

We got up, and she explained that we were going to find the host—I had never met him, she said, and it was making me uneasy. The undergraduate nodded in a cynical, melancholy way.

The bar, where we glanced first, was crowded but Gatsby was not there. She couldn't find him from the top of the steps, and he wasn't on the veranda. On a chance we tried an important-looking door, and walked into a high Gothic library, panelled with carved English oak, and probably transported complete from some ruin overseas.

A stout, middle-aged man with enormous owl-eyed spectacles was sitting somewhat drunk on the edge of a great table, staring with unsteady concentration at the shelves of books. As we entered he wheeled excitedly around and examined Jordan from head to foot.

'What do you think?' he demanded impetuously.

'About what?'

He waved his hand toward the book-shelves.

'About that. As a matter of fact you needn't bother to ascertain. I ascertained. They're real.'

'The books?'

He nodded.

'Absolutely real—have pages and everything. I thought they'd be a nice durable cardboard. Matter of fact, they're absolutely real. Pages and—Here! Lemme show you.'

Taking our skepticism for granted, he rushed to the bookcases and returned with Volume One of the 'Stoddard Lectures.'

'See!' he cried triumphantly. 'It's a bona fide piece of printed matter. It fooled me. This fella's a regular Belasco. It's a triumph. What thoroughness! What realism! Knew when to stop too—didn't cut the pages. But what do you want? What do you expect?'

He snatched the book from me and replaced it hastily on its shelf muttering that if one brick was removed the whole library was liable to collapse.

‘Who brought you?’ he demanded. ‘Or did you just come? I was brought. Most people were brought.’

Jordan looked at him alertly, cheerfully without answering.

‘I was brought by a woman named Roosevelt,’ he continued. ‘Mrs. Claud Roosevelt. Do you know her? I met her somewhere last night. I’ve been drunk for about a week now, and I thought it might sober me up to sit in a library.’ ‘Has it?’

‘A little bit, I think. I can’t tell yet. I’ve only been here an hour. Did I tell you about the books? They’re real. They’re— —’

‘You told us.’

We shook hands with him gravely and went back outdoors.