This is not good. My self-esteem is shot.'

'Yes, Zelda is a strong woman it may seem, but crazy like hell. I mean, Scott... she's on something that fruitess. Trust me she's not a fruitess. She's born to suffer that whore. She's just trying to impress you that she can live without you. But she'll come back.'

'You sure, Zelda will come back to me? But when?'

'I figure when her private parts turn sour. About then will be a good time. She'll need you then I figure, you 'saving' her and all that. It's a long shot, but I figure Zelda will come back to you, despite you beating her. After all, she's only a woman.'

'But Zelda...' Scott continued.

'Only a woman,' Ernest repeated and stretched out his chest. 'A female. Our nemesis.'

'But about Zelda. You think she still...'

'Just forget about Zelda.'

Scott was different than Ernest. In many ways he was sincere. He loved Zelda and stood by her even though she slept with the whole of the southern seaboard's syphilis-tainted population during her prime. Boy, she got tested so many times for HIV, she was appointed chairwoman of the HIV blood donating society for all her efforts. Scott was convinced she got the virus. Always has. Yet, she came out clean... every time she was tested. There... there was an abnormality about her was told. Her vagina was so complex and sophisticated, it produced its own vaccines and serums. Doctors all over the country were impressed by her vagina. Zelda became most famous for what she had between her legs than anything else. That's the honest truth.

'Just be strong Scott. Be strong. You said it's over. Let it be over then.'

'I will Ernest, thanks,' Scott said and pumped his two literary fists in the air to show strength and character. 'From now on I'll just ignore her completely. If she phones, I won't pick up. If I walk past her on the street, I... I...'

'You run like hell Scott. Run like hell, the other way around.'

'Yeah, right. I mean... that's it. I run like hell. Good. It's good. She's not even worth ten Daisy Miller's that girl.'

'You'll be all right,' Ernest said. He winked at Hemingstein who nodded and made himself useful behind the counter.

'Yeah, I've just had it with her you know. She's pushed me around too much. I mean I've lost all manhood with that woman. I feel I shouldn't be a man. I feel so worthless and pathetic.'

'Make no mistake, you are worthless and pathetic, make no mistake about it,' Ernest said and nodded his head in earnest. 'Well put Scott.'

'Thanks,' Scott said and buried his head in shame.

'We'll fix it soon enough though. You just need some quality time with Tania. That's a good start.'

'Whom?'

'Tania the Greek. Now that's what I call a real woman.'

'No,' Scott said, now waving his hands in protest. 'I fear that Tania. I mean... last time didn't go as planned. I wasn't in the mood that day, but she... gee you know Tania old Ernest friend. She's always in the mood. Apparently she's in the mood when she's

asleep. Her legs open up like a sunflower that woman and then she's asleep, like that. Tania's like a vending machine. She's quicker than a sufficient takeaway store that girl.'

'I still think you need to see Tania. She has helped many a man with their problems. Just promise me you'll leave that wretched Zelda for good.'

'Oh dear. What if... what if she's fallen ill Ernest? I mean... she's practically ill every day. We think she got tuberculosis Ernest. It's a damn death sentence. Zelda needs help.'

'No, you need help. She's playing tricks with your mind like always. Get her out of your system. There are literally hundreds of pretty girls waiting for you Scott. Why do you always go back to that abusive woman? You must break the spell she has on you. You must fight this Scott. You must fight this.'

'Gee, I don't know. I need a drink Ernest. A real stiff one too. I don't like standing up to Zelda you know. I'm afraid she might kill me. Or her parents. You seen her parents? They're like the mafia Ernest, rich, dangerous and outright nasty. If

I leave her you might never see me again. Gee Ernest.'

'Not if we kill Zelda first,' Ernest said, lowering his tone of voice. 'Listen Scott. I've never killed a man, nor a woman for that matter. But you see Scott... I always do the best for my fellow human being. And... and what I see Scott, what I see is that you and Zelda in the same town is no good. You should run away, or we should get rid of her.'

'I can't go away Ernest. I mean... what about my friends, you and Pat and Jerome. And Stump. I'll miss you guys like hell.'

'That's why I say Scott. I know some people, some whatdoyoucallthem? eh... mercenaries.'

'I... I don't like you talking like this Ernest. You're a good friend, but Zelda, she doesn't deserve to die.'

'But she will Scott, sooner or later. We all die, sooner or later.'

'No Ernest. You're nuts. I'll talk to Zelda now and straighten this out like a man. I've done it before. I'll... I'll show her the rough and tough side of Scott. If she objects I'll slap her. Ha! You hear what I just said Ernest? I'll slap that woman

around like a toddler. I mean... I've done it before haven't I? Just you wait and see Ernest. She'll be amazed, she'll fall right back in love with me. I'll make her jealous with my new found self. Hopefully she'll leave that transsexual and come to a real man. What do you think about that Ernest? Zelda wants a real man, I'll give her one.'

'Hmm... I don't know Scott. You're a weak character. You're so smart, but when it comes to your personal life, you're a wreck. You're like Jerome. I feel so sorry for you. And gee... Jerome had an excuse. He was damn autistic, high functioning but still autistic. That guy had no skills Scott. But you... you're just an embarrassment. You should see a psychiatrist and get a diagnosis for mental illness. That way you have an excuse for you craziness. Boy, such a disappointment you are to me Scott.'

CHAPTER FIVE

Ernest reluctantly excused himself from Dingo bar with dignity, and gave a pleasant wave to Hemingstein, who was now reading the morning newspaper with relative ease. The 90-year old man was still sitting there, keeping a close eye on Rosemary in her seductive black skirt. Ernest waved them goodbye too.

Ernest left Dingo bar and strolled along the end of a busy Main Road towards the farthest reaches of Beach Road and its surrounding pleasantries. It was

a beautiful day, and the sun couldn't be any brighter. So too the seagulls, who were pleasantly hovering above the city's inhabitants, each serving their own purpose.

During his stroll, Ernest felt simultaneously depressed and happy. Sure, he felt depressed because he probably will never see Scott ever again, but he also felt happy because Dingo bar brings back so many memorable memories of his best friend. But listen... it's those fond memories that Ernest tries to freshen up in his head. It's those fond memories of Scott that Ernest would try to remember for good, especially when times are as slow for our Ernest here.

PART TWO:

PAT HOBBIE and the city fairies

CHAPTER SIX

When you think about it, there's only two things a man really care about - that of his own and that of his women. All other things seem trivial, so much that when a man almost dies he still cares for nothing than to live and see his women.

Thus, comrades, it is here that PAT HOBBIE tries to explain the case of two great and wonderful friends that confronted all this, two friends whom Pat both loathed and cherished at the same time and whom he pondered long nights over with. Friends that

made Pat jealous, friends that if Pat could choose to be someone else, he'll choose to be like one of them. Gosh, Pat loved both of them, but as far as love affairs went, it wore out pretty quickly, even for a slicker such as Pat. But... let's also be honest, for Scott and Ernest... they were the only men who made this impression on Pat, the only whom he cared for if only for a little while. And when they parted, like people do, Pat cared again only for his own welfare, and yes... the company of his June.

Let's see... they officially met at Dingo bar and I remember Ernest telling me that he didn't think much of Scott then as he and a couple of worthless characters ridiculed this attractive man and his low capacity for drink. Scott said that he thought he didn't impress Ernest much, for he was boastful and got drunk pretty quickly and Ernest dismissed him for that. 'Hemingway I presume?' Scott asked, whereby Ernest looked up and said neutrally, 'Sit there you runt,' and that's how they met. Ernest laughed and ridiculed Scott in front of his worthless friends who Scott said knew nothing about literature. And so Scott took upon drinking and later he dragged himself

home and Zelda he said was missing but he was drunk and he didn't care about her when drunk. He had a low capacity for alcohol that Scott, and Ernest reminded him of that every single day of their time together.

So see... eh, it wasn't an instant friendship, nor a clear-cut Kodak moment, but it gradually grew to an intellectual partnership of substance. Few friends can ever dream of generating such common ground intellectual stimulation, but Scott and Ernest... they did it in their sleep.

Like I said, Scott was very boastful that first day, and when they started drinking Scott passed out almost immediately. It was only a few days after Ernest said, when he and Scott were alone in private, that Scott started to impress him. Not only physically, for Scott was an attractive fellow with the most charming face. But Ernest... he... he valued intellect more than anything. Scott's cerebral attitude impressed Ernest most. And I guess Scott's cerebral insides impressed PAT HOBBIE too. And listen, it was only when the cerebral train got moving when that Ernest and Scott fell in love with each other and their way with words.

Nice one Pat. Yes, that's... that's when the literary friendship started, and a high-flying Scott helped Ernest to become a big shot in the travel book industry. He even revised Ernest's articles and periodicals for a decent amount of money, whilst... whilst Ernest would further spread the word around about Scott, that his new friend's worth as a columnist and literary poster boy is indeed beyond any singing of it. It was a working relationship, and both benefited enormously, especially Ernest, whose travel book became better and better with Scott around.

Scott was submitting articles locally and abroad, and was widely sought by poster boy seekers who needed a lift in sales. But it's funny the way PAT HOBBIE thinks and he's got some truth there that... that ever since Ernest met Scott it's sad but true that Scott's career took a turn for the worst. His work became more and more an irregular thing, as papers were gradually incorporating more and more visuals into their dailies, for the art of reading took too much public energy. Scott was determined though not to sacrifice old-fashioned writing for another 9-5 job, so he relied upon Ernest and Stump

and sometimes even PAT HOBBIE for free extra income. Yeah, and Ernest promised to put in a good word to his literary reputation, which he did to an extent. Ernest also gave Scott an allowance from time to time, and as I hear, Scott did the same to his best friend when he and Zelda were high-flyers in the paper merchandise. Say Pat, was it the whole fairy thing or was it because of Zelda? Or was there something else? Who wrecked him? And what's up with Zelda? Was she a real girl or what?

Well-eh, Zelda was by far the most impressive woman of all women. There's no question about it, and even Ernest felt threatened by her dazzling presence. See toots... Ernest didn't fancy Zelda because he didn't want to. I figured he was intimidated by her personality.

Look, Zelda was a wonderful socialite and I hate to say that she wrecked Scott all on her own. She was courted by up to a dozen men in her prime that girl. One could even regard her as some post-feminist at times you know, for even though she had the most seductive of ways, she was strong-minded and no man ever walked over her. But see... her eyes, especially her eyes, she could obliterate the heart

and minds of almost any eligible bachelor or married man with those eyes. Hawk eyes. Notwithstanding her physical beauty, which still to my mind, simply no comparison. Oh, and she had the most glamorous voice, unlike any other South African voice, distinctly unique. I tell you, her words fell to waxed ears like poetry. Zelda was like that, and made fools of many men, including Scott.

Eh... I always felt that Zelda was after all in love with Scott, and that he... with his charming homophobic ways and enormous intellect, captured her imagination more than any other human specie she managed to seduce. I tell you, that Zelda was very much in love with Scott, just like Scott was with her. That is a fact, and I don't contradict myself convict, although... if I do, read Walt Whitman. He has a few pointers on contradiction trust me.

Good work Pat. Thanks. Hmm... you know... know what? You know what Scott also told, eh? Enlighten me Pat. Well, you know what Scott told eh, he... he doesn't drink because he wants to. He drinks because he has no one to talk to. Give me a heroine Pat and I'll drink you a tragedy. Poor thing that Scott.

Say Pat, how did the two of you meet, eh? Who? Me and Ernest? Sure. Oh, well, I... I remember how I met Ernest at a no-nonsense Islamic bookshop, and how we frequented there until we too started facing the old Jew at Dingo bar with Scott and everyone. It was all during that 9/11 fiasco where we really became sort of good friends and all. Yeah, your spoof remembers he just met Ernest when the two planes crashed into the World Trade Centre. Some memory, and it was a terrific day all in all. The sun was almost shining, my female parrot was singing her hourly quaker song - almost perfect I dare say. So yes, it was all in good spirits when the planes came down. I mean, we strolled into this second hand Islamic bookshop and Ernest and I were still trying to come to terms with each other's likes and dislikes and all and I remember how Ernest shoved Dostoevsky's collected works down my hack throat, for he was astonished by my big-mouth and its revelation that it never finished with Brothers Karamazov. Boy, the guy went on a cursing spree, cursing a God he never even believed in. In fact, Ernest claimed God, and after that he usually screamed bolderdash, like I always did, and then *di immortales* like my mother and father

always did. And then the Islamic bookshop owner had a holy fright. I guess Ernest ran out of swear words. In fact, Ernest was the closest to the real anti-christ, and many a quaker fell victim to his petrifying voice from hell. I mean, that guy had much in common with Ghandi when it came to diplomatic speech therapy, but I guess the anti-christ was diplomatic there too. That's why I also compare him with the anti-christ you see.

Anyway, it was hot like hell when the planes came crashing down. The godddamn bookstore owner even closed the shop first thing. Yeah... he was an Islamic. I know, nobody even suspected terrorism and all. The Islamic terrorist guy just ran out and we heard bells ringing all night long as if something terrific had happened in Muslim culture. I mean gee... we're living in South Africa. Yes, and Main Road and Beach Road were a desolate desertion. Not even the foreign Africans were around to sell chemicals and needles. It was a mayhem of city silence that day. Whores were being taken home by taxis, feeling gutted for not being worked through, escorted by Chinese pimps and their masochistic ways, off to the place where one can chase the elusive dragon instead.

Gosh, Ernest and I didn't know a thing about what happened there at the World Trade Centre. No sir, we still had a few debts to cover at our sex shop. And... and while there, we browsed and joked for about a hour, and then only at money-making Dingo bar when the old Jew Hemingstein blurted it out with a Jewish fart. Gee, Ernest felt like a gutted whore at first, but when the possibility of war came up, he lightened up.

