

# Consequences

By Willa Cather

Henry Eastman, a lawyer, aged forty, was standing beside the Flatiron Building in a driving November rainstorm, signaling frantically for a taxi. It was six-thirty, and everything on wheels was engaged. The streets were in confusion about him, the sky was in turmoil above him, and the flatiron Building, which seemed about to blow down, threw water like a mill-shoot. Suddenly, out of the brutal struggle of men and cars and machines and people tilting at each other with umbrellas, a quiet, well-mannered limousine paused before him, at the curb, and an agreeable, ruddy countenance confronted him through the open window of the car.

“Don’t you want me to pick you up, Mr. Eastman? I’m running directly home now.”

Eastman recognized Kier Cavanaugh, a young man of pleasure, who lived in the house on Central Park South, where he himself had an apartment.

“Don’t I?” he exclaimed, bolting into the car. “I’ll risk getting your cushions wet without compunction. I came up in a taxi, but I didn’t hold it. Bad economy. I thought I saw your car down on Fourteenth Street about half an hour ago.”

The owner of the car smiled. He had a pleasant, round face and round eyes, and a fringe of smooth, yellow hair showed under the brim of his soft felt hat. “With a lot of little broilers fluttering into it? You did. I know some girls who work in the cheap shops down there. I happened to be downtown and I stopped and took a load of them home. I do sometimes. Saves their poor little clothes, you know. Their shoes are never any good.”

Eastman looked at his rescuer. “Aren’t they notoriously afraid of cars and smooth young men?” he enquired.

Cavanaugh shook his head. “They know which cars are safe and which are chancy. They put each other wise. You have to take a bunch at a time, of course. The Italian girls can never come along; their men shoot. The girls understand, all right; but their fathers don’t. One gets to see queer places, sometimes, taking them home.”

Eastman laughed drily. “Every time I touch the circle of your acquaintance, Cavanaugh, it’s a little wider. You must know New York pretty well by this time.”

“Yes, but I’m on my good behavior below Twenty-third Street,” the young man replied with simplicity. “My little friends down there would give me a good character. They’re wise little girls. They have grand ways with each other, a romantic code of loyalty. You can find a good many of the lost virtues among them.” The car was standing still in a traffic block at Fortieth Street, when Cavanaugh suddenly drew his face away from the window and touched Eastman’s arm. “Look, please. You see that hansom with the bony gray horse—driver has a broken hat and red flannel around his throat. Can you see who is inside?”

Eastman peered out. The hansom was just cutting across the line, and the driver was making a great fuss about it, bobbing his head and waving his whip. He jerked his dripping old horse into Fortieth Street and clattered off past the Public Library grounds toward Sixth Avenue. “No, I couldn’t see the passenger. Someone you know?”

“Could you see whether there was a passenger?” Cavanaugh asked.

“Why, yes. A man, I think. I saw his elbow on the apron. No driver ever behaves like that unless he has a passenger.”

“Yes, I may have been mistaken,” Cavanaugh murmured absentmindedly. Ten minutes or so later, after Cavanaugh’s car had turned off Fifth Avenue into Fifty-eighth Street, Eastman exclaimed, “There’s your same cabby, and the cart’s empty. He’s headed for a drink now, I suppose.” The driver in the broken hat and the red flannel neck cloth was still brandishing the whip over his old gray. He was coming from the west now, and turned down Sixth Avenue, under the elevated.

Cavanaugh’s car stopped at the bachelor apartment house between Sixth and Seventh Avenues where he and Eastman lived, and they went up in the elevator together. They were still talking when the lift stopped at Cavanaugh’s floor, and Eastman stepped out with him and walked down the hall, finishing his sentence while Cavanaugh found his latch-key. When he opened the door, a wave of fresh cigarette smoke greeted them. Cavanaugh stopped short and stared into his hallway. “Now how in the devil—!” he exclaimed angrily.

“Someone waiting for you? Oh, no thanks. I wasn’t coming in. I have to work tonight. Thank you, but I couldn’t.” Eastman nodded and went up the two flights to his own rooms.

Though Eastman did not customarily keep a servant he had this winter a man who had been lent to him by a friend who was abroad. Rollins met him at the door and took his coat and hat.

“Put out my dinner clothes, Rollins, and then get out of here until ten o’clock. I’ve promised to go to a supper tonight. I shan’t be dining. I’ve had a late tea and I’m going to work until ten. You may put out some kumiss and biscuit for me.”

Rollins took himself off, and Eastman settled down at the big table in his sitting-room. He had to read a lot of letters submitted as evidence in a breach of contract case, and before he got very far he found that long paragraphs in some of the letters were written in German. He had a German dictionary at his office, but none here. Rollins had gone, and anyhow, the bookstores would be closed. He remembered having seen a row of dictionaries on the lower shelf of one of Cavanaugh’s bookcases. Cavanaugh had a lot of books, though he never read anything but new stuff. Eastman prudently turned down his student’s lamp very low—the thing had an evil habit of smoking—and went down two flights to Cavanaugh’s door.

