

## ONE MORNING IN JUNE

**B**Y half past ten, a vaporish heat had gathered on the road above the Mediterranean, and the two picnickers, Barbara Ainslie and Mike Cahill, walked as slowly as they could. Scuffing their shoes, they held themselves deliberately apart. It was the first time they had been alone. Barbara's aunt, with whom she was staying in Menton, had begun speaking to Mike on the beach—she thought him a nice young boy—and it was she who had planned the picnic, packing them off for what she termed a good romp, quite unaware that her words had paralyzed at once the tremulous movement of friendship between them.

So far, they had scarcely spoken at all, passing in silence—in the autobus—between the shining arc of the beach and the vacant hotels that faced it. The hotels, white and pillared like Grecian ruins, were named for Albert and Victoria and the Empire. Shelled from the sea during the war, they exposed, to the rain and the road, cube-shaped rooms and depressing papered walls that had held the sleep of a thousand English spinsters when the pound was still a thing of moment. At sixteen, Barbara was neutral to decay but far too shy in the presence of Mike to stare at anything that so much as suggested a bedroom. She had looked instead at the lunch basket on her lap, at her bitten nails, at the shadow of her canvas hat, as if they held the seed of conversation. When they were delivered from the bus at last and had watched it reeling, in its own white dust, on to Monte Carlo, they turned together and climbed the scrambling path to Cap Martin.

"What will we talk about?" Barbara had asked her aunt, earlier that morning. "What will I say?"

Barbara's aunt could see no problem here, and she was as startled as if a puppy tumbling in a cushioned box had posed the same question.

"Why, what do young people have to say anywhere?" she had asked. "Tell him about your school, if you like, or your winter in Paris." Having provided that winter, she did not see why its value should be diminished in June, or, indeed, why it should not remain a conversational jewel for the rest of Barbara's life.

"I suppose so," Barbara had said, determined not to mention it at all. She was in France not as a coming-out present or because she had not smoked until she was eighteen but ignominiously, because she had failed her end-of-term examinations for the second year running.

She had been enrolled in one of the best day schools in New York, a fact that she was frequently reminded of and that somehow doubled her imperfection. Her mother had consulted a number of people—an analyst she met at a party, two intimate women friends, the doctor who had delivered Barbara but had noticed nothing unusual about her at the time—and finally, when the subject was beginning to bore her, she had dispatched Barbara to Paris, to the distressed but dutiful sister of Barbara's late father. Barbara was conscious, every moment of the day, that she was to get something from her year in France, and return to America brilliant, poised, and educated. Accordingly, she visited all the museums and copied on slips of paper the legends of monuments. Her diary held glimpses of flint tools, angular modern tapestries, cave drawings, the Gioconda ("quite small"), and the Venus de Milo ("quite big"); of a monument "that came by ship from Africa and was erected to the cheers of a throng;" and of a hotel where Napoleon had stayed as a young man, "but which we did not really see because it had been pulled down." These mementos of Paris she buttressed with snapshots in which ghostly buildings floated on the surface of the Seine, and the steps of the Sacré-Coeur, transparent, encumbered the grass at Versailles. The snapshots she mounted and shielded with tissue in an album called "Souvenirs de France."

She was proud of the year, and of the fact that she had shivered in unheated picture galleries and not spent her time drinking milk shakes in the American Embassy restaurant; still, she felt her year no match for Mike's. When her aunt, testing, asked him where he lived in Paris, he had replied, "Oh, St. Germain," and Barbara had been ill with envy, unaware that he stayed at a recommended *pension*, the owner of which sent fortnightly reports to his mother.

**G**LANCING now at Mike shyly, as they walked along the upper road, Barbara caught from the corner of her eye the movement of her own earrings, Moroccan hoops she had bought, in the merciful absence of her aunt, from an Arab on the beach. With his sweaty fez and his impertinent speech, the Arab had seemed to Barbara the breathing incarnation of oil, greed, and problems. She had read a great deal in the winter, and she could have told anyone that Africa seethed, Asia teemed, and that

something must be done at once about the Germans, the Russians, the Chinese, and the Spanish or Heaven only knew what would happen. She had also been cautioned that these difficulties were the heritage of youth, and this she acknowledged, picturing the youth as athletic, open-shirted, vaguely foreign in appearance, and marching in columns of eight.