'Ha, it's about time we have another war you guys. I mean, the Cold War was just ass kissing to my mind. Vietnam well, that's four damn decades ago. We need a good war again. These American people know how to make good wars. I respect them for making a good war. I mean... if it wasn't for Vietnam, that Oliver Stone guy would've been a methadone addict. And you remember that Apocalypse Now guys? Boy, it was a terrific Joseph Conrad film. I tell you, there were some good things that came out of Vietnam I tell you. Another war would be good, if only for Hollywood.'

'It's still a tragedy.'

'Yeah Pattie boy, whatever you say you think is true, but listen... this is also a great damn tragedy. Those Americans must be shitting all over themselves

right now, eh? Jesus-Jesus boys, just look at us. Look at these South African city people, what the hell are we fearing for anyway? I say we must drink to this and celebrate. Christ, we need Scott for this. Hmm... it wouldn't surprise me if it was a fairy job. They had it rough the last few weeks. They wanted to get married, now they're getting their due. Terrorism my ass. I wouldn't even suspect a Jew for this. I tell you Pat, a classic fairy case gone wrong. Yeah, those fairies. Lunatics, all of them.'

'Encore.'

'Eh Pat... gee, some fairy man wanted to give me the HIV. There's a HIV night club, you know that? Only HIV's allowed, members only. Christ, you need to get the HIV to get access. They're damning this world, Pat! These damn fairies, they invite people to get the HIV to get a sense of belonging.'

'Gee...'

'I'm wretched because of them. Let's drink to all them no-goods and celebrate.'

'I drink to thee.'

CHAPTER SEVEN

Anyway, it is the phoniest thing ever to begin start telling of PAT HOBBIE and the city fairies. So he starts telling where he remembers it all very well the day everybody were there and where everybody were still optimists.

Even Scott the drunk made it Pat said. Said he wouldn't miss it for the world I tell you, not even for a bottle of prime whisky. Boy, he arrived like a flashbang that man, sober as a bloomin dober, up and arms over a book from a certain D.H. Lawrence writer. Scott reads like a maniac at best. Even for a drunk he knows more than most about books. That man is a

literate I swear but hasn't put a sentence to paper or screen for months. In fact, he's pretty much down and out from that point of view altogether. Ah, the rummy's life... eh?

PAT HOBBIE straightened his hack suit and the spoof went on to take a designated mint, saying, yeah... I listened to Scott and Ernest arguing and it was curious. Jerome sat there too, not saying anything clever or stupid, just... just being his autistic self. He... Jerome I mean... he just preyed on Scott's inconsistent logic, which you know is an engraving sight on foolish memories. Damn academic that Jerome. Yup, Jerome was that university man and we all... we all respected him for being that university man. None of us cowards made it far there at the university, although everyone, except for Ernest of course, made a mark there. Yes, about right till there.

But let's give time for PAT HOBBIE to think and swallow that mint. There you go Pat, my spoof. Tell now... tell about who made their mark there where and when, eh?

Yes-yes, Scott... Scott got into the student newspaper I remember, and was chief and editor for

more than a year. He loved that university newspaper student job, but he never received a cent for doing it. Stump, oh he was a terrific writer of essays, one of the best, and could beat anyone at that exercise on a shiny day. Like... like I said, Ernest never went, said it was a bunch of intellectual rubbish, and got into newspaper reporting real quickly and real good too. Ernest speaks with the authority of success, I always said that you know, with... with the determination of a young and robust middleweight boxer. Gee, he even looked like that Rocky at times. Oi, didn't he had a good physique for a literary man, eh? Strong as an ox that Ernest I tell you. Strong as a damn ox.

Eh see fellow hacks... he was leaving for Tanzania, an African country I hear, to freelance for a travel magazine that paid well. He... he was also set to write his new travel book while there. So he said anyway. Yeah... Ernest was pretty much the character. Everybody back then looked up to Ernest for doing something worthwhile with his life and... and I sometimes wonder why he bothered with a bunch of no-goods like Scott and Stump and poor Jerome, and... and the guy with the lump in the throat here, PAT HOBBIE.

At that time I was still kind a seeing Tania, although Rosemary didn't like her first thing. Said the whore had first degree gonorrhea, but how the hell was I to know, and... and Rosemary supposedly wanted my children real bad you see. Stump, he got into Tania too, but he threw a lot of money at her. I remember Tania telling me she's very selective regarding genital contact, but I guess the whole money thing blew her over with Stump. Not good.

Jerome, eh... he was pretty much asexual during that time. He prized fidelity, but couldn't find a girl he could trust. For a high functional autistic I've always figured him to be quite out there, and not in a good way. The... the thing about him was that he was too big on trust. So much so, his trusting expertise you know... psychologists are taking it up in their spiritual counselling.

In the end, poor Jerome couldn't trust anyone. Nah, he just couldn't. Instead, he took a jump off Table Mountain. He just had to that yahoo. What's worse my fellow Zionist, it took the psycho half a day to climb the mountain in the first place. Tell that to the counselling.

Anyway... your PAT HOBBIE and star of the show got a bit of a lump in the throat and a straightened suit isn't helping Pat introducing all of his city fairies. Still... Pat is ready about how it was supposed to be a damn picnic on that mountain, with that yahoo Jerome upsetting everyone by taking the plunge. True hack?

Eh yes. Scott got lost when we started drinking, near base camp I suppose. And... and when we came down from the top Scott was lying naked under a tree, mugged by a couple of Russian immigrants, who earlier assaulted a lesbian couple, surely for a Russian drunken reason. It was hot like hell that day and those Russians had it bad. Poor things.

Ernest and Stump were nuts as usual, chasing after a family of baboons with sharpened sticks and whisky, looking like a bunch of worthless no-goods/mountaineers. They came back with blood on their hands, smiling and cursing at the same time, holding a dead rabbit. Gosh, your Pat hero tried his very best to keep up with Jerome eh that's... that's for the record, but Jerome was up there in record time. I figured he'd done enough living by then you know. That nut left me stranded. What else could I

do? See, I could only wait for Stump and Ernest and maybe Scott and get that damn picnic started.

In the end, when that boy Jerome came flying down like a sack of potatoes, right about then the picnic or brunch or whatever you call that suicide meal of ours was taking shape. It was a nice picnic, and you know that family of baboons Mr. Scissorhands? Well, that same family of baboons who terrorized Ernest and Stump made themselves comfortable right alongside Pat here, demanding their share of sticky rabbit. What silliness.

Still... the view was great up there... for one could see a good deal of Cape Town. I showed Ernest the best streets and buildings, streets and buildings whom I fell in love with so tenderly as a young capitalist. Good times.

Hmm... it was there on the mountain amongst the baboons and chilly air and sight-seeing Pat said. Right there he said Ernest unveiled his plans for Tanzania, right there Pat said Stump wrote poetry about death and suicide, whilst Pat... Pat said he started to think about the latest fight he had with that troubled lady friend of his, eh... Rosemary. Ah, sweet Rosemary. Apart from Tania and Maddonas, the

great love of Pat's life during that sexual period. And Pat said she really was a keeper that woman. She really was.

Gee comrade Pat said. We were so stuffed after that picnic we went straight back home. Only the next day, around noon I guess, we picked up old Jerome. Uh... it was a messy thing altogether. His body was still rather warm, despite a chilly night on the freaking mountain. Even the rescue workers went tear-faced. Well, good thing was he got buried the next day, and there was a memorable ceremony with good quotes that I dotted down to make sure my obituary would've had Jerome's stamp of approval. And... and it was emotional there at the funeral too as far as I can remember.

PAT HOBBIE said he never saw it coming. Never in a millions years. It was the day before Jerome's birthday. PAT HOBBIE can shed a bucket of tears over this if he wants to you know, but instead... instead he blows up a fart.

Gee, we never saw it coming you know. Never in a million years. Arggh, death and all. It was the day before his birthday. Jerome loved the outdoors and I bought him some camping gear the day before he never

even got to use, the same kind of camping gear I bought Ernest when he left. But hey... eh see now... with Ernest maybe doing some more travelling in the future, I figured I can do with camping gear and go with Ernest on his trips. So I stole back dead Jerome's camping gear the day after his funeral, but only after writing the most scrumptious obituary of a deceased friend who could have done with some decent camping gear. I mean... I have morals you know... and I know what being corrupt is.

Ernest loved the camping gear first thing, and promised to put in a good word to his travel magazine about his new literary spy who writes poetic obituaries. In case you're wondering, that's me, PAT HOBBIE.

Who was that fairy Scott seeing besides Zelda and Zelda alone? Oh, that horrendous singer (Zelda) turned alcoholic and addict who despite her beauty had few admirers, except of course for what she disclosed between her legs. In there she was on the Guinness World Records waiting list, for what she disclosed between her legs was apparently an artwork rivalled only by some computer programme that could distort pornographic pictures. She would've

shattered a number of private part records that Zelda, if only the Guinness World Records judges weren't so picky about wild Africans and their pathological lying abilities. It's tough being a Guinness judge, for only last month they got an urgent call deep inside the African jungle about a guy struggling with a ten ton testicle. A real live one they say.

Zelda was a fully fledged nymphomaniac despite the Guinness headache, and could go hours on end. I remember this one time - we went to the beach and Robben Island looked enormous in all its splendour. It was pretty wintry that day, but Zelda was gay and threw off her clothes and ran naked into the water. She looked like a sea-nymph in the water, but Scott was standing there autistic like, not quite understanding his woman. So he walked off in disgust, and we kept Stump there to keep a close watch. This was just the break Stump needed, for he went after that nymph that whole day. Scott and I did some fishing for a couple of hours or so, not making any headway, for we were pretty useless at that exercise in any case. We came back and there they were, lying in each others arms naked still

going at it. Christ, they hardly recognized us. Scott was devastated and immediately threatened for divorce, but then remembered: he weren't married. Phew.

Nevertheless... PAT HOBBIE is convinced that Scott fell in love with Zelda first thing. Instant love, or something like that. Yup... they conversed when drunk, and through default almost got married. And you're right, it was instant, a match made in heaven. Both were tremendously attractive and both had a splendid affinity for alcoholic beverages.

And that's the only time to converse with Scott and Zelda anyhow, when they're drunk you see. Scott... when the guy's sober, he's an utter... a muttering gifted man with words you know. What I mean is, the guy reads Homer's Odyssey in Greek for fun, considering it light Sunday reading, along with his beloved Anna Karenina. Eh, I remember he brought that cursed book up the mountain in great splendour. Gee hack, those darn Russians didn't know the first thing about Anna Karenina. No, they just stuffed it inside Scott's rectum when they found no use for it. Poor Scott. I felt sorrier for him than Jerome.

That... that Scott bastard doesn't belong here at all I tell you. He should be at Harvard or Cambridge, giving sermons in Greek or something. Shoot... that's how smart he is.

CHAPTER EIGHT

But wait, dear PAT HOBBIE maintains it was the phoniest thing, for all the city fairies were there to bid Ernest farewell and good-luck on his phoney-like-hell trip to Tanzania. It was a real Yahoo business Pat says, and they were all sitting at Dingo bar. It was some café-bar and it served some decent Jewish food and drink, with an old Jew keeping the place tidy and fresh. Ernest looked marvellous as he smiled with that big mouth of his, awaiting his rifle. It was a classic Ernest performance Pat says.

Hmm... yes, that Ernest, he went over his list of travelling goods I say, smouldering its names

meticulously over his trained tongue. We all... we all watched him perform. Just perfect.

The PAT HOBBIE word was that Ernest had it all covered weeks ago, but none of us minded the elaborate scene Ernest was projecting. Just... oh just being in his presence was already enough to satisfy our sickly thirst, that of someone else hacking it in another country, an act none of us ever performed. Not quite.

So the setting was Dingo bar gents. And Ernest was still awaiting his rifle during the goodbye ceremony and yes... Ernest couldn't wait the arrival of his rifle. This made the party nervous, not too mention the nervous old Jew Hemingstein at the back, who was bellowing and spitting gas chambers at his frightened staff. Eh... Rosemary looked radiant as always, reading a daily newspaper, and I gathered she was telling about a military coup in West Africa. Hmm Pat thinks... that was some woman right there. Rosemary. She worked a couple days a week at that Dingo bar place and the Jew was all over her like hell. I mean... if Rosemary felt something up her scrotum area, the Jew had to know. If Rosemary had her period, the Jew took her to the emergency room.

He was very protective of that woman and it was only when I was accepted to his circle of trust that I got the opportunity to abuse his trust and get close to Rosemary. That was the beginning of a good sexual period for your star spoof here.

But hear... with military coup and war being the subject, Ernest turned touchy.

'What? Coup? West Africa? In that case I need two rifles. I'll take that musket along then. Thanks.'

'That's darn unnecessary Ernest. You need no more you can carry. Take the one that do both. You think you'll summit Kilimanjaro with two rifles let alone one?' That's Rosemary speaking, a very well informed and educated girl, no question. Honest. When she spoke, everybody listened. For... for her lips me says, her lips sensually molested the English language better than any whore, even when discussing war.

'Hey Hemingstein,' Ernest screamed across. 'Tell your wife she's a stupid lesbian.'

'I don't talk to Jew haters.'

'That was a long time ago stinkpot.'

'She's right Ernest. I mean... gee, with all the camping gear I've given you...'

'Hell, I thanked you a thousand times for that worthless camping gear you've given me PAT HOBBIE. If you don't mind Pattie boy, this is goddamn Africa and if you haven't checked our status yet, well, Africa is the birthplace of worthlessness.'

'Tanzania's a stable place I hear.'