The young man himself answered Eastman’s ring. He was freshly dressed for the evening, except for a brown smoking jacket, and his yellow hair had been brushed until it shone. He hesitated as he confronted his caller, still holding the door knob, and his round eyes and smooth forehead made their best imitation of a frown. When Eastman began to apologize, Cavanaugh’s manner suddenly changed. He caught his arm and jerked him into the narrow hall. “Come in, come in. Right along!” he said excitedly. “Right along,” he repeated as he pushed Eastman before him into his sitting-room. “Well I’ll—” he stopped short at the door and looked about his own room with an air of complete mystification. The back window was wide open and a strong wind was blowing in. Cavanaugh walked over to the window and stuck out his head, looking up and down the fire escape. When he pulled his head in, he drew down the sash.

“I had a visitor I wanted you to see,” he explained with a nervous smile. “At least I thought I had. He must have gone out that way,” nodding toward the window.

“Call him back. I only came to borrow a German dictionary, if you have one. Can’t stay. Call him back.”

Cavanaugh shook his head despondently. “No use. He’s beat it. Nowhere in sight.”

“He must be active: Has he left something?” Eastman pointed to a very dirty white glove that lay on the floor under the window.

“Yes, that’s his.” Cavanaugh reached for his tongs, picked up the glove, and tossed it into the grate, where it quickly shriveled on the coals. Eastman felt that he had happened in upon

something disagreeable, possibly something shady, and he wanted to get away at once. Cavanaugh stood staring at the fire and seemed stupid and dazed; so he repeated his request rather sternly, "I think I've seen a German dictionary down there among your books. May I have it?"

Cavanaugh blinked at him. "A German dictionary? Oh, possibly! Those were my father's. I scarcely know what there is." He put down the tongs and began to wipe his hands nervously with his handkerchief.

Eastman went over to the bookcase behind the Chesterfield, opened the door, swooped upon the book he wanted and stuck it under his arm. He felt perfectly certain now that something shady had been going on in Cavanaugh's rooms, and he saw no reason why he should come in for any hang-over. "Thanks. I'll send it back tomorrow," he said curtly as he made for the door.

Cavanaugh followed him. "Wait a moment. I wanted you to see him. You did see his glove," glancing at the grate.

Eastman laughed disagreeably. "I saw a glove. That's not evidence. Do your friends often use that means of exit? Somewhat inconvenient."

Cavanaugh gave him a startled glance. "Wouldn't you think so? For an old man, a very rickety old party? The ladders are steep, you know, and rusty." He approached the window again and put it up softly. In a moment he drew his head back with a jerk. He caught Eastman's arm and shoved him toward the window. "Hurry, please. Look! Down there." He pointed to the little patch of paved court four flights down.

The square of pavement was so small and the walls about it were so high, that it was a good deal like looking down a well. Four tall buildings backed upon the same court and made a kind of shaft, with flagstones at the bottom, and at the top a square of dark blue with some stars in it. At the bottom of the shaft Eastman saw a black figure, a man in a caped coat and a tall hat stealing cautiously around, not across the square of pavement, keeping close to the dark wall and avoiding the streak of light that fell on the flagstones from a window in the opposite house. Seen from that height he was of course fore-shortened and probably looked more shambling and decrepit than he was. He picked his way along with exaggerated care and looked like a silly old cat crossing a wet street. When he reached the gate that led into an alleyway between two buildings, he felt about for the latch, opened the door a mere crack, and then shot out under the feeble lamp that burned in the brick arch over the gateway. The door closed after him. "He'll get run in," Eastman remarked curtly, turning away from the window. "That door shouldn't be left unlocked. Any crook could come in. I'll speak to the janitor about it, if you don't mind," he added sarcastically.

"Wish you would." Cavanaugh stood brushing down the front of his jacket, first with his right hand and then with his left. "You saw him, didn't you?"

"Enough of him. Seems eccentric. I have to see a lot of buggy people. They don't take me in any more. But I'm keeping you and I'm in a hurry myself. Good night."

Cavanaugh put out his hand detainingly and started to say something; but Eastman rudely turned his back and went down the hall and out of the door. He had never felt anything shady about Cavanaugh before, and he was sorry he had gone down for the dictionary. In five minutes he was deep in his papers; but in the half hour when he was loafing before he dressed to go out, the young man's curious behaviour came into his mind again.