"Straight over there is the Middle East," she said to Mike, placing him without question in those purposeful ranks. She pointed in the direction of Corsica, and went on, "All the Arabs! What are we going to do about the Arabs?"

Mike shrugged.

"And the Indians," Barbara said. "There are too many of them for the food in the world. And the Russians. What are we going to do about the Russians?"

"I don't know," Mike said. "Actually, I never think about it."

"I suppose you don't," she said. "You have your work to do."

He glanced at her sharply, but there was no need to look twice. He had already observed her to be without guile, a fact that confused and upset him. Her good manners, as well, made him self-conscious. Once, when she mentioned her school, he had not mentioned his own New York high school and then, annoyed with himself, had introduced it with belligerence. He might have saved himself the trouble; she had never heard of it and did not know that it was a public school. He blamed his uneasiness, unfairly, on the fact that she had money and he had not. It had not occurred to him, inexperienced as he was, placing her with the thinnest of clues, that she might not be rich.

Mike was older than Barbara, although not by a great deal. He had come to France because the words "art" and "Paris" were unbreakably joined in his family's imagination, the legend of Trilby's Bohemia persisting long after the truth of it had died. When his high-school art teacher, a young woman whose mobiles had been praised, pronounced that his was a talent not to be buried under the study of medicine or law, his family had decided that a year in Paris would show whether or not his natural bent was toward painting. It was rather like exposing someone to a case of measles and watching for spots to break out.

In Paris, Mike had spent the first three weeks standing in the wrong queue at the Beaux-Arts, and when no one seemed able to direct him to the



right one, he had given up the Beaux-Arts entirely and joined a class instructed by an English painter called Chitterley, whose poster advertisement he had seen in a café. It was Mr. Chitterley's custom to turn his young charges loose on the city and then, once a week or so, comment on their work in a borrowed studio on the Quai d'Anjou. Mike painted with sober patience the bridges of the Seine, the rain-soaked lawns of the Tuileries, and a head-on view of Notre Dame. His paintings were large (Mr. Chitterley was nearsighted), askew (as he had been taught in the public schools of New York), and empty of people (he had never been taught to draw, and it was not his nature to take chances).

"Very interesting," said Mr. Chitterley of Mike's work. Squinting a little, he would add, "Ah! I see what you were trying to do here!"

"You do?" Mike wished he would be more specific, for he sometimes recognized that his pictures were flat, empty, and the color of cement. At first, he had blamed the season, for the Paris winter had been sunless; later on, he saw that its gray contained every shade in a beam of light, but this effect he was unable to reproduce. Unnerved by the pressure of time, he watched his work all winter, searching for the clue that would set him on a course. Prodded in the direction of art, he now believed in it, enjoying, above all, the solitude, the sense of separateness, the assembling of parts into something reasonable. He might have been equally happy at a quiet table, gathering into something ticking and ordered the scattered wheels of a watch, but this had not been suggested, and he had most certainly never given it a thought. At last, when the season had rained itself to an end (and his family innocently were prepared to have him exhibit his winter's harvest in some garret of the Left Bank and send home the critics' clippings), he approached Mr. Chitterley and asked what he ought to do next.

"Why, go to the country," said Mr. Chitterley, who was packing for a holiday with the owner of the Quai d'Anjou studio. "Go south. Don't stop in a hotel but live on the land, in a tent, and paint, paint, paint, paint!"

"I can't afford it," Mike said. "I mean I can't afford to buy the tent and stuff. But I can stay over here until August, if you think there's any point. I mean is it wasting time for me to paint, paint, paint?"

Mr. Chitterley shot him an offended

look and then a scornful one, which said, How like an American! The only measuring rods, time and money. Aloud, he suggested Menton. He had stayed there as a child, and he remembered it as a paradise of lemon ice and sunshine. Mike, for want of a better thought, or even a contrastive one, took the train there a day later.