'Uh... heard that too,' muttered Stump.

'Shut your trap Stump.'

Stump. The name Stump originates from a family of sophistication and high culture, but Stump wasted it all away quickly, for he's worthless. Stump nevertheless obtained a Masters degree in English, whereupon his fascination grew on James Joyce, and ever since then he specialized in writing unpublished and unreadable novels/scribes. But like I've mentioned, the man had little talent and absolutely no genius. I mean, boy, from such a family of sophistication and all, he sophisticated mainly in whores. Very sophisticating. Oh, and he's done them all, conquering all continents, except maybe for Antartica, but I hear Stump's thinking of migrating south with all this global warming. Don't ask.

'Shut your trap Stump. Listen Pat, that's for me and my musket to decide when I get there. Who's going, you or me, eh Pat? Your job is to feed my precious pigeons when I'm gone.'

'What I was trying...'

It was very difficult to talk sensibly with Ernest, for his dominating presence also supplemented his quick intelligence. He was a real handful that Ernest, even for a hack like PAT HOBBIE. It was very difficult to talk to him. See... Ernest was always the superior type of man in the company of men, and we were basically forced to act as the inferior company of men. It wasn't something to really discuss or argue over. The imperative mathematical formula being with Ernest was this: admiration = friendship. Listen, PAT HOBBIE had a point there. That formula was a truth universally acknowledged when dealing with Ernest.

'And I'm also considering maybe to report on that eh... what do you call it eh... Rosemary girl?'

'Military coup in West Africa.'

'Yeah, that thing.'

'But rifles Ernest, who needs them? You'll only be a reporter. You think of maybe joining the coup?'

You think you'll do some fighting, eh Ernest? You think so?'

'What, you think Winston Churchill never used his gun? I'm telling you, that serial killer killed more Boers than the whole English army combined back then. Listen Pat, I need two rifles.'

'Eh...'

'Christ, I don't want to waste my time here talking to worthless no-goods like PAT HOBBIE. What's the time Jerome?'

'It's time.'

Of course, Ernest didn't get his two rifles and to tell you the truth, there's nothing more he enjoyed than to talk worthless crap to worthless people like PAT HOBBIE. That's why he loved Pat so much and that's why he also came to see Pat almost every day, lying and cheating his precious time away with me Pat, a no-good-for-nothing piece of shit. I never felt anything towards Ernest to tell you the truth. I knew he was a liar and cheat and all he cared for was his stupid ego that made fun of others. I'll never forget this... some poor and battered cross-eyed guy in Angola got castrated during the war. Poor thing. I... I thought that Ernest would take to

him you know... because it's got war stuff and all that, but I really don't know what the heck was wrong with Ernest that day at Dingo's.

'What? Where?'

'Buying cigarettes on the counter. Talking to Jew. Talking to stinkpot Hemingstein. Gee, he was castrated during the war in Angola. Poor thing.'

'Let me speak to him Pat,' Ernest said and made his way towards the castrated character. 'I want to speak this man.'

'Hey... yes you with no balls, I hear you fought in Angola. That true old man?'

'All of it,' the man said. 'I fought in...'

'And I hear you got castrated there, eh? That true also, you've got nothing left whatsoever?'

'Uh...?'

'Say, who took your manhood from you? What happened?'

'Eh... grenade, who told you?'

'Live one you say?'

'Ditto, blew me bits and pieces to smithereens.'

'Godspeaking tragedy, eh Pat?' Ernest said and looked at the castrated character from head to toe, smiling proudly.

'Yup.'

'Damn wars,' Ernest said and pointed to the sky outside. 'Screw them all. I never had a good thing to say about wars Pat. Wars are terrible, eh... look at his poor guy, except... except for maybe World War II. That was a good war. But say old man, yes you... how do you still bother living? I mean... look at you and your... what's your mission?'

'No-no, I live here around the corner, on the street I live. Like you said... damn wars. Damn straight. Burned me up for good.'

'You live on the streets soldier?' Ernest asked.

'Sure. I mean... have no where else to go.'

'Parasites. All of you.'

'Fought in many wars.'

'Jesus Christ, no wonder Pat. Should've known this bugger got not balls.' I thought Ernest was gonna snap and do some damage. I tugged at his shirt, shaking my head in agreeability. 'Yes, let's go,' I said, 'useless as you say.'

'He's a no-good with no balls that's what he is. A worthless damn fool living on the streets. Yes, you, you with no balls.'

The battered man snorted a curse but Ernest and I walked away without looking back, laughing and ridiculing a helpless soul with caring to look back.

PAT HOBBIE never cared for Ernest to live or to die and if Pat wasn't such a sissy he would've killed him for sure. Just as long as Pat kept on feeding the precious pigeons of this egomaniac, that was about all Ernest cared for you know, Pat thinks. Ernest was just there, a presence, killing time, Pat's and his. Like Stump. Gee, that Ernest.

It was all show anyway that day with him. Damn show I say. Ernest was going away. And we all sat there, salivating our butts off, listening to his crazy stories, imagining all those adventures he probably never even once did whilst in Tanzania. None... none of my fruity friends here ever left this rotten place. Gee, they didn't even have the energy to even slightly consider such a mission. Only Ernest. The man was a lunatic, a murderer, a sadist, a talent... all into one.

Still Pat, the guy was a castrated character. Ernest was right. He had no mission right? They should send him back to the trenches and let him find his manhood. What's you say slicker?

Oh boy, eh... phew, let's just say we admired Ernest for being everything one could wish to be, despite ones view on castration and its pleasantries. Right on toots. But Ernest, he has his dark side for sure, make no mistake about it. If... if Ernest wishes to beat the crap out of someone, castrated or not, he'll take out ten guys at once. If Ernest wants to beat his women, he'll make them beg for mercy, giving them a educating moral lesson in the process. For what he did to his wives, beating the cerebrum out of them, I have my sources. No question Ernest liked beating.

'My wife was naughty Pat,' I remember Ernest telling. 'Very naughty. She'll never see me naked again that's for sure. But I learned her a good lesson. Hmm... I learned her a good lesson you hear me Pat?'

'What did she do?' I asked.

'I found her in bed with another man's sausage that's what she did. Right on top of him and his Mr.Goodbar. It was some picture. Remember it so well. But yes... gave her a good beating. I slapped her good. You should see her. Hmm... not good.'

'Hadley? You're wife? Cheating?'

'Whatever.'

'You beat her?'

'Eh... I gave her a lesson,' Ernest said and took upon himself to show his beating technique. 'Slap-slap.'

'And the man?'

'Shaped his face, he looks different now, but that's about it. Stump said he came of light. Where's Stump? He'll tell you all about it.'

'Gee Ernest. Wife-beating. That's like... illegal. You know that?'

'Not in my culture Pat,' Ernest said and scratched his crotch area. 'It keeps them obedient. Damn bitches.'

'What culture are you from Ernest?'

'The wife-beating culture. It's a high-class society Pat boy. You won't fit in. I tell you, we're also listed on the stock exchange, some corrupt gold mining company. It's all for a good cause they say.'

Well, only Ernest did that, but it doesn't mean we had clean relationships. Stump and Zelda were terrific together for a week or so, but it wore out pretty quickly. She couldn't last two weeks being faithful with one person. That was the common

perception and truth. That despite that her parents being married for over fifty years.

Of course, Scott didn't like Stump's advances towards Zelda one bit. No that it mattered though. That wretched Zelda. She really messed with Scott in a big way, including the messy bits inside his pants, which she in fact ridiculed. Now imagine that for a second.

But... but things... things started off great in the fairytale Zelda/Scott relationship it really did. I mean... there were even talk of little toddlers and all that, there really were. Things were great, terrific in fact, until Zelda...

'I have ambitions too you know.'

'Ambition between your legs. So I've heard.'

'Don't be so naïve Scott. I have talent, just like you have. Just because I'm a woman doesn't mean I can't amount to something.'

'Now you're sounding too much like a feminist today Zelda dear. What happened to you, eh? You were such a good housewife the first two weeks. Who's gonna do the dishes when you're out all amounting to something and committed? I'm very upset. What happened to the idea of getting married

and... and that toddler we planned for, eh? What happened to a little squealer of our own?' Things started off great Pat said, until Zelda started planning for herself and her future and all that future stuff.

She wanted to become a ballet dancer of all things. Previously wanted to be a world famous painter. Things didn't work out with the painting, but she was a very artistic girl make no mistake about it.

Still, Scott wanted stability, something Zelda agreed upon at first. Instead Scott took on a whirlwind for a woman. With that PAT HOBBIE shakes his head, grabbing another mint, inspecting it as if some shiny stone. Gulping the mint, he continues... yeah, I was around at that time. Remember it well. I only recently met Scott at a dinner party of a boastful literary friend who dearly wished to get published. Some no-good.

'So what do you do?' Scott asked me.

'I write,' I told him.

'Oh, your write, eh? Of what kind?'

'Mostly obituaries,' I told him. 'I like writing obituaries. There's a lot money to be made you know.'

Obituaries I mean. I saw a gap in the obituary market and I took it.'

'My god, you write obituaries? You hear that Ernest?'

'Yes,' Ernest said. 'This Pat man here is the best damn obituary writer in the country, aren't you Pat? I mean, he's the obituary master for all I know. He's knows how to put people to peace with words trust me. I remember that one guy you put to rest Pat, boy, I almost fainted when I read that obituary. He's a poet when it comes to obituaries. Don't make fun of him Scott. Don't you dare.'

'Just, gee relax. Hey, I thought you were like a comedian or something. My, you have such clever eyes and face. I thought you were like... it must be a very suicidal profession. Obituaries.'

'Eh... no... Ernest say it's good.'

'Yes Scott. I say it's good and now listen here before I beat you.'

'I was just...'

'And he paints like hell too. Tell him Pat. Tell him how you paint.'

'Eh... I paint a little too.'

'Oh, so you paint as well. That's interesting. You're a very artistic boy it seems. Like my butterfly Zelda.'

'Interesting this PAT HOBBIE guy, eh Scotty?' Ernest said, jerking his own chain. 'Yup, this Pat is the best damn painter on the African continent at present. Remember that apple you painted... that apple you showed me? That red apple, eh Pat?'

'Ah...'

'Christ, that was the best apple I've seen anyone paint.'

'You painted an apple? But that's like... I mean... my Zelda says apple painting are for fairies only.'

'Heh? That apple painting made more than R20 000 you fool. Pat here painted a great apple. Everybody wanted that apple painting. You see Scott... people like fruit. They like eating it, looking at it, admiring it, fruit is damn healthy on top of it. And now you have Pat the painter here, who... who gives them the most scrumptious best-looking apple ever seen, an incorporation of all the apple qualities I've just given it. So... when people get hungry they don't necessarily buy the real apple, they just go and have a look at what the ideal apple looks like,

namely Pat's darn apple. Right Pat? It's so seductive that apple. He's using psychology shit Scott.'

'Ah, so you using psychology in your paintings, eh Pat? Then you probably like that Freud guy.'

'I read a few of his works,' I stammered ',but... but he didn't influence me much.'

'But you said psychology Pat. You're a contradicting character you know that, a real contradiction.'

'Well, Ernest said that, but I... I just like painting fruit. It's nice to paint, easy to construct, and for some reason, people like looking at it. I saw a gap in the painting market and I took it.'

That's correct. We met at a dinner party of a boastful literary friend who dearly wished to get published. Some no-good we called Stump. He was a decent writer and all, but had little talent and no genius. For that he was too happy and had many friends who admired only his happiness and wealth. As for Scott and I, it was more wealth than happiness that made us like Stump the boastful literary friend.

Stump had money to spend, and as both Scott and I had very little, Stump bought our friendship. We read his work and he gave us money for doing so. That was the so-called agreement.

True. That was the agreement, and to this day PAT HOBBIE says he has no idea what happened to Stump and the precious novel he used to shove in peoples faces. Everybody just praised that book like they do in hell, just to get away from Stump, because Stump had frequent skin rashes. Stump didn't look like a man for words either. And Pat never believed that looks played a role, honestly, until he met Scott and Ernest. You really think so Pat? You're really so shallow, judging people on how they look and all? Sure thing sling. Most definitely. And that's what made the friendship even more strange.

Stump was a short and ugly man with a drooping left eye. He had frequent skin rashes, some that would last for weeks on end. It was a messy sight and Ernest and I avoided Stump for weeks, just so not to witness that messy face of his, not to mention that twitchy eye. We never confronted him about it. Not even Ernest mentioned it to Stump. Only behind the cockroach's back of course, where we joked

around. When Stump's face would come around and the rashes disappear, we embraced him like an old-timer, and I think Stump probably figured why he was ostracized like that. Ernest especially has a low esteem for people's appearance. I remember when his wife fell heavily pregnant; Ernest just couldn't bear the sight of her. Boy, she looked so ill and uncared for then with the pregnancy; poor Ernest even filed for divorce. It was too much for him - the ugliness of it all. It was only when she came round with the baby and got back her figure that Ernest fell back in love with her and threw away the divorce papers. It was a difficult time for Ernest, the pregnancy. I felt sorry for the inconvenience he had to go through with his second wife going pregnant. Very inconvenient.

But regarding Stump... for some reason that cockroach was always around. He admired Ernest a great deal, and showed a lot of interest when Ernest was being his boastful self. That I think cemented their friendship.

CHAPTER NINE

PAT HOBBIE is a hack and a spoof, a low-life who prey on the greatness of others. So to speak about Scott and Ernest is also to speak about PAT HOBBIE and his preying qualities on others. His wife June knows all about it. And his son, eh Scotty, he got the PAT HOBBIE look I swear. Don't trust PAT HOBBIE on your life. Just don't.