Eastman had merely a neighborly acquaintance with Cavanaugh. He had been to a supper at the young man's rooms once, but he didn't particularly like Cavanaugh's friends; so the next time he was asked, he had another engagement. He liked Cavanaugh himself, if for nothing else

than because he was so cheerful and trim and ruddy. A good complexion is always at a premium in New York, especially when it shines reassuringly on a man who does everything in the world to lose it. It encourages fellow mortals as to the inherent vigor of the human organism and the amount of bad treatment it will stand for. "Footprints that perhaps another," etc.

Cavanaugh, he knew, had plenty of money. He was the son of a Pennsylvania preacher, who died soon after he discovered that his ancestral acres were full of petroleum, and Kier had come to New York to burn some of the oil. He was thirty-two and was still at it; spent his life, literally, among the breakers. His motor hit the Park every morning as if it were the first time ever. He took people out to supper every night. He went from restaurant to restaurant, sometimes to half-a-dozen in an evening. The head waiters were his hosts and their cordiality made him happy. They made a life-line for him up Broadway and down Fifth Avenue. Cavanaugh was still fresh and smooth, round and plump, with a lustre to his hair and white teeth and a clear look in his round eyes. He seemed absolutely unwearied and unimpaired; never bored and never carried away.

Eastman always smiled when he met Cavanaugh in the entrance hall, serenely going forth to or returning from gladiatorial combats with joy, or when he saw him rolling smoothly up to the door in his car in the morning after a restful night in one of the remarkable new roadhouses he was always finding. Eastman had seen a good many young men disappear on Cavanaugh's route,—and he admired this young man's endurance.

Tonight, for the first time, he had got a whiff of something unwholesome about the fellow—bad nerves, bad company, something on hand that he was ashamed of, a visitor old and vicious, who must have had a key to Cavanaugh's apartment, for he was evidently there when Cavanaugh returned at seven o'clock. Probably it was the same man Cavanaugh had seen in the hansom. He must have been able to let himself in, for Cavanaugh kept no man but his chauffeur; or perhaps the janitor had been instructed to let him in. In either case, and whoever he was, it was clear enough that Cavanaugh was ashamed of him and was mixing up in questionable business of some kind.

Eastman sent Cavanaugh's book back by Rollins, and for the next two weeks he had no word with him beyond a casual greeting when they happened to meet in the hall or the elevator. One Sunday morning Cavanaugh telephoned up to him to ask if he could motor out to a roadhouse in Connecticut that afternoon and have supper; but when Eastman found there were to be other guests he declined.

On New Year's Eve Eastman dined at the University Club at six o'clock and hurried home before the usual manifestations of insanity had begun in the streets. When Rollins brought his smoking coat, he asked him whether he wouldn't like to get off early.

"Yes, sir. But won't you be dressing, Mr. Eastman?" he inquired.

"Not tonight." Eastman handed him a bill. "Bring some change in the morning. There'll be fees."

Rollins lost no time in putting everything to rights for the night, and Eastman couldn't help wishing that he were in such a hurry to be off somewhere himself. When he heard the hall door close softly, he wondered if there were any place, after all, that he wanted to go. From his window he looked down at the long lines of motors and taxis waiting for a signal to cross Broadway. He thought of some of their probable destinations and decided that none of those places pulled him very hard. The night was warm and wet, the air was drizzly. Vapor hung in clouds about the Times Building, half hid the top of it, and made a luminous haze along Broadway. While he was looking down at the army of wet, black carnage-tops and their reflected

headlights and taillights, Eastman heard a ring at his door. He deliberated. If it were a caller, the hall porter would have telephoned up. It must be the janitor. When he opened the door, there stood a rosy young man in a tuxedo, without a coat or hat.

“Pardon. Should I have telephoned? I half thought you wouldn’t be in.”

Eastman laughed. “Come in, Cavanaugh. You weren’t sure whether you wanted company or not, eh, and you were trying to let chance decide it? That was exactly my state of mind, Let’s accept the verdict.” When they emerged from the narrow hall into his sitting-room, he pointed out a seat by the fire to his guest. He brought a tray of decanters and soda bottles and placed it on his writing table.

Cavanaugh hesitated, standing by the fire. “Sure you weren’t starting for somewhere?”

“Do I look it? No, I was just making up my mind to stick it out alone when you rang. Have one?” he picked up a tall tumbler.

“Yes, thank you. I always do.”

Eastman chuckled. “Lucky boy! So will I. I had a very early dinner. New York is the most arid place on holidays,” he continued as he rattled the ice in the glasses. “When one gets too old to hit the rapids down there, and tired of gobbling food to heathenish dance music, there is absolutely no place where you can get a chop and some milk toast in peace, unless you have strong ties of blood brotherhood on upper Fifth Avenue. But you, why aren’t you starting for somewhere?”