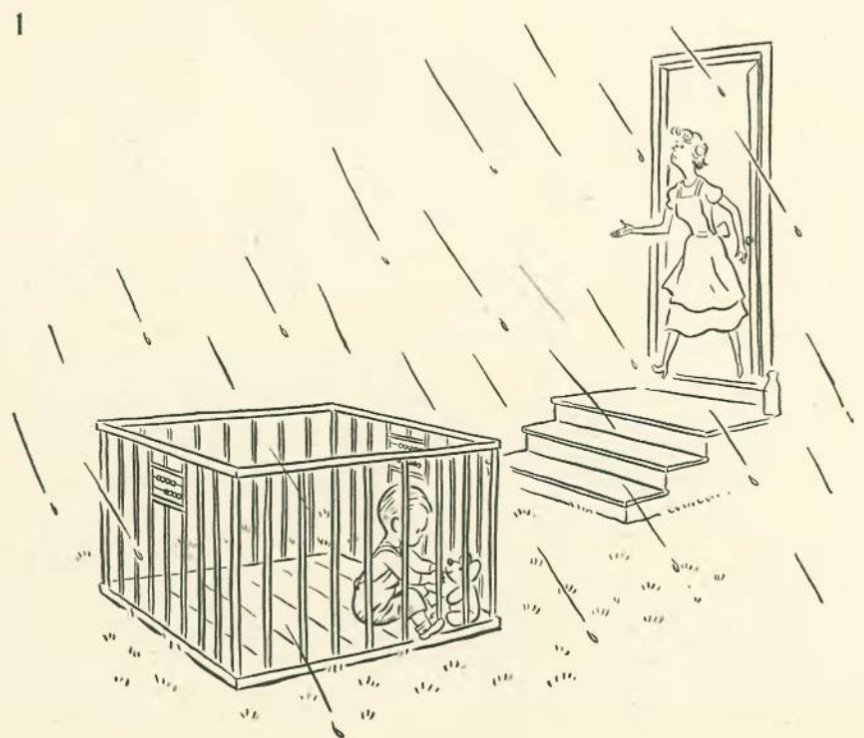
Menton was considerably less than paradise. Shelled, battered, and shabby, it was a town gone to seed, in which old English ladies, propelling themselves with difficulty along the Promenade George V, nodded warmly to each other (they had become comrades during the hard years of war, when they were interned together in the best hotels, farther up the coast) and ignored the new influx of their countrymen—embarrassed members of the lower middle classes, who refused to undress in the face of heat and nakedness and who huddled miserably on the beach in hot city clothing, knotted handkerchiefs on their heads to shield them from the sun.

"Not the sort of English one likes," Barbara's aunt had said sadly to Mike, who was painting beside her on the beach. "If you had seen Menton before the war! I had a little villa, up behind that hotel. It was shelled by the Americans. Not that it wasn't necessary," she added, recalling her origins. "Still—And they built a fortification not far away. I went up to look at it. It was full of rusted wire, and nothing in it but a dead cat."

"The French built it," Barbara said. "The pension man told me."

"It doesn't matter, dear," her aunt said. "Before the war, and even when it started, there was nothing there at all. It was so different." She dropped her knitting and looked about, as if just the three of them were fit to remember what Menton had been. It was the young people's first bond of sympathy, and Barbara tried not to giggle; before the war was a time she didn't remember at all. "In those days, you knew where you were at," her aunt said, summing up the thirties. She picked up her knitting, and Mike went on with his painting of sea, sky, and tilted sailboat. Away from Mr. Chitterley and the teacher who had excelled in mobiles, he found that he worked with the speed and method of Barbara's aunt producing a pair of Argyle socks. Menton, for all its drawbacks, was considerably easier to paint than Paris, and he rendered with fidelity the blue of the sea, the pink and white of the crumbling villas, and the red of the geraniums. One of his recent pictures, flushed and accurate as a Technicolor still, he had given to Barbara, who had written a touched and eager letter of thanks, and then had torn the letter up.

MIKE had brought his painting things along on the picnic, for, as Barbara's aunt had observed with approbation, he didn't waste an hour of his day. Barbara carried the picnic basket, which had been packed by the cook at Pension Bit o' Heather and contained twice as much bread as one would want. Around her shoulders was an unnecessary sweater that she



had snatched up in a moment of compulsive modesty just before leaving her room. She carried her camera, slung on a strap, and she felt that she and Mike formed, together, a picture of art, pleasure, and industry which, unhappily, there was no one to remark but a fat man taking his dog for a run; the man gave them scarcely a glance.