Eh, my fellow cyclop, PAT HOBBIE recollects. Scott was always very excited with Ernest around and I figured those two would miss each other's company when Ernest left for Tanzania. But that was Ernest's thing, travelling, and he never missed an opportunity to leave the country.

Anyway, it was usually an energetic and excited Ernest before departures, and so, when the Dingo bar farewell committee faded in faking their disappointment at the-invincible-Ernest-and-his-rifle-leaving-for-Africa-performance, us three compatriots walked aimlessly along the Sea Point beach with our sandals and bare feet, and the now drunk Scott started to chase the tranquil seagulls and Ernest and I laughed at his foolishness. It was a beautiful day. The sea was calm and the sun was merry. So too was Scott, who with all his seagull chasing left Ernest and I to our own devices.

I was walking steadily alongside Ernest and we discussed various things, things that cemented our friendship over the years, ranging from sports to women to literature, back to women and sex and so forth. You know... I couldn't help but be impressed by this worldly Ernest, despite the love-hate feeling I felt and still feel towards him from time to time. Just so impressive that Ernest.

'Eh... but still... the wedding Ernest. You made any arrangements for the wedding yet?'

'That's Pauline's worries,' Ernest said and filled his nose with fresh sea air. 'That bitch likes

weddings. It's her fifth marriage. She can do whatever she feels like with this marriage rubbish.'

Looking at Ernest, he had the most impressive appearance, despite being a bit rough on the edges. Like Scott, he had the most brilliant and beautiful of blue eyes, it shunned with utter wit and intelligence, and many well-thought ladies succumbed to its subsequent charm - including the dark lady. He was so commanding and self-confident that Ernest, I found it ponderous to why he had to depend so much on alcoholic beverages to calm his system.

'I see...'

'I have too much on my mind right now Pat, too much to think about this Tanzania thing. Maybe I can postpone the marriage a bit you know... otherwise... otherwise I'll just go to the nearest Tanzanian chapel, but what is a marriage without a good wedding, eh? There's nothing like a good wedding and good wedding cake, Pat. I swear it must be the point of marriage, for marriage is marriage. Nothing special. Honestly-honestly Pat, I still care no more for Pauline than for Hadley, that ex-whorewife of mine, a whorewife whom I once considered a true love. The only difference now is that Hadley doesn't love

me and Pauline does. So now I have to marry Pauline, otherwise I'd be lonely like hell. I just have to get married and get Pauline on my side for a year or so. Get this contract thing over with and see how long before she leaves as well...'

Ernest was a much better husband than people give him credit for. He never engaged in adultery, although none of those two fancied whores much. Tania excluded, Ernest was faithful and financially supportive to all his wives and mistresses and his work...

'...you see Pat, when you marry it works well if you want to keep your women a while longer. They'll leave you eventually, but that's not why people marry. See, you just need to keep the ideal of marriage going, that things will get better, that your Ernest here isn't such a selfish bastard that he makes himself out to be. Ha! Of course, it takes them a couple of years or so to realize I won't change one bit. They'll leave me, like that Hadley whoremonger, but hopefully by then I'd get someone to fill her shoes. This divorce worked out wonderfully in the end you know. Hadley left me and in stepped Pauline, fresh and naïve. I have a good and

sufficient system going at the moment. Marriage is nothing but a carrot, a green one. And gee, I don't have time to run after whores all day long Pat. What I do is that I take one of them captive, get the whore to be your wife or mistress, throw money at her, pay her attention, screw her till she's sore. Then... then I'd go back to my old ways.' Saying that Ernest blew up a rare cigarette. I was flabbergasted at first, the honesty in the man's voice overwhelmed me. I took off my sandals, and walked in the sand with my bare feet.

'Which is?'

'Getting drunk.'

'Ah...'

'Women is just too much of a hassle see. I'd rather be a miserable drunk than a miserable lover. No woman can ever satisfy me. It's just the lonely bits that kills me. Pauline, she's a good housemaid and terrific copywriter, she sees the mistakes in my work. She reads everything I write, except the story that I'm working on now. Christ, I based it on her, but it's true. If she happens to read it she'll sue the hell out of me Pat. It's still true though.'

...and he developed a strong base of readers over the years. Sure his travel books didn't sell much, but it was nevertheless a stamp of approval... Ernest had a reputation. It's a tough job, grinding out real-life adventures for ones ill-struck readers. Ernest contributed to a number of magazines too, and made a living almost entirely through that word processor of his.

'Change it then,' I said and felt how the soft sea sand below my feet protruded through my toenails.

'Good travel stories are the offensive real and damning true stories Pat. I don't change. I don't even change the names. I speak the truth. But hey... I'll figure something out. Maybe I'll throw Pauline into the Spanish bullring or something one day, or feed her to the crocodiles in Tanzania when she's a hassle. We'll see. Right now... right now we're in love. Gee, I'm in love. I can't wait to see her. But love fades.'

'Good remark. Love fades. It's true.'

'But I still enjoy that tingly feeling my tummy generates every morning when I think about Pauline. It's so overwhelming, that tingly feeling Pat, I just

want to kill myself because of it. Especially when waking up.'

'That's a bit drastic, don't you think?'

'Hardly,' Ernest said and hurled a piece of bamboos into the sea. 'Depression is the general rotten state of being. Sex alleviates it. Love... love I guess complicates it.'

'Hmm... interesting observation.'

'Appreciated Pat. King Kong felt it too.'

'Eh sure. But... what about this new woman, the other one, eh? Is she coming with?'

'Christ Pat,' Ernest said and took a breath of fresh salty air, stifling his cigarette. 'Can't take both of them along you know. I've got morals and stuff. Besides, I'm getting married.'

'Yeah, silly me.'

'But she's a damn distraction Pat. A damn distraction this mistress. Especially in sunlight. See Pat, in the dark she's pretty like hell.'

'The new one you're entertaining?'

'Sure, pretty like hell in the dark. But you don't want to see her during the day you know, eh... when she's exposed to hazy sunlight and all that. Boy... boy it's a damn mess then. A real damn mess.'

But in the dark she's quite extravagant, a beautiful female specimen undoubtedly. A thoroughbred for sure. Ask Scott.'

'Terrific,' I said and looked at Scott a hundred yards ahead of us chasing the white seagulls. Scott was drunk, although it was hard to tell sometimes if it was just drink or something else too, chasing the elusive dragon for instance. He had his ways that Scott, coping and all. Scott hardly spoke on Jerome's death, as he feared for his own life too much. Jerome's death brought even more anxiety and fear to Scott's drunken well being. Scott was a sickly man, with illnesses coming out of his waxed ears on the worst of days. He made everyone aware of it, although his plight on tuberculosis was a bit too touchy. We all knew that there was only one cure for Scott and that was to stop drinking for good. Gosh, his drinking got so out of hand, it was almost impossible to distinguish a sober Scott from the drinking one. Probably because the sober Scott gave up. Gee, I don't even recall a sober Scott to you. That's a scary thought thinking about it. It would have been interesting to observe a sober Scott for a change.

'Of course Pat, I didn't know about her sunlight issues when I met her because we met mostly during the evenings. But as you know, things get complicated. So... so it was arranged, after one forgetful sunlight morning, that we could only converse at night , and only... only when the lights are dim or shattered. Other than that I refuse to see or speak or make love to her.'

'Pity.'

'She needs a pretty strong radiation suite during the day I figure. Her skin... it's oh so fragile Pat, she'll get the skin cancer first thing. I feel sorry for her, but that's... but like my grandfather used to say eh... that's how the cookie crumbles.'

'Ditto.'

'She's nevertheless a good woman,' Ernest said and put his hand in his pocket and started scratching his crotch area.

'And? How does she feel about the arrangement?'

'Asked me what nights would be best, what clothing she should wear, what perfume I prefer, all that horsecrap you know. She was very approachable if I think about it. I like that about a woman. She's

not like Pauline. I won't marry her. But... but with Pauline doing the groceries, I need her at times.'

'She's a devoted woman it seems,' I said and called after Scott.

'Yes,' Ernest said and pointed to Scott tripping over himself and being a toddler, eating the sand for a drunken reason. 'Although I don't like her religious attitudes much. She's a Catholic. I mean, she's not allowed to use any protective gear you know. Hmm... I'm a bit concerned, dipping my sausage into her child-making-apparatus. Oi, don't like hunting with bare hands all the time. Sure don't.'

'You do that all the time?

'Uh... see my triceps son? See how my veins protrude, eh? I killed a lion with these triceps. In Kenya. Christ, I sprang out of an air balloon... an air balloon that's right, I sprang right on top of the animal, and... and choked it to death like this. Arrgh. It was a big one, but I took him out.'

'Incredible how you hunt.'

'This woman Pat, it's a hassle. Yesterday, it was a bit uncomfortable. Not with the sausage, but, I was walking the streets with a good friend of mine, timely unaware of having a darn mistress. It was

daytime, sun was shining you know. And... and then, there she was, out of the hazy blue, exposed to sunlight and all, embracing me. Arrgh Pat.'

'Fuck me, that's a woman for you.'

'She even tried to slip her tongue into me. Gee, I could see the friend alongside me, he was repulsed. I mean, he's a high class guy, with... with many beautiful and distinguished women. Who the hell is this woman? he asked me. Eh Ernest? You know this despicable looking woman? Christ no! I told him. I don't know who this is! Who are you ugly woman? Where's your radiation suit? It's me chubby she said. I'm doing groceries for tonight. Am I seeing you tonight my chubby bear Ernest? Heh? Chubby bear? Me? You must be mistaken ugly woman. Never seen you in my entire life. I have a brother eh... Ernesto. Probably him. Gee old Pat, we scurried away and she called after me but we just scurried away, resuming our chat about eh... condoms or something. Phew, now that was tough Pat.'

'Oi,' I said. We saw Scott and we walked up to him lying in the sand with his mouth covered with the stuff and he was in a dream. He passed out right there on the beach. Gee, I remember the early Scott

when he was still in good shape. His drinking wasn't nearly as corrupt as it went on to become. If beauty leads to jealousy, then so too does that of the unmistakable sign of giftedness and its compound effect. Thanks a lot to alcoholic beverages.

'Wake up Scott!' Ernest screamed and gave Scott a couple of kicks in the ribs with his black pointers. 'Get up you worthless drunk.' Scott didn't move and we watched Scott's handsome boyish face and we both commented on its attractiveness.

'You ever beat Scott?' I asked Ernest whilst staring at Scott in the sand.

'A couple of times.'

'How does it feel, beating this guy?'

'It feels good. I never go for his face though. Scott has a beautiful face, I don't want to take that away from him. Once I hit him on the jaw, but I apologized for that. It's all in good spirits anyhow. A beating is good sometimes. Listen... I beat Scott only because of him being drunk. Then, he cleans up his act. Until... when he goes all merry again, I beat him.'

'But you drink too. You go merry too. I've seen you.'

'Then beat me Pat. You think I care, eh? Beat me. See... all you bunch of fairies. Christ.'

Later we took Scott home and Ernest said goodbye to Scott but Scott didn't hear and Zelda was absent as usual. Ernest and I had one last drink at some lousy bar and Pauline was also present and I felt privileged that Ernest chose to spend his last moments in the city with his favourite spoof. We said our goodbyes and I told Ernest to have a great marriage and honeymoon with Pauline. Ernest reminded me of his pigeons and to take care of Scott and to stay away from that Rosemary girl, whom I was half in love with. I thought then, with the taxi taking Ernest and Pauline to the airport and away into the jungle, I thought then that I've surely made a considerate friend. It made PAT HOBBIE feel competent.

CHAPTER TEN

Of course, Ernest going to Tanzania wasn't a first. He enjoyed travelling a great deal and got good money for it. The travelling part gave meaning to Ernest. The great love of his life. PAT HOBBIE had a small time thing with obituaries and apart from his women and Scott and Ernest, obituaries were the great love of his life. Yet no one paid for food and drink like Ernest did when he came back from his travels. He was a lavish spender and spent a lot on his friends and admirers. When short in cash, Pat the hack meagrely attended his friend's invitations, if only for admiration and doing ones duty. But hey... this seedy monster is by no means another Ernest disciple till death do them apart. In fact, PAT HOBBIE had a

mind of his own, and only the slightest intention of indifference was required in order for Pat to capture Ernest's unsound imagination and fill his friend's spying tummy.

Ernest was a punctual person, and being on time at Dingo bar was a necessity. Ernest didn't like waiting, and never allowed anything to get in the way of his designated meal. Not even his horny wife in her silver white robe detracted Ernest from a timely meal. PAT HOBBIE had a sharp eye for this, and among other things, careful and observant.

'I figure Ernest, with this country going at it now as it is, it won't be long before we proclaim five-star status. Eh Ernest?'

'Not with the blacks around Pat,' Ernest said and stuffed a Dingo burger in his mouth. 'Hmm... not with them around.'

'Why is that?' I asked and started with the salad. 'You think blacks are trouble? You think blacks are like women, eh Ernest? You don't like their leadership style or what, eh?'

'Let me tell you about blacks Pat,' Ernest said and chewed and pointed to a careless black man crossing the street. 'I tell you Pat... I tell you...

there's only one good thing black in this country and that's a black whore. Everybody else should burn in hell for all I care. Don't look at me like that, Pat. There was this one guy who was delivering a fascinating lecture on D.H. Lawrence. I mean... you know how much I like D.H. Lawrence, eh? And the guy had a good grip of Lawrence, working on some perverse autobiographical details of the author, weaving and shitting it into his lecture. You know that Lawrence wrote an essay on Paul? Christ, I never knew that. Funny thing is Pat, brilliant the lecture was, fascinating as I found it, mesmerising the way it was constructed, I... I still walked out of that lecture with about 30 minutes left. Why? You want to know why? Because I just couldn't take it anymore, that's why'

'Why is that?' I asked. 'Why couldn't you just take it?' I remember Ernest looking at me schmuck-faced. He gave a loud snort and said,

'With all due respect my worthless comrade, and I know you're diplomatic and all with equality Pat so don't get me wrong. I'm... I'm a man of principles and I've got to obey them. See now... I've never seen a guy as black as that guy. I mean... he was covered

from tip to toe in pitch black darkness. He was goddamn too black. Yeah Pat, call me a racist of whatever you like to but... but that guy was too black for me. He ruined the whole lecture by just being too black.'