The young man sipped his soda and shook his head as he replied:

“Oh, I couldn’t get a chop, either. I know only flashy people, of course.” He looked up at his host with such a grave and candid expression that Eastman decided there couldn’t be anything very crooked about the fellow. His smooth cheeks were positively cherubic.

“Well, what’s the matter with them? Aren’t they flashing tonight?”

“Only the very new ones seem to flash on New Year’s Eve. The older ones fade away. Maybe they are hunting a chop, too.”

“Well”—Eastman sat down—“holidays do dash one. I was just about to write a letter to a pair of maiden aunts in my old home town, up-state; old coasting hill, snow-covered pines, lights in the church windows. That’s what you’ve saved me from.”

Cavanaugh shook himself. “Oh, I’m sure that wouldn’t have been good for you. Pardon me,” he rose and took a photograph from the bookcase, a handsome man in shooting clothes. “Dudley, isn’t it? Did you know him well?”

“Yes. An old friend. Terrible thing, wasn’t it? I haven’t got over the jolt yet.”

“His suicide? Yes, terrible! Did you know his wife?”

“Slightly. Well enough to admire her very much. She must be terribly broken up. I wonder Dudley didn’t think of that.”

Cavanaugh replaced the photograph carefully, lit a cigarette, and standing before the fire began to smoke. “Would you mind telling me about him? I never met him, but of course, I’d read a lot about him, and I can’t help feeling interested. It was a queer thing.”

Eastman took out his cigar case and leaned back in his deep chair. “In the days when I knew him best he hadn’t any story, like the happy nations. Everything was properly arranged for him before he was born. He came into the world happy, healthy, clever, straight, with the right sort of connections and the right kind of fortune, neither too large nor too small. He helped to make the world an agreeable place to live in until he was twenty-six. Then he married as he should have married. His wife was a Californian, educated abroad. Beautiful. You have seen her picture?”

Cavanaugh nodded. “Oh, many of them.”

“She was interesting, too. Though she was distinctly a person of the world, she had retained something, just enough of the large Western manner. She had the habit of authority, of calling out a special train if she needed it, of using all our ingenious mechanical contrivances lightly and easily, without over-rating them. She and Dudley knew how to live better than most people. Their house was the most charming one I have ever known in New York. You felt freedom there, and a zest of life, and safety—absolute sanctuary—from everything sordid or petty. A whole society like that would justify the creation of man and would make our planet shine with a soft, peculiar radiance among the constellations. You think I’m putting it on thick?”

The young man sighed gently. “Oh, no! One has always felt there must be people like that. I’ve never known any.”

‘They had two children, beautiful ones. After they had been married for eight years, Rosina met this Spaniard. He must have amounted to something. She wasn’t a flighty woman. She came home and told Dudley how matters stood. He persuaded her to stay at home for six months and try to pull up. They were both fair-minded people, and I’m sure as if I were the Almighty, that she did try. But at the end of the time, Rosina went quietly off to Spain, and Dudley went to hunt in the Canadian Rockies. I met his party out there. I didn’t know his wife had left him and talked about her a good deal. I noticed that he never drank anything, and his light used to shine through the log chinks of his room until all hours, even after a hard day’s hunting. When I got back to New York, rumors were creeping about. Dudley did not come back. He bought a ranch in Wyoming, built a big log house and kept splendid dogs and horses. One of his sisters went out to keep house for him, and the children were there when they were not in school. He had a great many visitors, and everyone who came back talked about how well Dudley kept things going.

“He put in two years out there. Then, last month, he had to come back on business. A trust fund had to be settled up, and he was administrator. I saw him at the club; same light, quick step, same gracious handshake. He was getting gray, and there was something softer in his manner; but he had a fine red tan on his face and said he found it delightful to be here in the season when everything is going hard. The Madison Avenue house had been closed since Rosina left it. He went there to get some things his sister wanted. That, of course, was the mistake. He went alone, in the afternoon, and didn’t go out for dinner—found some sherry and tins of biscuits in the sideboard. He shot himself sometime that night. There were pistols in his smoking-room. They found burnt out candles beside him in the morning. The gas and electricity were shut off. I suppose there, in his own house, among his own things, it was too much for him. He left no letters.”

Cavanaugh blinked and brushed the lapel of his coat. “I suppose,” he said slowly, “that every suicide is logical and reasonable, if one knew all the facts.”

Eastman roused himself. “No, I don’t think so. I’ve known too many fellows who went off like that—more than I deserve, I think—and some of them were absolutely inexplicable. I can understand Dudley; but I can’t see why healthy bachelors, with money enough, like ourselves, need such a device. It reminds me of what Dr. Johnson said, that the most discouraging thing about life is the number of fads and hobbies and fake religions it takes to put people through a few years of it.”