Rounding a bend between dwarfed ornamental orange trees, they saw the big hotel Barbara's aunt had told them about. From its open windows came the hum of vacuum cleaners and the sound of a hiccuping tango streaked with static. The gardens spread out before them, with marked and orderly paths and beds of brilliant flowers. Barbara's aunt had assured them that this place was ideal for a picnic lunch, and that no one would disturb them. There was, on Cap Martin, a public picnic ground, which Barbara was not permitted to visit. "You wouldn't like it," her aunt had explained. "It is nothing but tents, and diapers, and hairy people in shorts. Whenever possible in France, one prefers private property." Still, the two were unconvinced, and after staring at the gardens and then at each other they turned and walked in the other direction, to a clearing around a small monument overlooking the bay.

They sat down on the grass in the shade and Mike unpacked his paints. Barbara watched him, working over in her mind phrases that, properly used, would give them a subject in common; none came, and she pulled grass and played with her wristwatch. "We're leaving tomorrow," she said at last.

"I know." After some peering and indecision he had decided to face the hotel gardens instead of the sea. "I may not stay much longer, either. I don't know."

Barbara, bound to her aunt's unyielding cycle of city, sea, and mountains, marvelled at his freedom. She fancied him stepping out of his hotel one morning and suddenly asking himself, "Shall I go back to Paris now, or another day?" and taking off at once for Paris, or Rome, or Lisbon, or, having decided he had had enough of this, his parents' house.

"My father thinks I should go to Venice and Florence, now that I'm south." He spoke with neither enthusiasm nor resentment; had his father ordered him home, he would have set off with the same equable temper.

"Then you might go to Italy soon," Barbara said. He nodded. "I'm going home in September," she said. "My mother's coming for the summer, and we're going back together. I guess I'll go back to school. I have to do something—learn something, I mean."

"What for?"  
"Well, it's just that I have to do something. It's different for you," she said, helplessly. "You have something to do. You've got—" She blushed, and went on, with resolution, "You've got this art to do."

Startled by her reminder of his vocation, he dropped his arm. He knew he would have to decide very soon whether to go on with painting or begin something else. If someone who knows would come along and tell me

what to do this minute, he thought, I would do whatever he said.

Barbara, believing him in contact with some life of the spirit from which she was excluded, looked at him with admiration; and when he did not move for a moment longer, she focussed her camera and took his picture, so that her album called "Souvenirs de France" would include this image of Mike looking rapt and destined, his eyes secretively shadowed, high above the sea.

"It's different for me," Barbara said, forgetting once more to wind her film. "I can't do anything. There's nothing I'm good at. I'm really dumb in school." She laid her camera in the shade. "Really dumb," she repeated, shaking her head at the thought. Confronted with ruled examination paper, the electric clock purring on the wall, she was lost—sometimes she was sick and had to leave the room; sometimes she just wrote nonsense. At school, they had tested her for aptitudes and found only that she liked to cook and had played with dolls until it was a scandal; her mother had had to give the dolls away. Anybody could cook and grow up to be a parent, the brisk, sallow student psychologist from N.Y.U. who had tested her implied, and he had then written something terrible—Barbara could only imagine the summing up of her inadequacies—that had been shown to all her teachers and to her mother.

"You should worry," Mike said. "You'll probably get married sometime, anyway, so what does it matter what you learn?"

The effect of this was to strike her into silence.

She drew her knees up and examined her dusty sandals; she pulled at her skirt so that it covered her legs, and drew her sweater close. Does he mean *to him*, she wondered. It had occurred to her many times in this lonely winter that only marriage would save her from disgrace, from growing up with no skills and no profession. Her own mother did nothing all day, but she was excused by having once been married. It was the image of her aunt that Barbara found distressing—her aunt filling her day with scurrying errands, writing letters of complaint (Bus conductors were ruder than before the war. Why did young girls shrink from domestic service? The streets of Paris were increasingly dirtier) to the "Letters" column of the *Continental Daily Mail*. But who would marry me, Barbara had thought. From her reading she knew that she would never meet men or be of interest to them until she could, suddenly and brilliantly, perform on the violin, become a member



of Macy's Junior Executive Squad, or, at the very least, take shorthand at a hundred and twenty words a minute.