'Strong statement there Ernest.'

'Strong statement? Screw you Pat. It's a perfectly agreeable statement. Arrgh... eh the blacks, they're just like the tractor nation. So damn ridiculous, damn so, connected to their tractors like a damn naval-string or something. I'm repulsed by these Dutch specie I really am. They're a disgrace to us, to me especially. Bloomin Dutch, ugly race that. Eh see Pat, I'm not a racist. I just hate all of them, and the blacks. Shoot, we English are the worst of the bunch I tell you.'

'Eh?'

'These Dutch/Boer farmers Pat. I mean, I never believed these things lived above ground. I really didn't. Weren't they some form of sub-specie eh... earthworms speaking some tractor language, eh Pattie? I mean look at me, look at me Pat. I've never said anything about anyone here that is remotely good.'

And don't look at me you stupid brat, you little fairy Pat. I'm not a racist.'

'Gee Ernest. Sorry but...'

'Let me tell you about blacks Pat. You know the Kenyan blacks, eh? You should go on an air balloon with them Pat. You really should do it when on holiday. Just a pity a black Kenyan man cannot steer a damn air balloon properly. Gosh, we crashed into damn trees 10 feet upon lift off. It's due to that black man Pat. That damn black man. See... he was just too black I figure, too black to steer that air balloon. I swear he choked the fire right out of the balloon with that charcoal body of his.'

'Gee Ernest.'

'I mean, just because I don't like black people doesn't mean I'm a racist. I just don't like the bastards, especially these Nigerian blacks who give people the dragon to go and chase. But I'm not a racist. Ask Stump. He doesn't like blacks, he just likes black whores. And not just screwing them Pat. No-no, black whores make for excellent scrabble players. I mean... I've seen them in action, and not to mention their talent at making you feel special. Ask Stump and his strap-on.'

Scott's stories always had a tinkle of irony or moral lesson. Ernest hardly ever thought about that. He was just being himself I guess. Ernest was in the mode of bullfighting, bullwhacking and bullshitting around when telling stories. Pat had no problem with such stories, but it was also nice to listen to Scott's stories from time to time. It had a goodness of its own.

'Well,' I said and felt sweat pouring down my forehead and then down unto my burger plate. 'I'm an open-minded character Ernest. I mean we're all here anyhow, for better or for worse. It seems natural to give each one his due.'

'Christ Pat, you remind of airy fairy liberalism. I guess you'll say you have a big problem with the Holocaust then, that it was a mistake burning those sneaky Jewish farts, eh?'

'Absolutely. The Holocaust was a travesty.'

'Damn liberals. All the same. You included Pat. Take a hike.'

Boy, how Ernest managed to stay oh so healthy and strong all these years is a mystery, for that man buried the whole spectrum of ethics altogether, making the misery of living a set way of life. One

cannot escape that feeling upon being with Ernest. Every second he reminded Pat of the so-called futile existence of present living, and to this day PAT HOBBIIE remembers and trembles the gospel of Ernest by heart. Today Pat carries this tragic gospel with him, in the hope of educating his curious child on the subject, hopefully advising the little squealer not to embrace its wonders. A man can be destroyed, but not defeated. Good line, eh Pat? What do you think of that line spoof? Any good? Eh?

Well, I... I don't know whether Ernest adhered to any such principles my fellow earthworm, but boy, it surely sounds good. Hell, one could say that behind the Ernest heroism crap was a man low on self-esteem, destroyed by a horrendous childhood filled with abuse and old-fashioned molestation, but not yet defeated. That's what I think. Sure, he had confidence in himself as a literary man, but when it came to ordinary life he was all an old man at sea you know. I remember his various disastrous women. It was a sight for soaring eyes. Ex-whores, drug-addicts, suicidal singers, all whom he tried to fit back into society, making them up to fail eventually; which I think he wanted in any case. That's my hack theory

on this. He was a complete narcissist that guy, a narcissist in need for sucking space. He sucked loving things from loving, compelling them to stand there like statues, whilst he the narcissist congratulated himself on a terrific work of craft.

See... he usually recruited them for his discreet business hours, setting them about 10 minutes or so walking distance from his apartment, keeping them alive through various errands and broken promises which nobody knew well and nobody kept either. Just so he that he could be angry at them I guess. To this day all of us wonder how many times he actually slept with those woman, or how much they were just another of his fronts to install that glaring image of Ernest the rugged rhino. Some of these women were never sighted (except a few loyal disciples), women whose existence are even today shrouded in lies of mystery.

It's irrelevant now I guess, for hall Ernest's women were weak and submissive anyhow. If they fell off the wagon, if they turned naughty, or if the master got depressed, master Ernest won't come for his designated weekday visit. That's what the lunatic and master said. That was the time each

mistress was given in gaining his precious company, depending on the number of mistresses Ernest kept. Until growing tired of them and cutting them loose, he'll punish them. Their defects he loathed and cherished simultaneously. I tell you, all his money were spent on women and worthless friends but none on himself. He wore the same ragged clothes day in and day out, not shaving, not cleaning, just being the heroic tragedy of Ernest the raging rhino. What a respectable married man.

I'm thinking Pauline is the perfect woman for Ernest. I really think so. She's just what this Ernest needs. She really is someone that PAT HOBBIE here believes challenges him, especially intellectually. Yes, she can be weak and submissive, but she's also a facilitator for growth, something the personality of Ernest urgently requires. And yet... yet I'm seeing trouble brewing in Tanzania, and... and from what Ernest told me a few weeks before marrying Pauline, Ernest I don't think feels strongly for that woman, nor any other woman for that matter. Women cloud the brain he once said.

Regardless, it was still wonderful to see Ernest in love. His inherent shyness and boyishness would

show its true colours during courting, and at the best of times, Ernest is very much like Scott I believe, an old-fashioned romantic. Pauline's a beautiful woman, but very submissive, and Scott I think didn't like that about her. Ernest likes to be in charge, and although faithful to an extent, his moral devotion is always in doubt. Sure, Ernest can fall in love very quickly, but when that pass, he'd go absent into his self-obsessed work, making the wife nothing but an extra commodity and burden. Ernest would never discuss serious matters with his wives, only domestic affairs, whilst Scott and Zelda consummated in almost everything they did, sharing their whole tragedy of two ruined lives glamorously to each other. Ernest couldn't accept the intoxicating intimacy between his best friend and Zelda, something Ernest deeply resented, and advised PAT HOBIE to conduct his affairs according to his raging but sufficient manner, and be happy with those principles in tact. 'Keep them at a distance Pat,' Ernest warned me with a pointed finger, 'And go seize the fucking day.' In many ways that makes Ernest functional. He keeps his social life simple, and doesn't get into messy politics with those close to

him. Never for long periods I'd rather say. And he never had a Zelda. Those he avoided, and will continue to do so.

Most of all, Ernest will choose his woman as if he is picking a champion racehorse. Love is never the dominant issue for Ernest. All he wants is submission, a submissive thoroughbred, someone who excels under inferiority, despite the inferior's own wishful strengths. For... when mating season arrives, the thoroughbred must comply unto the firm regulations set down by master and jockey and god. It was beautiful to watch this metamorphosis in real life and see how clinically detached Ernest could operate with all the dynamic thoroughbreds he has assembled over the years. It was purely based on sufficiency. I was much impressed by that trait, as your favourite spoof wears many scars, scars suffered from wild and untamed thoroughbreds.

Oh, all suffering I may conclude is largely due to the agonies of failed or dysfunctional relationships. My, I must be the unhappiest person alive.

Ah, when I think back to Rosemary, she was a wonderful wicked woman whom manipulated me in falling in love with her. Yet, there wasn't a day or second

or timeframe I kept reminding myself to stay away from Rosemary and her jealous Jewish husband Hemingstein, an angst ridden fellow who carried a Nazi pistol under his pillow - the same pillow Rosemary molested when making violent love to me. I knew Rosemary was a troublemaking girl, yet I kept on coming back for more, for she had the most deceiving and delicious body. Ernest commented on this too once.

'How's Rosemary?'

'Left her. Again.'

'About time. You finally left that Rosemary nymphomaniac?'

'Yup, June is my wife. We're married.'

'Married? Christ, where was I?'

'You... you were on that trip of yours. Tanzania remember? You were away almost three months I think. Enough time for a quickie.'

'Know what you mean there. Especially when it's those darn nymphomaniac who got the syph kind of girls. They're not keepers.'

'True.'

'So how's June? Any good?'

'She's simple. I just don't like her that much. In fact, I dislike her.'

'Is Paris a city Pat?'

'There's not a lot of passion see Ernest. Gosh, she doesn't even make me jealous. She's the perfect wife if that's what you want. She's never cheated on me. I hate that about her.'

Of course, none of us city fairies had a perfect love life and all of us messed around now and then. Even the great Ernest. Pat, you're no exception, for there was Rosemary, the girl who you loved and cared for like no other. You two met as toddlers in the countryside, then she came to the city where she discovered her private parts, and you shared. Yes, I admit, we were inseparable. She cared for literature like I did and we planned on writing obituaries together. She was the perfect match except for what happened between her legs. I never left her because of that. I left her because she couldn't stay away from that filthy old Jew and his money. I left her because of that.

'Oi, you're too damn picky Pat,' Ernest said. 'You know... my problem is a couple of squealers with

my first and second wives. Now that's problematic. That I don't like.'

'How's the squealers?'

'I... I couldn't handle the first squealer, so I gave her to Hadley, my first disaster. I see that little girl whenever I feel like it. Boy, that girl of mine is not real I think. I don't love her that much anyhow. Not like my precious boy. She's too much of a fairy that little girl. Hadley can have her. I don't care.'

'You're right. Children's a hassle.'

'But I have no real problem with my son. I don't see him, he doesn't see me. We respect each other's private spaces. It's good.'

'Yes, but you gave your son up for adoption during conception. That's...'

'He still my damn son,' Ernest said and banged his fists on the table. 'I love that boy.'

'What happened to the mother?'

'Haven't heard a thing. Shame, she was a good woman. A mute, but a good woman. I never had one fight with her. I respected her because of that. I think you need a woman like that Pat. A mute. Someone that doesn't speak.'

'Nah, I like a woman that connects my mind, a woman that I can confront and argue with, a woman that challenges me. All that modern woman stuff. A kind of a mind-mate.'

'You're looking for a lesbian?'

'No, I want a mind-mate.'

'Christ Pat, give June to me then. I need a mistress anyhow. I've always said it. You're mental. You and Jerome. Give me June.'

'Only for a while heh heh...'

'Eh, you must work on your relationships Pat. It takes too much of your time when writing good obituaries and painting good crap. You must work on your women. You need a system.'

'I'm not the systems type.'

'That's because you're a loser, Pat. I remember ever since we were kids. You're a loser, like that Jerome fairy, picked on at schools, bullied till the two of you were blue. Look at you now, two miserable sods, one dead and another soon off to deadness. Damn no-goods that's what you are. Guys like you cannot marry well. Bolderfuckingdash. Look at me Pat. I've had two wonderful marriages. And this one with Pauline... I'm feeling good things I really do

Pat. The moment I saw her you know... the day she walked into that smoky bar half-naked, right there... right there I knew. This Pauline, she's a striking woman. I don't want to mess things up with her. She'll leave me first thing. I need to be careful when unfaithful.'

There's no substitute for a thoroughbred I guess. Ernest is right, although his own character is impenetrable, even for a magical thoroughbred. The will of Ernest is as strong as an ox, and with that will he rules with fear. Even beauty succumbs to that kind of charm. Some lunatics even find it attractive.

'What happened between you and Hadley back when? You two made a terrifyingly good couple.'

'Oh, she was a complaining woman Pat. Always complaining that Hadley cuntface. The last straw was when she complained over this bloomin penis of mine. Too large for her she said. That's right Pat. My distant ex-wife said that. I divorced her.'

'Because of your penis?' I asked.

'Hell no. My penis, Pat, it should be paraded. I'm proud of this darn thing. It was actually a

compliment her saying that. I felt so good when she said it. So good.'

'Why did you divorce her, didn't you?'

'Sure. It was still a complaint see. I'm a man of principles Pat. I don't like complaining women, even if it's really compliments they're giving.'

'I don't understand...'

'Listen Pattie boy, I don't mind people telling I'm a painful lover. It makes feel more of a man to tell you the truth. It makes me happy. But she complained too much. It hurt too much she said.'

'I understand now.'

'Good. I'm glad you take my side on this. It's one thing putting her back on the street where she belongs with no money and no future and all, but another to complain about sexual organs. She crossed the line Pat. Yeah, sure, I know her demented parents are threatening me over me robbing Hadley of everything and throwing her away just like that. But Christ Pat... she was nothing before she met me. I made that Hadley. I gave her love, dignity, respect, things she'll never have again. She's a naughty woman Pat.'

'Eh...'

'And now? Now she's doing her darn social work again. Yup, community social work. What a disgrace Pat. What a disgrace.'