“Dr. Johnson? The specialist? Oh, the old fellow!” said Cavanaugh imperturbably. “Yes, that’s interesting. Still, I fancy if one knew the facts—Did you know about Wyatt?”

“I don’t think so.”

“You wouldn’t, probably. He was just a fellow about town who spent money. He wasn’t one of the *forestieri*, though. Had connections here and owned a fine old place over on Staten Island. He

went in for botany, and had been all over, hunting things; rusts, I believe. He had a yacht and used to take a gay crowd down about the South Seas, botanizing. He really did botanize, I believe. I never knew such a spender—only not flashy. He helped a lot of fellows and he was awfully good to girls, the kind who come down here to get a little fun. who don't like to work and still aren't really tough, the kind you see talking hard for their dinner. Nobody knows what becomes of them, or what they get out of it, and there are hundreds of new ones every year. He helped dozens of 'em; it was he who got me curious about the little shop girls. Well, one afternoon when his tea was brought, he took prussic acid instead. He didn't leave any letters, either; people of any taste don't. They wouldn't leave any material reminder if they could help it. His lawyers found that he had just \$314.72 above his debts when he died. He had planned to spend all his money, and then take his tea; he had worked it out carefully."

Eastman reached for his pipe and pushed his chair away from the fire. "That looks like a considered case, but I don't think philosophical suicides like that are common. I think they usually come from stress of feeling and are really, as the newspapers call them, desperate acts; done without a motive. You remember when Anna Karenina was under the wheels, she kept saying, 'Why am I here?' "

Cavanaugh rubbed his upper lip with his pink finger and made an effort to wrinkle his brows. "May I, please?" reaching for the whiskey. "But have you," he asked, blinking as the soda flew at him, "have you ever known yourself, cases that were really inexplicable?"

"A few too many. I was in Washington just before Captain Jack Purden was married and I saw a good deal of him. Popular army man, fine record in the Philippines, married a charming girl with lots of money; mutual devotion. It was the gayest wedding of the winter, and they started for Japan. They stopped in San Francisco for a week and missed their boat because, as the bride wrote back to Washington, they were too happy to move. They took the next boat, were both good sailors, had exceptional weather. After they had been out for two weeks, Jack got up from his deck chair one afternoon, yawned, put down his book, and stood before his wife. 'Stop reading for a moment and look at me.' She laughed and asked him why. 'Because you happen to be good to look at.' He nodded to her, went back to the stern and was never seen again. Must have gone down to the lower deck and slipped overboard, behind the machinery. It was the luncheon hour, not many people about; steamer cutting through a soft green sea. That's one of the most baffling cases I know. His friends raked up his past, and it was as trim as a cottage garden. If he'd so much as dropped an ink spot on his fatigue uniform, they'd have found it. He wasn't emotional or moody; wasn't, indeed, very interesting; simply a good soldier, fond of all the pompous little formalities that make up a military man's life. What do you make of that, my boy?"

Cavanaugh stroked his chin. "It's very puzzling, I admit. Still, if one knew everything—"

"But we do know everything. His friends wanted to find something to help them out, to help the girl out, to help the case of the human creature."

"Oh, I don't mean things that people could unearth," said Cavanaugh uneasily. "But possibly there were things that couldn't be found out."

Eastman shrugged his shoulders. "It's my experience that when there are 'things' as you call them, they're very apt to be found. There is no such thing as a secret. To make any move at all one has to employ human agencies, employ at least one human agent. Even when the pirates killed the men who buried their gold for them, the bones told the story."

Cavanaugh rubbed his hands together and smiled his sunny smile.

“I like that idea. It’s reassuring. If we can have no secrets, it means that we can’t, after all, go so far afield as we might,” he hesitated, “yes, as we might.”

Eastman looked at him sourly. “Cavanaugh, when you’ve practised law in New York for twelve years, you find that people can’t go far in any direction, except—” He thrust his forefinger sharply at the floor. “Even in that direction, few people can do anything out of the ordinary. Our range is limited. Skip a few baths, and we become personally objectionable. The slightest carelessness can rot a man’s integrity or give him ptomaine poisoning. We keep up only the incessant cleansing operations, of mind and body. What we call character, is held together by all sorts of tacks and strings and glue.”

Cavanaugh looked startled. “Come now, it’s not so bad as that, is it? I’ve always thought that a serious man, like you, must know a lot of Launcelots.” When Eastman only laughed, the younger man squirmed about in his chair. He spoke again hastily, as if he were embarrassed. “Your military friend may have had personal experiences, however, that his friends couldn’t possibly get a line on. He may accidentally have come to a place where he saw himself in too unpleasant a light. I believe people can be chilled by a draft from outside, somewhere.”

“Outside?” Eastman echoed. “Ah, you mean the far outside! Ghosts, delusions, eh?”