She peered up at Mike now, but he was looking only at his canvas, daubing in another patch of perfectly red geraniums. "For a while, they thought I could act," she said, offering him this semiprecious treasure. "I had a radio audition last year, when I was still fifteen. Really," she said quickly, as if he were about to round on her with complete disbelief. "My speech-class teacher was nice. When my mother came to school to see why I wasn't doing so well, she met all my teachers. This teacher, Mr. Peppner, told her— something. He's the only man teacher in the whole school." She frowned, wondering once again what Mr. Peppner in his polished dark-blue suit had found to say to Mrs. Ainslie; probably she, moist-eyed and smelling expensive, had been so warm, so interested, that Mr. Peppner had had no idea he was being treated like a meritorious cook and had said something extravagant. A few days later, Barbara's mother had asked to dinner a bald young man in spectacles, who had stared hard at Barbara and said, gracefully, that her coloring was much too delicate for television but that he would make an appointment for her with someone else.

"It's not that my mother wanted me to work, or anything," Barbara explained to Mike, "but a friend of hers said it would give me poise and confidence. So I went to be tested. I had to read lines in a play. There was someone else being tested, a man, and then there was a girl, a real actress. She was only helping. My name in the play was Gillian. It was called 'The Faltering Years.'"

Mike had never heard of it.

"Well, neither did I, but they all seemed to know it," Barbara said. "I don't think it was one of the great plays of our time, or anything like that. Of our time," she repeated thoughtfully, having frequently read this phrase on the jackets of books. "Anyway, I had to be this Mayfair debutante. I was the girl friend of this man, but I was leaving him."

"For a rich lord?" Mike said, smiling.

"No," she said, seriously. "He was the lord, only poor. I was leaving him for a rich industrialist. I had to say, 'Peter, won't you try to understand?' Then he said something. I forget what. Then I had to say, 'It isn't you, Peter, and it isn't me. It's just.' The line ended that way, but like a question. That was my main part, or most of it. Then I went away, but I was sorry. They

## JOURNEY BY TRAIN

Stretched across counties, countries, the train  
Rushes faster than memory through the rain.  
The rise of each hill is a musical phrase.  
Listen to the rhythm of space, how it lies,  
How it rolls, how it reaches, what relays  
Of wood, meadow where the red cows graze  
Come back again and again to closed eyes—  
That garden, that pink farm, that village steeple,  
And here and there the always solitary people  
Who stand arrested when express trains pass,  
That stillness of an orchard in deep grass.

Yet landscapes flow like this toward a place,  
A point in time, and memory's own face.  
So when the clamor stops, we really climb  
Down from the earth itself, closing the curve of time,  
Meeting those we have left, showing those we meet  
Our whole life, like a ribbon unrolled at their feet.

—MAY SARTON

skipped all that. Then the man being tested had this big scene with the actress. She was the nurse to his sick mother, who wins his heart. I forget what *they* said."

"It sounds to me like she had the best part," said Mike.

"She was around thirty," Barbara said. "I think she was the director's girl friend. He took her to lunch afterwards. I saw them going out. Anyway, at the end I had to say to her, 'You love Peter very much, don't you?' And she had to say, 'Terribly.' Just the way she said that, the director told me, showed she was an actress. I guess he meant I wasn't. Anyway, they said I'd hear from them, but I never did."

"It's the craziest audition I ever heard of," Mike said. He stopped working and turned to look at her. "You a Mayfair debutante, for God's sake. It wasn't a fair audition."

She looked up at him, troubled. "But they must know what they're doing, don't you think?" At this reminder of knowledge and authority, Mike agreed that they probably did. "Are you hungry?" she asked. She was tired of the conversation, of exposing her failures.

The sun was nearly overhead, and they moved under a parasol pine. "There's nothing to drink," Barbara said apologetically, "but she put in some oranges."