CHAPTER ELEVEN

After I waved goodbye to Ernest and his wife, and after I saw them being escorted away on their distant trip to Tanzania, and, after I felt competent, I went home and considered writing a few obituaries but then realized I didn't really feel like it after all. Obituaries are tiresome I thought to myself. Not something to ponder over on a Saturday night for sure. Instead I phoned faithful Jerome, who either wasn't there or didn't want to pick up, for the phone kept on ringing and ringing. I then rang June out of duty, for I made the woman bugger pregnant and felt guilty about it. We talked about our day, about this and that, activities and so forth, and when she invited me to come over to her place I pretended to

be sick and hung up the phone. Reason? Fearfulness, what else? I thought June understood anyhow and I didn't pay any attention to my pregnancy dilemma for the rest of the evening. I went to my computer and played minesweeper for a wee hour, not making any headway at expert level, nor at intermediate, for my level of concentration had already dropped. I got tired playing minesweeper and went to bed full of thoughts. I started to thought, think rather, about Jerome and the reason of why he didn't pick up his phone on a Saturday night, for Jerome doesn't like going out on a Saturday night due to the buzzing noises Saturday nights tend to generate in Sea Point. Next I kept thinking on how lucky Jerome must be with having that autism thing, him not having to worry about other people that much, like having a woman and making her pregnant, but just being his autistic self. What a lucky old chap I thought. I was thinking of again calling him up for a nice old chat, but I didn't, for I then remembered how removed he could be in company, and that it would be too much hassle just for a distant old chat. I figured he didn't want to talk to me anyway. Hearing my little

phone squeaking instead, I turned it off, seeing who it was.

I then, I then kind of a felt sorry for Jerome, for he was such a child in a man's world, he didn't live a good or happy life. He sometimes reminded me of that home alone kid in that Home Alone movie. Just so alone, even during Christmas. I mean, talk philosophy and he'd go nuts. He'd tell you about that Wittgenstein nutcase, himself an autistic nutter, and he'd go on about that damn Tractatus all day. He'd tell you the book from the beginning to end in thirty seconds. He's brilliant on that and will end up saying, 'Uh-uh, what we cannot speak of, therefore we must remain silent.' And that's when I tell him to shut his trap. Damn Wittgensteinian. And look, Ernest agreed on this. He hated Wittgenstein as much as I did.

'I hate that Wittgenstein guy Pat. Arrgh, I just feel like puking when I hear his stinking name. I really don't know why Russell bothered with that fruit. I mean, he was a nutter, he rubbed that whole Cambridge the wrong way. Now they worship him. But that's the English. They have none to worship, so they take this Wittgenstein guy. Christ, he's not

even English. He's damn Austrian. But that's the English for you Pat. They'll worship anyone except they're own. A bunch of fools and hypocrites. I'm ashamed to speak this damn language. English are the worst bunch, except... except maybe for all the others.'

'That's true.'

'See Pat... I don't like Wittgenstein just like I don't like salt and pepper. I'm serious Pat. I just don't get it. It's a real fairy thing, like Wittgenstein, salt and pepper you know. I mean, who cares about salt and pepper? Food is food. You eat and get on with work. Who cares about a little salt and pepper, eh? It's a fairy thing.'

'I like salt, pepper too.'

'That proves my point. You're the biggest fairy of them all Pat, except for Scott. Look, that Scott will start a fairy movement one day that's for sure. Especially with Zelda leaving. And Jerome, he's a fairy too I believe. Christ, I remember asking about the last time when he was inside a woman, Jerome I mean. It's... it's a regular kind of question, right Pat?'

'Like the weather.'

'Yes-yes. Jesus-fuck-me-Christ, Jerome, he scratched his chin, took out his itinerary, frowned like a child and asked about the last time it snowed on Table Mountain. Hell, don't know I said to the poor guy, how the hell should I know when the last time was? So I phoned the weather community Pat, asking them about the last time it snowed on Table Mountain. Five years they said. Five years!'

'That's something.'

'I confronted the guy Pat, told him he should go and see someone, like that sex therapist Stump had. This is not good for your health I told him. This whole sexual repression thing is very dangerous. I mean... look at that Isaac Newton guy. Look what happened to him. No eh... look at that Wittgenstein. Yes Wittgenstein. That man lost his marbles Pat. He lost it good. He even checked into a damn monastery, just so he didn't have to do it and get swinging. I told Jerome he's too much a Wittgensteinian. Yeah, that's right. And I told him about fabulous Tania and asked whether he fancied Tania. No, I... I in fact dragged the bugger to Tania, and Pat, didn't she look ravishing that night at Madonnas, eh? Ah, she had that beautiful red underwear that makes one lubricate

all over. Those eh... glittering underwear you know. Boy. But Jerome... Jerome, he shook Tania's hand like some child savant and I was disgusted by his behaviour. Not a real man that Jerome. Anyway, Tania took Jerome inside her little dormitory and, hell, I was quite stiff myself, seeing those two going dormitory wandering and surely getting it off. Surely I said. And gee, he came back smiling. Can you believe that Pat?'

'He did?'

'Positive Pat. And so... so I asked, how do you feel, eh Jerome? After five years you must feel rejuvenated. Was... was the long wait worth it, eh? Tell me, what happened? Oh, he said. We talked. It was eh... nice. We talked and talked. Boy, she's a swift talker. She likes talking that's for sure. Mighty fine talker she. What, talked? You just talked? But Jerome I said, didn't she take of your clothes by ripping it to shreds with those naughty little red claws of her? Didn't she molest your tits with those sharp stainless teeth of her? Didn't she come down on your trousers like Winnie the Pooh used to do? Isn't she the real thing, eh? Nah, nah the nutter said. We just talked about our lives, our

future hopes and all that stuff. It was nice. She's very clever. She said I should go back there again tomorrow. It's nice. Uh-uh... I really like this lady. She's very agreeable, very agreeable indeed. Hmm... what's her name again Ernest? Uh... Jesus Christ, I felt like screaming hack, I really felt like strangling him. Agreeable? What the hell does agreeable mean Pat? Hmm... we should go out to watch a movie. I wonder what movies she fancies, hey Ernest? Hmm... I wonder. See Pat, I have a quick temper, you know that. So I took Jerome by his throat, eh... like this...'

'Arrgh.'

'Yeah, and I said... listen Jerome, it's been five years my friend. You need someone to get you back in shape. Tomorrow you just go in, you sit on that customer chair, very close to her, and... and whilst you talk about your future and your careers and all that crap, start opening your legs like a sunflower, so that she can see your crotch. She wouldn't resist I tell you. It works every time.'

'I concede.'

'Well, as you know Pat, Tania never misses a trick, but Jerome was as set as can be. They just

talked and talked and then Jerome went to his bed and slept there on his own, like he did for the past five years, dreaming about women. It's the damn autism. It's like cancer Pat. It gets worse and worse by the day. He needs help that guy. This sexual repression technique is a very bad idea. I mean... look at what happened to Henry James. He became all confused over boys and girls. Oh boy Pat. It may work for the Pope or the next Ghandi, this repression technique, but hell, this is Sea Point Pat. Screwing has become a big fucking franchise. There's nothing you can do to escape it. I mean... they're even selling sex protection gear in the community church. Everyone is cashing in you know. I mean... yeah HIV, that's a big thing they say. But... but with all the sex protection gear nowadays, you need to be pretty damn stupid to contract the damn disease, although some whores I hear complain about the durability of sex equipment gear, but its because they don't read the instruction manuals. They can't even read those poor devilish no-goods. Hmm... where was I? Yes, you, you Pat. You remind me of Jerome sometimes. You're too decent at times. You... you find this beautiful woman, you'll fall in love with her and bring her to us, you'll

make sweet tender love to her in true romantic fashion. And then... few months later... like that - she's gone. It becomes a myth, a spook story parents tell their kids at night when they're ready to fall asleep. Keyzer Soze Keyser Soze! PAT HOBBIE! PAT HOBBIE! That's who you are PAT HOBBIE. You're just as much a solitary type as that Jerome nutter. I don't like mysteries Pat. I don't like people who hide things. It tells me they're good liars, and I hate good liars, because then I've got competition. Stay away from my itchy rifle then. Don't let me start smelling seething little rats Pat.'

Ernest was right, Jerome had a tough time with his women, although the story went he had a penis to that of a German U-boat. Anyhoo, like I said, the man was pretty much asexual, and had the morals of a dumbass Kierkegaard, and I think that even the Pope would've been proud of him during his chastity periods. Jerome had a distinct autistic way about him no question. He just wasn't there if you know what I mean. He had these strange habits and rituals, collecting thousands upon thousands of comic books, or talking to himself in a decorative fashion,

checking his watch every second, counting the tiles on the floor meticulously, arranging its patterns in his head. He had quirks like hell. When... when he found out his girlfriend was unfaithful, he left her first thing. Jesus, she was in the middle of her explanation when he threw her out just like that, saying stupidly, 'Uh, its over.' She was pretty and considerate girlfriend that, not just a regular whore we see every day, but someone I guess with morals and all that, but like I said, when Jerome loses trust its all over. She tried again to come back to Jerome. Again and again she tried. But Jerome stuck with his Kierkegaard morals saying, 'Uh, its over.' Phew.

At the university Jerome was very vibrant though, and mention the word philosophy, gee, he'd lighten up first thing. But in the end, he was the ultimate loner, and I never once had a single idea what he was thinking of when we were spending time together. Sure, he talked about books and philosophy and all that, but when it came to his character, and his inner thoughts you know, he was a recluse. He lived in his own world, and it's only when we interrupted

him, eh... yanked at his chain, that he got out of it. Jerome was depressed, but he never sought help. Once I saw a glimmer in his distant eyes the cries of help me help me, but Jerome's brain was wired up incorrectly I guess. It's a shame, for he had wonderful abilities. He was a workaholic most of his life, he never understood people one bit, and when he tried to he failed time and time again. Thus he went back to his own world. I think things got a bit too much for him in the end. He was a lonely guy with few friends. Gee, I don't think he had any real friends. That girl loved him, but I guess she was frustrated by him and his social ineptness. Jerome never called that girl I remember. She just came to him. I guess she felt needy at the time. I always thought that Jerome liked that girl and that they make a good couple. For a few months she did wonders with him, and he got out of his shell for the first time. He was very talkative when she was around. But like I said, it was very difficult to get through to Jerome, and that girl cheating on him, not because she didn't love him, but probably because she couldn't communicate with Jerome, in bed mostly but also in other stuff. Gosh, it's not fair. Jerome

was a sweet guy and never harmed anyone in his entire life.

Hmm... I don't think he liked us that much anyhow, Jerome that is. But... but he was there, and we respected the fact that Jerome was there looking like a friend. To tell you the truth, all of us needed friends badly. I mean, our relationships were so meaningless that it was hard to keep a straight face about it thinking about it.

Well, the tragedy about it all was that, when Ernest came back and when we went on that memorable picnic up the mountain, Jerome chose to end it. That's the tragedy and really silly to my mind. Really silly from my toward Jerome's point of view. Yeah, there were a couple of glum faces in the beginning I remember, but Scott and Ernest cared too much about their own rivalry as to why Jerome decided to jump off Table Mountain in all its splendour. It never occurred to me at first that they actually cared, until I read Ernest's chapter on what happened that day. Gosh, his account was so honest and real, I had a new sense of this Ernest guy. And while he refrained from proclaiming that Jerome was an

altogether worthless character, the story ended as such, that it was just another death, another death for yours truly to insert in his beloved obituary section. I wrote the finest obituary on Jerome one could have on someone taking the plunge. The obituary staff I remember congratulated me on an outstanding obituary. Jerome's death drove me to poetry I remember, and even though my English high school teacher ridiculed my childhood poetry, I wrote some good poetry on Jerome. It was a good obituary, with a bit of rhyming poetry to turn it into a classic obituary. It was a classic, but no new perspectives. Oi, Jerome.

I didn't thought this so meticulously through at home that evening when Ernest left to feed his wife to the crocodiles in Tanzania, for Jerome was at that point in time still his quirky old self. I was rather thinking about Jerome and his aversion, why he avoided people so deliberately. But now... now it's hard not to think about Jerome and how he died on the mountain. That's why PAT HOBBIE is such a party wrecker, sticking with the whole death aspect of life. Lighten up Pat.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Sure, I was still in reflective mode that evening. I couldn't get out of it, for besides Jerome, I felt a great burden with Ernest's departure, leaving his admirers to cope with whatever instruments there were left in coping. Of course, we all had our different methods. I remembered Ernest's last insightful comment just before entering the yellow taxi, upon seeing a decent-looking man pissing on a billboard that read Be wise, condomize.

'Look there Pat,' he shouted and pointed. 'Look at that pisspot pissing. See that?'

'Gee, I see.'

He laughed and said, 'Now don't you just love this country, eh Pat? Just the pure decadence of it all.'

It's so sweet Pat. Thanks to that pisspot I'll never fully embrace Europe. Never.'

'Speaking like a true African,' I jested.

'Yeah, well, I was born here. Might as well die and rot here too.

'True enough.'

'Goodbye Pat. Take care. And tell Scott to sober up. Oi, fucking pisspots.' I couldn't quite understand why I came about remembering that specific insightful comment Ernest gave, but that night I nevertheless instantly acknowledged just how much I relied on his presence in this alienated city we dare call community. I even felt that the Ernest I'd come to know was more than just a self-proclaimed hero, but dare I say holy cow, also a self-proclaimed father figure. What, is it good? I asked myself. More and more I began to figure that Ernest, despite my negativity towards the guy, added a distinct value to our enterprise in the city. Frankly, the more I rolled the madman around in my head, the more I realized that with Ernest gone, our lives would crumble altogether. Ernest was right when he remarked on the worthlessness aspect. It felt true. Ernest kept us together in many ways.