Cavanaugh winced. “That’s putting it strong. Why not say tips from the outside? Delusions belong to a diseased mind, don’t they? There are some of us who have no minds to speak of who yet have had experiences. I’ve had a little something in that line myself and I don’t look it, do I?”

Eastman looked at the bland countenance turned toward him. “Not exactly. What’s your delusion?”

“It’s not a delusion. It’s a haunt.”

The lawyer chuckled. “Soul of a lost Casino girl?”

“No; an old gentleman. A most unattractive old gentleman, who follows me about.”

“Does he want money?”

Cavanaugh sat up straight. “No. I wish to God he wanted anything—but the pleasure of my society! I’d let him clean me out to be rid of him. He’s a real article. You saw him yourself that night when you came to my rooms to borrow a dictionary, and he went down the fire escape. You saw him down in the court.”

“Well, I saw somebody down in the court, but I’m too cautious to take it for granted that I saw what you saw. Why, anyhow, should I see your haunt? If it was your friend I saw, he impressed me disagreeably. How did you pick him up?”

Cavanaugh looked gloomy. “That was queer, too. Charley Burke and I had motored out to Long Beach, about a year ago, sometime in October, I think. We had supper and stayed until late. When we were coming home, my car broke down. We had a lot of girls along who had to get back for morning rehearsals and things; so I sent them all into town in Charley’s car, and he was to send a man back to tow me home. I was driving myself, and didn’t want to leave my machine. We had not taken a direct road back; so I was stuck in a lonesome, woody place, no houses about. I got chilly and made a fire, and was putting in the time comfortably enough, when this old party steps up. He was in shabby evening clothes and a top hat, and had on his usual white gloves. How he got there, at three o’clock in the morning, miles from any town or railway. I’ll leave it to you to figure out. *He* surely had no car. When I saw him coming up to the fire, I disliked him. He had a silly, apologetic walk. His teeth were chattering, and I asked him to sit down. He got down like a clothes-horse folding up. I offered him a cigarette, and when he took off his gloves I couldn’t help noticing how knotted and spotty his hands were. He was asthmatic, and took his breath with a wheeze. ‘Haven’t you got anything—refreshing in there?’ he asked,

nodding at the car. When I told him I hadn't, he sighed. 'Ah, you young fellows are greedy. You drink it all up. You drink it all up, all up—up!' he kept chewing it over."

Cavanaugh paused and looked embarrassed again. "The thing that was most unpleasant is difficult to explain. The old man sat there by the tire and leered at me with a silly sort of admiration that was—well, more than humiliating. 'Gay boy, gay dog!' he would mutter, and when he grinned he showed his teeth, worn and yellow—shells. I remembered that it was better to talk casually to insane people; so I remarked carelessly that I had been out with a party and got stuck.

" 'Oh yes, I remember,' he said, 'Flora and Lottie and Maybelle and Marcelline, and poor Kate.'

"He had named them correctly; so I began to think I had been hitting the bright waters too hard.

"Things I drank never had seemed to make me woody; but you can never tell when trouble is going to hit you. I pulled my hat down and tried to look as uncommunicative as possible; but he kept croaking on from time to time, like this: 'Poor Katie! Splendid arms, but dope got her. She took up with Eastern religions after she had her hair dyed. Got to going to a Swami's joint, and smoking opium. Temple of the Lotus, it was called, and the police raided it.'

"This was nonsense, of course; the young woman was in the pink of condition. I let him rave, but I decided that if something didn't come out for me pretty soon, I'd foot it across Long Island. There wasn't room enough for the two of us. I got up and took another try at my car. He hopped right after me.

" 'Good car,' he wheezed, 'better than the little Ford.'

"I'd had a Ford before, but so had everybody; that was a safe guess.

" 'Still,' he went on, 'that run in from Huntington Bay in the rain wasn't bad. Arrested for speeding, he—he.'

"It was true I had made such a run, under rather unusual circumstances, and had been arrested. When at last I heard my life-boat snorting up the road, my visitor got up, sighed, and stepped back into the shadow of the trees. I didn't wait to see what became of him, you may believe. That was visitation number one. What do you think of it?"

Cavanaugh looked at his host defiantly. Eastman smiled.

"I think you'd better change your mode of life, Cavanaugh. Had many returns?" he enquired.

"Too many, by far." The young man took a turn about the room and came back to the fire. Standing by the mantel he lit another cigarette before going on with his story:

"The second visitation happened in the street, early in the evening, about eight o'clock. I was held up in a traffic block before the Plaza. My chauffeur was driving. Old Nibbs steps up out of the crowd, opens the door of my car, gets in and sits down beside me. He had on wilted evening clothes, same as before, and there was some sort of heavy scent about him. Such an unpleasant old party! A thorough-going rotter; you knew it at once. This time he wasn't talkative, as he had been when I first saw him. He leaned back in the car as if he owned it, crossed his hands on his stick and looked out at the crowd—sort of hungrily.