They ate their lunch in silence, like tired Alpinists resting on a ledge. Barbara screwed her eyes tight and tried to read the lettering on the monument; it was too hot to walk across the grass, out of their round island of shade. "It's

to some queen," she said at last, and read out: "*Elizabeth, impératrice d'Autriche et reine de la Hongrie.*" Well, I never heard of her, did you? Maybe she stayed at this hotel." Mike seemed to be falling asleep. "About Hungary, you know," she said, speaking rapidly. "One time, I went to a funny revue in Paris with my aunt. It was supposed to be in the war, and this lady was going to entertain the Russian Ambassador. She wanted to dress up her little dog in the Russian costume, in his honor, but she had only a Hungarian one. So she called all the embassies and said, 'Which side of the war is Hungary on?' and nobody knew. So then she finally called the Russian Ambassador and she said, 'I want to dress

my little dog in your honor but I have only a Hungarian costume. Do you know which side the Hungarians are on?' And the Ambassador said, 'Yes, I do know, but I can't tell you until I've talked to Moscow.'" Barbara looked anxiously at Mike. "Do you think that's funny?"

"Sure."

Neither of them had laughed.

"Do you remember the war?" he asked.

"A little." She got up as if she were suddenly uncomfortable, and walked to the edge of the grass, where the Cap fell away sharply to the sea.

"I remember quite a lot," said Mike. "My father was in Denver the whole time—I don't know why. We stayed home because they couldn't find us a place to live there. When he came home for leaves, we—my brother and I—wouldn't mind him, we were so used



to our mother. When he'd tell us to do something, we'd ask her if it was all right." He smiled, remembering. "Was yours away?"

"Well, mine was killed," she said diffidently, as if by telling him this she made an unfair claim on his attention. "I was only five when he went away, so I don't remember much. He was killed later, when I was seven. It was right before my birthday, so I couldn't have a party." She presented, like griefs of equal value, these two facts. "People are always asking me—friends of my mother, I mean—do I remember him and what a wonderful sense of humor he had and all that. When I say no, I don't remember, they look at me and say—" Her voice went up to an incredulous screech: "But it can't be that long ago!"

"Well, it is," Mike said, as if he were settling a quarrel. He stood up and moved beside her. Together, they looked down to the curving beach, where the sea broke lightly against the warm rocks, and the edge of the crumbling continent they had never seen whole. From above, they could see that beside each of the tumbled hotels a locked garden, secure against God knew what marauders, had gone wild; they could distinguish the film of weeds that brushed the top of the wall, the climbing roses that choked the palms. Above, out of their vision, was the fortification that had offended Barbara's aunt, and down on the beach was the aunt herself, a dot with a sunshade, knitting forever.

Say we might get married later, Barbara willed, closing her eyes against the quiet sea and the moldering life beside it. But Mike said nothing, thinking only of how dull a town Menton was, and wondering if it had been worth two weeks. He had been taught that time must be reckoned in value—and fiscal value, at that. At home, he would be required to account both for his allowance and for his days and weeks. "Did you get anything out of Menton?" his father would ask. "Was it worth it?"

"Oh, yes," he might tell them. "I worked a lot, and I met a rich girl."

His parents would be pleased. Not that they were vulgar or mercenary, but they considered it expedient for young artists to meet the well-born; they would accept, Mike was certain, the fact of his friendship with Barbara as a useful acquirement, justifying a fortnight of lounging about in the sun. When he thought of Barbara as a patroness, commissioning him, perhaps, for a portrait, he wanted to laugh: yet the seed of the thought—that the rich were of utility—remained, and to rid himself of it he



*"Enrich the soil with humus, which can be obtained from any nearby bog . . ."*

asked her sharply if she had brought her bathing suit.

Stricken, looking about as if it might be lying on the grass, she said, "I didn't think— But we can go home and get it."

THEY gathered up their scattered belongings and walked back the way they had come. Barbara, in her misery, further chastened herself by holding a geranium leaf on her nose—she had visions of peeling and blisters—and she trotted beside Mike in silence.

"Do you write letters?" he said at last, for he had remembered that they both lived in New York, and he felt that if he could maintain the tenuous human claim of correspondence, possibly his acquaintance with Barbara might turn out

to be of value; he could not have said how or in terms of what. And although he laughed at his parents, he was reluctant to loosen his hold on something that might justify him in their sight until he had at least sorted out his thoughts.

She stood stock-still in the path, the foolish green leaf on her nose, and said solemnly, "I will write to you every day as long as I live."

He glanced at her with the beginning of alarm, but he was spared from his thoughts by the sight of the autobus on the highway below. Clapping hands, they ran slipping and falling down the steep embankment, and arrived flushed, bewildered, exhausted, as if their romp had been youthful enough to satisfy even Barbara's aunt. —MAVIS GALLANT