Strangely enough, his drinking prowess was one of those ways. A strong drinker who commanded respect everywhere he went by just drinking. I respected that. I tried my best to show a capacity for drink too. Some days though, when Ernest ordered round after round, PAT HOBBIE knew when to stop drinking. Pat the hack knew when to stop or pass out, and take his drink to the restroom and spill it empty there. Ernest never knew that spoof of mine, and he was very impressed with the high tolerance for the substance alcohol his counterpart PAT HOBBIE was capable of, unlike his darn best friend Scott, whom he resented for being a fairy drinker.

I say it... it was a familiar routine at Dingo bar, and Ernest at that paid for it all, receiving paid attention, and introducing his Pattie boy to the old Jew's menus and customs. Ernest was probably the best customer of that old Jew Hemingstein, not that it mattered relationship wise though. Those two couldn't stand each other, and I don't recall a compliment from either side once. In fact, I don't recall Ernest giving a compliment to anyone except his mother, who slapped him around like a toddler.

She was mad, and Ernest looked to her for inspiration, probably to get even with society. After the punishment, Ernest would come down on society in a big way I say, crushing each and every little thing in his bullish path. It was on such days when he'll put that Jew on a train to Auswitch, cursing at his worthlessness, and finally, crapping wholesomely on what was the best damn café bar in town. Subsequently a whole scene would follow, climaxing at a broken chair or jaw, with the old Jew closing the whole place down altogether - in tears. Next day he'd open up again, and Ernest would walk in like always, cursing at everybody and everything, including himself of course. The old Jew would crack up with a nervous smile and pretend like nothing ever happened and will give Ernest the morning newspaper. Ernest would eat, scratch his crotch, and think up some crap for his travel magazine. Yeah, I guess those two couldn't get enough of each other, but I tell you; those two never saw eye to eye for one second.

Maybe then Pat... it was because of Rosemary, who for some reason had something against the whole Ernest heroism crap. She figured him a fairy despite

the macho thing Ernest was all about. Zelda thought that too. But you know... it was all a mess anyhow, and we all knew Scott was attracted like hell to Ernest. I mean Pat, you've got the insides on what happened in that restroom and Scott's larva. You care to enlighten, eh Pat?

Yes, but it's a kept secret sinners. And... and if your PAT HOBBIE here cared enough he should really keep his mouth shut. What's for sure is this: We were sitting at some lousy restaurant, arguing over an essay, hmm... Why I am not a Christian by that Cambridge fellow eh... Russell. It was a ridiculous argument, for none of us cared about religion anyhow, but Scott came out fighting agnosticism and Ernest backing atheism no matter what. Who cares right?

Anyway, logician Jerome wasn't there to keep them honest, unfortunately you'd say, for you could only imagine the atrocious fallacies that were committed on that table, most of them appealing to some immortalized authority. But after a while you know... geniuses such as Sartre and Nietzsche were tossed away for more appropriate Ernest logic such as, 'It's because I say so that's why!' I tell you, their arguments were fierce, but still rather useless.

Anyway, those two were at each other throats and it was getting rather dull and sweaty in their presence, so I turned the discussion, asking Ernest why the hell he keeps on scratching his crotch area. Ernest cursed at me for introducing him to Tania, who at that time was invited to display her sick private parts at a medical research institution. Again. And... and that's when, with Ernest cursing, your Pat and fellow communist here quickly had to pop out for a smoke, for he's addicted to cigarettes, and a valid excuse to get away from the rotten conversation.

I was standing outside the creepy restaurant in vibrant Main Road attempting to smoke, when, for no sound reason, the need for a shit screeched up my ass. So I went back inside the restaurant to take a sophisticated shit in the restroom. It was a spectacular restroom, and the air smelled neat and fresh. I was in there about 5 minutes, enjoying my time at the far end of the restroom, when... when I heard the bolderdash voices of Scott and Ernest, whom for some reason also decided on the restroom to further their argument. I flushed my toilet whilst thinking about a joke and quietly went to the exit, with Ernest and Scott surprisingly missing and quiet.

I was curious. What happened to Scott and Ernest? I thought. I turned around swiftly to look for their presence and had a sneak peak underneath the first restroom door and... and... there it was, four ugly looking literary feet neatly stacked together. I believe it was poetry in motion sinners. One could hear one of those silent pins drop and that's where I went pale and petrified. I turned around mechanically, and went out for the mentioned smoke. I didn't know what to make of it, until Rosemary brought the subject up a few weeks later after I handsomely seduced her in a moment of lust. I just couldn't keep quiet with radiant Rosemary around, so I told her about what I saw and all hell broke loose I remember. Ernest had a hefty stroke when Rosemary let it slip and he almost broke out in tears right there at the hospital. He cleansed the air only once after he beat the crap out of Scott, claiming back his manliness in the process. It was over Zelda he said.

'Scott came to me over that wretched Zelda bitch. The damn bastard had a penis of a microscopic larva she said. Christ, you know Scott and me. He came to me telling about it, like he always does. See Pat,

Zelda wouldn't sleep with him cause his penis gone all crumbling. I said to him that's impossible... I mean... how the hell does a penis go all crunchy? So I had to see it to believe it. I took him to the restroom Pat, pulled down his trousers and had a sophisticated look. We heard a flush at the far end and we kept silent until some wall-eyed no-good son of a bitch at that far end left. Hmm... I had a good inspection of Scott's penis and couldn't find anything wrong with it. Christ, it was in perfect shape! So I zipped it back up, telling him his wife's a jealous lesbian that doesn't know a damn thing about penis culture. Scott gave me a hug crying and I told him his wife is deranged with syph and he cried even more and I said to him don't worry about it. And then he kissed my ass.'

'For real?'

'Yeah. Why the hell not? I'm Ernest for Christ sake. Scott kisses my ass all the time Pat, so go fuck yourself.'

'Sorry Ern...'

'Where was I? Oh, and so he kissed my ass and we went back into that creepy burger restaurant place. You said you went for a smoke outside. When you came

back we were still on that Russell essay. I mean, I'm defending Russell like hell when he started with his Kierkegaard irrelevance. For an agnostic the man's a psycho. He just wants to get my hormones flowing and beat him up. That's it you know. He's a darn masochist. I mean... you were there. But I tell you Pat... that bastard who knew about this you know, about Scott and me, that guy at that far end in the restroom, eh? He knew Rosemary probably as well. Jesus, the day I find that bastard Pat I'll break his skull. You hear me good old faithful friend PAT HOBBIE, eh?'

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Swallowing his final mint, Pat, sweaty palmed and everything, continued... Tania was there and she was the one who made Pat happy. Of all she understood me best. She cared nothing for literature and for four years I saw her once or twice a week wherever and whenever we felt cosy. She met my parents once and they liked her very much. She got acquainted to Scott and he was dazzled by her charm. Pity about the thing she had between her legs. I left her because of that inconvenience. Stump fancied Tania and he threw a lot of money at her. He won her over just by that. He was ugly like hell, but for Stump sex = happiness and he threw a lot of money at her and she fell for that first thing, together with the

equation. Well, Stump admitted saying that Tania fell for almost anything. No question.

Bingo, but Pat was still able to make good use of Rosemary from time to time, a girl whom he thought he was in love with, but then again, Pat took second-guessing to a new level. Rosemary did Pat in good though, and he ended up paying like hell. She was worse than any whore he had ever encountered. He's still paying for his times with Rosemary. At least he managed to get out while still relatively in the clear.

PART THREE:

PAT HOBBIE's Christmas wish

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Ah... this no-good-for-nothing hellhole. What an altogether worthless place. What are you doing here, Pat? Gee, he's got no clue, no clue whatsoever. I guess Pat still loves this place. After all these years I guess Pat still loves this place you know. Isn't Main Road a pretty sight, eh Pat? Oh my fellow communist, it's the best. After all these years it's still the best I tell you. I guess after all these years... but what are you doing here, Pat? Tell me... what are you doing here? Hmm... he doesn't really know you know. I guess he's maybe showing that of wife his, eh... June, his roots and all. People ought to do that you know. It strengthens relationships they say.

'Tell me Pat. What exactly are we doing here?'

'Like I said... like I said a thousand times just now, I'd like to show you where I spent away all my time in this fairy city. I'm finally opening up, eh?'

'Hardly opening up Pat. More like trying to get into contact with those addicts you said you left. Gosh Pat. And this Scotty of yours is sleepy. I'm sleepy. And this street... well, it doesn't look, I mean... so many young girls late at night.'

'These girls are making a decent living believe you me. Christ, this is not the countryside Mrs June. They don't have cows to milk or pigs to slaughter for a living. Different kind of jungle this baby. Altogether different.'

'Then let's just go back to the country. Let's just go.'

Oh, this is Pat's wife June. She's beautiful and shiny and all that, but it doesn't mean she also not a pain in Pat's ass. Especially with all her environmentalist discussions. Like Pat's grandfather always used to say, 'Marry well, son. Marry well.' And he never listened. Bolderdash. 'And remember son: If you marry for beauty and grace and all sophistication, marry a damn misanthropist.' But Pat

never listened. Grandpa married a misanthropist.
And Pat never listened.

'Look! Isn't that Dingo bar over there, eh?
Gosh, it looks like they've been expanding.'

'Let's go home this minute Pat!'

'In a minute. Watch the car will you?. And the
kids. See Dingo bar over there?'

'I see nothing.'

'I met some wonderful people at that place.
Distinguished people dare I say. They were like
family to me for so long. I just want to have a
sneak peak if I may. For old times sakes.'

'Eh...'

'See... Madonnas *is* just next to it.'

'What's Madonnas?'

'Uh, it's a women's bar. Lesbians I think.'

'Now, what I said Pat...'

'Watch Scotty.'

And Pat is outside and for the first time in
months he can smell the smoky sea air he has grown so
used to over the hack years. 'Arrgh,' Pat says.
'Phew-phew,' he says. Pat looks down and sees a dose
of seagull shit on the pavement. Oh, and do you hear
that sweet lurid smells above, eh Pat? Nah, what

limbo got into Seapoint anyway? Pat squints at Dingo bar. The place is closed but he knew that long before. He stares through the window pane instead, pointing to the counter, showing his imaginary friend the yellowy chairs, old stylish Frank Sinatra on the wall, rat pack wrenching his ass, wrecking his suit. Pat thinks back now, he's visualizing that old man who came here every morning, consuming his morning burgers in bliss. He got beaten to death by a couple of teens he remembers. Age: 90. Pat left a couple of days after, distraught by the event in the head. Pat turns around, fighting through bright neon lights of a beloved street he tended to for so long. He hears a familiar sound of a horn and sees his new car, he sees June cursing at him. Christ, that complaining woman Pat thinks. Should never have brought her here.

Hmm... Dingo bar. What fond memories of this place my fellow spoof, a place of a Jew and his friends. Pat wonders what happened to that old Jew. He walks over to Madonnas, seeking familiar faces and chatter. He stops at the entrance and looks up. He sees the conditioned purple sign flashing and he smiles heartily of the pure joy his tummy generates because

of this flashing. Inside he gets the chokes and stops in front of an old smoking fart of a lady. She takes her eyes of a lesbian magazine and stares up annoyingly.

'Gee, what choking perfume you using here?' Pat asks.

'None of you business. Who're you?'

'My name is Pat, PAT HOBBIE. I... I know you're name is Gertrude Stein, right? I've been here a long time ago. Lived here too. I was good friends with Scott and Ernest. You know those, don't you?'

'Yes I know you Pat,' said the lesbian fart. 'I remember you and Scott and Ernest and that tireless Stump very well. You were all fools... all of you.'

'Yup.'

'See business is rather slow you know. We're waiting for the tourists.'

'I see...'

'Hmm... haven't seen you in ages young Pat man.'

'Damn ages I say. But let's see eh... Pat boy. I know your type of woman - small, weak, pathetic, suicidal...'

'No...'

'I also have a fresh and open-minded girl here... for new tranquil adventures that is. She's quite an intellectual at times too. Some find just talking to her worth their money. Quite a philosopher she. You like that, don't you?'

'Thanks,' Pat said, 'but no thanks. I'm actually here to hear if Tania's still around?'

'Who?'

'You know... the Tania, eh... the dark lady?'

'That cheap whore...'

'I'd say she was top of the pile.'

'Perhaps, but... but we had to let her go some while back. Unfortunately. She got some little infection, a rare one, but deadly. We have check-ups every month you know. New regulations and all.'

'What she got?'

'Don't know,' the lady said and choked on her cigarette.

'I liked that girl,' Pat said.

'Like I said... we had to let her go.'

'Fiddlesticks.'

'Eh, what Pat?'

'I mean... I should've taken her with to the country. Like I said I would've. Listen, she was a

good woman. Hmm... I should've done the right thing you know. Definitely should've.'

'Who the hell is fiddlesticks?'

'Fiddlesticks?'

'Yeah.'

'Oh, it's an expression.'

'Get rid of it. It's old fashioned. Old fashioned to use such words. You remind of some old man who comes in here looking for ladies.'

'What's wrong with that?'

'I don't sell ladies Pat,' the lesbian, attempting not to choke. 'I sell pussies.'

'Sure. Anyway, I... I just wanted to show my wife Dingo bar and all. Is the old Jew still working here? Hemingstein?'

'That old stinkpot? Christ, he's got a whole franchise going. It's Jew here, Jew there, Jews everywhere nowadays my fellow Zionist.'

'That's terrible. What... what about his wife?'

'Rosemary's still here.'

'How's she?'

'Radiant. Hmm... Stump too.'

'Oh, old Stump. We were good friends. Gosh, he settled now or something? I remember he really wanted to get married. He promised when I left.'