"I own I really felt a loathing compassion for him. We got down the avenue slowly. I kept looking out at the mounted police. But what could I do? Have him pulled? I was afraid to. I was awfully afraid of getting him into the papers.

" 'I'm going to the New Astor,' I said at last. 'Can I take you anywhere?'

" 'No, thank you,' says he. 'I get out when you do, I'm due on West Forty-fourth. I'm dining tonight with Marcelline—all that is left of her!'

“He put his hand at his hat brim with a gruesome salute. Such a scandalous, foolish old face as he had! When we pulled up at the Astor, I stuck my hand in my pocket and asked him if he’d like a little loan.

“No, thank you, but”—he leaned over and whispered, ugh!—“but save a little, save a little. Forty years from now—a little—comes in handy. Save a little.”

“His eyes fairly glittered as he made his remark. I jumped out. I’d have jumped into the North River. When he tripped off, I asked my chauffeur if he’d noticed the man who got into the car with me. He said he knew someone was with me, but he hadn’t noticed just when he got in. Want to hear any more?”

Cavanaugh dropped into his chair again. His plump cheeks were a trifle more flushed than usual, but he was perfectly calm. Eastman felt that the young man believed in what he was telling him.

“Of course I do. It’s very interesting. I don’t see quite where you are coming out though.”

Cavanaugh sniffed. “No more do I. I really feel that I’ve been put upon. I haven’t deserved it any more than any other fellow of my kind. Doesn’t impress you disagreeably?”

“Well, rather so. Has anyone else seen your friend?”

“You saw him.”

“We won’t count that. As I said, there’s no certainty that you and I saw the same person in the court that night. Has anyone else had a look in?”

“People sense him rather than see him. He usually crops up when I’m alone or in a crowd on the street. He never approaches me when I’m with people I know, though I’ve seen him hanging about the doors of theatres when I come out with a party; loafing around the stage exit, under a wall; or across the street, in a doorway. To be frank, I’m not anxious to introduce him. The third time, it was I who came upon him. In November my driver, Harry, had a sudden attack of appendicitis. I took him to the Presbyterian Hospital in the car, early in the evening. When I came home, I found the old villain in my rooms. I offered him a drink, and he sat down. It was the first time I had seen him in a steady light, with his hat off.

“His face is lined like a railway map, and as to color—Lord, what a liver! His scalp grows tight to his skull, and his hair is dyed until it’s perfectly dead, like a piece of black cloth.”

Cavanaugh ran his fingers through his own neatly trimmed thatch, and seemed to forget where he was for a moment.

“I had a twin brother, Brian, who died when we were sixteen. I have a photograph of him on my wall, an enlargement from a Kodak of him, doing a high jump, rather good thing, full of action. It seemed to annoy the old gentleman. He kept looking at it and lifting his eyebrows, and finally he got up, tip-toed across the room, and turned the picture to the wall.

“‘Poor Brian. Fine fellow, but died young,’ says he.

“Next morning, there was the picture, still reversed.”

“Did he stay long?” Eastman asked interestedly.

“Half an hour, by the clock.”

“Did he talk?”

“Well, he rambled.”

“What about?”

Cavanaugh rubbed his pale eyebrows before answering.

“About things that an old man ought to want to forget. His conversation is highly objectionable. Of course he knows me like a book; everything I’ve ever done or thought. But when he recalls them, he throws a bad light on them, somehow. Things that weren’t much off

color, look rotten. He doesn't leave one a shred of self-respect, he really doesn't. That's the amount of it." The young man whipped out his handkerchief and wiped his face.

"You mean he really talks about things that none of your friends know?"

"Oh dear, yes! Recalls things that happened in school. Anything disagreeable. Funny things, he always turns Brian's picture to the wall."

"Does he come often?"

"Yes, oftener, now. Of course I don't know how he gets in downstairs. The hall boys never see him. But he has a key to my door. I don't know how he got it, but I can hear him turn it in the lock."

"Why don't you keep your driver with you, or telephone for me to come down?"

"He'd only grin and go down the fire escape as he did before. He's often done it when Harry's come in suddenly. Everybody has to be alone sometimes, you know. Besides, I don't want anybody to see him. He has me there."

"But why not? Why do you feel responsible for him?"

Cavanaugh smiled wearily. "That's rather the point, isn't it? Why do I? But I absolutely do. That identifies him, more than his knowing all about my life and my affairs."

Eastman looked at Cavanaugh thoughtfully. "Well, I should advise you to go in for something altogether different and new, and go in for it hard; business, engineering, metallurgy, something this old fellow wouldn't be interested in. See if you can make him remember logarithms."