'Well, he was here... earlier. He's taking care of that cheap whore he says, and we might do business together. He's has a good head for business that boy.'

'He was a good friend. Scott and Ernest too.'

'You mean those literary fools.'

'Take good care of little Stump,' Pat said quickly and waved the old lady goodbye. Outside it was frosty and eerie, the city attempting to claim silence. Our visitor's city memories are now locked away again, buried it seems. And so he scurries away, seeking his new car and June and the baby.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Fairy cities do everything wrong you know, for there in the countryside the people are friendly and warm. There in the countryside the red roses in nature remain true, and reflect no falsities. I never took Tania out of the city, and I know I should've for she deserved a sprinkle of something different. In the dark streets of the city one gets lost almost through default. You fall asleep, only to awake as if just experiencing a nightmare. But then, then you realize the nightmare is real. A real live one they say.

It's only in the city where one can fully comprehend this nightmare I'm referring to, this cry for help. Because there where I was born I feel safe and sound, almost too safe and sound, as if it wasn't

supposed to be that way. An omniscient God surely made the countryside. If he didn't, well, I don't know what's all great and powerful I really don't.

Anyway, it was rather an anti-climax to tell you the truth of how it all ended. Those were good times nevertheless, but the ending was an anti-climax to be proud of. All of us were long past our roaring twenties and thirties, but we still kept on going strong despite the flickering signs of addiction and suicide and little money in the bank. Our dreams and aspirations were still the same as when we were youngsters and we were childish most of the time. And what times there were. I'll never forget the day when all five of us, Ernest, Scott, Jerome, Stump and PAT HOBBIE - I'll never forget the day when we were enjoying the beach for a change, sitting on the seven steps of cement overlooking the sea, looking and pointing at the breaking waves as the tide was slowly coming in. Robben Island was there in all its splendour, but we kept on eating our ice cream like little toddlers, not commenting on the island's geographical significance. When Ernest's ice cream cone fell on the cement and dripped deliciously unto

the sand, he cursed poor Scott because he knew he could. He then tried to crush Scott's ice cream cone but we prevented this fiendish intention and I remember Ernest kicking the sand in disgust afterwards. It was so wonderful that day you know, and we listened to Ernest boasting his urine off about something he probably didn't even do in some remote African country. We listened to Scott and Ernest arguing over the worst novel of the 20th century and we listened to Jerome correcting their committing the appealing to force or appealing to authority, all that logic stuff. It was agreed though, through the intervention of a passage from Anna Karenina and Scott's rectum, that the worst novel should be the longest novel, and I think War and Peace came second.

Yeah, and I remember looking at Jerome smiling whilst doing his silly logic tricks. Jerome didn't say much but when he did it was always something quirky and lovable, and that in itself cracked the whole gang up. I loved that Jerome at times. If only he was a little younger then, I would've adopted him for sure. Cute boy that Jerome. Not so Stump, whose skin

rashes on that day of remembrance were again on full display. Poor thing.

It's hard to put Stump into perspective, for he was a sad figure that Stump and his intent was always to fit in, and in that he never really did. I mean... all of us were sad figures, you know what I've told about all of us anyhow. There's not a good thing to say about any of my friends. But Stump... Stump's sadness was not sadness, but mere imitations to fit the profile of sadness. And look, he never had his foot up any of our asses for long periods, and that tells you something. It tells you something important.

I never cared for Stump to be miserable or to be happy you know. I really didn't care for Stump. Maybe... maybe he was a good guy, maybe his novel wasn't as bad as we all thought it was. Maybe he was a friend after all. But then again, I never felt real friendship toward him. No, he was just there to remind me that there are folks worse off than yours truly. In that, I'd say Stump was very much like a lover, until I started to settle with June a couple of months ago. (Yeah, we have a kid that squeals so I decided to give the whole parenting thing a go.)

Stump was like a lover to me. I didn't really care about him. Gosh, I hardly spent significant time with him. Just like Tania and Rosemary, with whom I spent very little time with too. Most of the times we did spend we spent in bed. We conversed very little in bed. I conversed little with Stump too and it's hard to put him into any decent form of perspective.

Scott Fitzgerald's work stalled due to his drinking. He really was highly thought of at the papers when young and earnest, but he couldn't keep up with the demands that were being put on him day after day after day. Furthermore, the dailies didn't admire his columns a great deal. It was losing the sharpness it had when he was starting out and they replaced him with an old hand, a 50-year young retired academic who just recently came from Amsterdam, and who always had a thing for students, mostly whores and virgins.

Scott became a hack, a freelance junkie that reminisced over lost genius. Eventually he couldn't support himself or Zelda or his drinking. The latter

turned him desperate, and Scott eventually lost everything. Zelda went back to live with her parents, who in an act of gratuity sent her to some madhouse where she's now receiving therapy. Word is she's not responding to therapy, only talking to Scott in her sleep when she's not masturbating. Zelda's parents blame Scott for all this. It's Scott who should be burned for Zelda's deteriorate in character and esteem they said. The last I heard something about Scott was from none other than Ernest. Ernest said a no-good woman friend of Scott, the indomitable Sheila Graham, has taken the crack-up under her wings to stay with her for a while in the great city of Johannesburg so that he can recuperate there and work in peace and quiet. Scott's woman also promised Scott a healthy allowance whereby Scott may curb his drinking habits or vice versa. A generous woman no doubt it would seem, until a man such as Ernest provides you some background info.

This woman, it has been said, has a distinct affinity for chemicals and needles in the great city of Johannesburg. With this Ernest also added that Scott's character would reach full circle in the atmosphere of chemicals and needles and chasing that

elusive dragon. Scott never had much affinity for those horrible things before, 'stay away from these rocks Zelda' he once exclaimed, 'they're a walking disaster', but now our fabulous Scott is not Scott. Boy, it seems a long time ago when Scott was a big shot paper fellow that had the literary world at his feet.

Ernest was like family to Scott, financially too. It was a cowardly act from Ernest to turn bitter towards Scott, but Ernest maintains his innocence regarding Scott's predicament. Strangest of all, Ernest is secretly scouting for a new literary rival. He beat Scott at his own game he believes but that's not enough. That Ernest devil has never been happier scouting. Let me tell you, Scott's demise has made Ernest strikingly virile again, saying that it was satisfying for him to see Scott the last time at Dingo bar in such a terrible shape, where the shining eyes of brilliance had a deadness rivalled only to PAT HOBBIE's obituaries.

Where Scott was once a butterfly that understood beautifully, his wings were now broken and its patterns marred and smudged. He wasn't a butterfly but a moth, a shadow of the Scott I was introduced

to. All in a few years, with a crazy woman, an alleged fairy affair, lots of drinking and a selfish egomaniac best friend, Scott lost the fight against his destiny at becoming a crack-up. He was determined to fail I suppose that Scott and Ernest said that Scott last spoke to him with the authority of failure. Ernest said he'll never cry over Scott because despite everything they had together, Scott drank all his talents and gifts away on a promising silver platter. He'll never cry over Scott Ernest said to me. He said he cried over the lion he killed with his bare hands in Tanzania, 'A short, tearful moment' I remember Ernest saying, but Scott's demise was not something to cry or ponder over. It's much too upsetting Ernest said. All one can do is say is, 'That bastard! The same as whoring!' and go on with ones life. Hail Scott Fitzgerald! I'll then say to myself. You hear me Ernest? Hail Scott Fitzgerald! He could've done with such a herald that's for sure.

Ernest Hemingway... I presume he was in every way the artist who as a young man felt he could forge in the smithy of his soul the uncreated conscious of his race, through which all else must bow to in humble

admiration. Pity he lives in the wrong century that Ernest.

Ernest had many enemies and almost no friends. It cannot be disagreed. Yet, here is a man that had effortless character, brutal honesty, quick in and intelligence, and never short of a vague compliment when deserved. I'll remember an Ernest who despite his overwhelming nature, I'll remember a face that carried symptoms of caring. Yes, caring. Jerome, Stump and I, all of us were scrutinized by Ernest to give our outmost. He knew our gifts; he made us aware of it and gave us courage to take it further and be more like a man like him. Ernest was brave to the extent it was contagious. Believe it. And look, when Scott lacked creative focus, Ernest was the one to help him. When Scott was ridiculed and abandoned by his wife, Ernest was there by his side.

Later on, when Ernest finally rolled up his mind over a wretched Scott, a Scott that is unable to take stock of destroying the self, Ernest turned his back on his best friend. Ernest has a reputation for that you know. He tried whole-heartedly with Scott, but he gave up and that's never a good thing I think, giving up that is. Scott refused to walk the path

Ernest took on walking, the path of success. And Ernest has given up on Scott for that, saying his former friend is full of drinking betrayal that should be shot for cowardice, but surely Ernest was reading the contradiction poem of Walt Whitman that day. I'll never forgive Ernest for leaving Scott.

Scott and Ernest were inseparable. They shared their whole life to each other. But... it wore out quickly. Like a love-affair it wore out as quickly as it was consummated. I knew Scott and Ernest were best friends. I knew it all along and I didn't compete for that spot one bit. They were best friends no question. Hell, they probably did have that homosexual affair after all, eh? It wouldn't surprise me seeing the voltage of electricity those two generated together when they were spending time together.

Ernest left for Cuba last I heard, for... for he said Cuba is living in exciting times, especially with the tropical storms and hurricanes hitting the island at regular intervals. It's good he said. He was just in time to capture Hurricane Melinda, a fierce hurricane that gave even the infamous Fidel Castro a mildest of headache. Ernest is supposed to

do some fishing in Havana, and he says he hear good things of the fish there. There's some big fish in Cuba and an old man told him all about it. He looks forward in getting that big fish. Gosh, I doubt if Ernest and I will ever be as close as our times spent in Sea Point. I've invited him to visit the wife and toddler and me here in the countryside. Ernest replied quickly to my invitation, saying he likes the idea very much. He likes the idea of fresh air and a possible hunting expedition with his old hack PAT HOBBIIE. Pat is looking forward to his arrival.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

When I look back I regret almost nothing of the city. Not the streets nor the bars nor the cafes nor the empty theatres. I don't miss the morning drum nor the strange faces, nor the funny man you don't seem to put into perspective. The city doesn't give colour like that. No, you only remember the people close to you, those that you wake up for, those that you spend your tiresome days with. It's whom make you laugh and cry that you remember. It's their sadness and state of misery that you frankly treasure.

It's their cry for help I never seem to quite get rid of, but can't get enough of either. That's the city, whereas in the place I was born there is only silence and peace. There is silence and peace and

silence and peace. Gee, there is so much silence and peace and silence and peace you go back to the misery you tried to escape in the first place. And when you come back, oh, it doesn't take a second before you get wretched all over. Not even a second. Just one fresh breath of smoky filthy city air and... you're hooked for good. It really is an addiction you know. They should put the city up on the addiction list. Trust me.

My last word and... and I went to the city to see some extravagant musical. It was a good musical, and June enjoyed it. I also wanted to show her where I lived. I remember that night clearly and being in Sea Point for the first time in a long while made me want to go back there for good. I still love Tania and Rosemary and I wanted to see them primarily for some reason, a sexual reason I guess, and some nights when I go to bed with June alongside me I still dream of them. I dream of the times when the three of us made violent and painful love all over the toilet seat. I dream of those great and wonderful times when my wife June is lying snoring alongside me, or when June is in the other room taking care of the screaming baby, or when

June is doing the dishes, or when June is irritating the crap out of me. I say to myself, Pat! Go back to Tania! Go back to Rosemary! Leave this June person you stupid stupid man. This is silliness. There are nights when I hear the baby crying with June fast asleep. She doesn't hear a thing some nights. It's then that I feel nothing. Yes, I go and have a look at the baby to stare and comfort its effortless squealing. If only it will go to sleep... that will help. Maybe I should smother the squealer? I'll say to myself. Tomorrow I'll wake up and this wouldn't be real. I wouldn't have wanted it. Not in a million years. Maybe I should leave June? Yes, good idea. Gosh, maybe I should shut up and check up on that squealing baby. But I haven't left June yet. And it's been a while since I've settled so I feel pretty comfortable with my time spent with June and the screaming baby.

Oh, it's a beautiful baby you know. His name is Scotty, named after Scott. I... I did this naming after Scott thing because even though Scott wasn't my best friend or anything, he still impressed me the most of all the characters I've met during my time here in Sea Point. Ha, whereas I'll name my boy

after Scott, I'll probably name my scavenger pet after Ernest. And that's not because I'm favouring any one here for both were marvellous people on their own make no mistake about it. Scott and Ernest were both so original, both so dynamic, their words and sayings drove yours truly in writing damned obituaries, and sometimes even rotten poetry. I admired them both, but I'd still choose my boy to be more like the real Scott, for even though Scott is pretty much seen as a failure in life by those around him, including himself of course, I've never met a more generous and charming human being and gentleman in my entire life, a gentleman that defined the essence of being, of what it is to really be in this crazy world. He's a drunk I admit that, but trust me also, I've seen the best of Scott the gentleman. And that's what I want from my Scotty at all times. I want the best of Scott in my living room.

Anyway, I remember the musical that night and how we came to Sea Point and Dingo bar in too much of a hurry. Dingo bar was closed but I knew that long before already. I remember June cursing and I remembered Sea Point for the last time. Soon I'll come back. That's PAT HOBBIE's Christmas wish. I

wish good things for you too. Always your stinking
old friend Pat the hack.

P.S.

Or... or maybe I should change Scotty to Ernesto?
He'll make a fine Ernesto too.

* * *

So perhaps I am destined to return some day and find
in the city new experiences that so far I have only
read about. For the moment I can only cry out that I
have lost my splendid mirage! Come back, come back,
O glittering and white!

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *My Lost City*