Cavanaugh sighed. "No, he has me there, too. People never really change; they go on being themselves. But I would never make much trouble. Why can't they let me alone, damn it! I'd never hurt anybody, except perhaps—"

"Except your old gentleman, eh?" Eastman laughed. "Seriously, Cavanaugh, if you want to shake him, I think a year on a ranch would do it. He would never be coaxed far from his favorite haunts. He would dread Montana."

Cavanaugh pursed up his lips. "So do I!"

"Oh, you think you do. Try it, and you'll find out. A gun and a horse beats all this sort of thing. Besides losing your haunt, you'd be putting ten years in the bank for yourself. I know a good ranch where they take people, if you want to try it."

"Thank you. I'll consider. Do you think I'm batty?"

"No, but I think you've been doing one sort of thing too long. You need big horizons. Get out of this."

Cavanaugh smiled meekly. He rose lazily and yawned behind his hand. "It's late, and I've taken your whole evening." He strolled over to the window and looked out. "Queer place, New York; rough on the little fellows. Don't you feel sorry for them, the girls especially? I do. What a fight they put up for a little fun! Why, even that old goat is sorry for them, the only decent thing he kept."

Eastman followed him to the door and stood in the hall, while Cavanaugh waited for the elevator. When the car came up Cavanaugh extended his pink, warm hand. "Good night."

The cage sank and his rosy countenance disappeared, his round-eyed smile being the last thing to go.

Weeks passed before Eastman saw Cavanaugh again. One morning, just as he was starting for Washington to argue a case before the Supreme Court, Cavanaugh telephoned him at his office to ask him about the Montana ranch he had recommended; said he meant to take his advice and go out there for the spring and summer.

When Eastman got back from Washington, he saw dusty trunks, just up from the trunk room, before Cavanaugh's door. Next morning, when he stopped to see what the young man was about, he found Cavanaugh in his shirt sleeves, packing.

"I'm really going; off tomorrow night. You didn't think it of me, did you?" he asked gaily.

"Oh, I've always had hopes of you!" Eastman declared. "But you are in a hurry, it seems to me."

"Yes, I am in a hurry." Cavanaugh shot a pair of leggings into one of the open trunks. "I telegraphed your ranch people, used your name, and they said it would be all right. By the way, some of my crowd are giving a little dinner for me at Rector's tonight. Couldn't you be persuaded, as it's a farewell occasion?" Cavanaugh looked at him hopefully.

Eastman laughed and shook his head. "Sorry, Cavanaugh, but that's too gay a world for me. I've got too much work lined up before me. I wish I had time to stop and look at your guns, though. You seem to know something about guns. You've more than you'll need, but nobody can have too many good ones." He put down one of the revolvers regretfully. "I'll drop in to see you in the morning, if you're up."

"I shall be up, all right. I've warned my crowd that I'll cut away before midnight."

"You won't, though," Eastman called back over his shoulder as he hurried downstairs.

The next morning, while Eastman was dressing, Rollins came in greatly excited.

"I'm a little late, sir. I was stopped by Harry, Mr. Cavanaugh's driver. Mr. Cavanaugh shot himself last night, sir."

Eastman dropped his vest and sat down on his shoe-box. "You're drunk, Rollins," he shouted. "He's going away today!"

"Yes, sir. Harry found him this morning. Ah, he's quite dead, sir. Harry's telephoned for the coroner. Harry didn't know what to do with the ticket."

Eastman pulled on his coat and ran down the stairway. Cavanaugh's trunks were strapped and piled before the door Harry was walking up and down the hall with a long green railroad ticket in his hand and a look of complete stupidity on his face.

"What shall I do about the ticket, Mr. Eastman?" he whispered. "And what about his trunks? He had me tell the transfer people to come early. They may be here any minute. Yes, sir. I brought him home in the car last night, before twelve, as cheerful as could be."

"Be quiet, Harry. Where is he?"

"In his bed, sir."

Eastman went into Cavanaugh's sleeping-room. When he came back to the sitting-room, he looked over the writing table; railway folders, time-tables, receipted bills, nothing else. He looked up for the photograph of Cavanaugh's twin brother. There it was, turned to the wall. Eastman took it down and looked at it; a boy in track clothes, half lying in the air, going over the string shoulders first, above the heads of a crowd of lads who were running and cheering. The face was somewhat blurred by the motion and the bright sunlight. Eastman put the picture back, as he found it. Had Cavanaugh entertained his visitor last night, and had the old man been more convincing than usual? "Well, at any rate, he's seen to it that the old man can't establish identity. What a soft lot they are, fellows like poor Cavanaugh!" Eastman thought of his office as a delightful place.