

**Бестселлер на все времена**

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**Любимые повести  
на английском  
Best Short  
Novels**



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Чтение оригинальных произведений — простой и действенный способ погрузиться в языковую среду и совершенствоваться в иностранном языке. Серия «Бестселлер на все времена» — это возможность улучшить свой английский, читая лучшие произведения англоязычных авторов, любимые миллионами читателей. Для лучшего понимания текста в книгу включены краткий словарь и комментарии, поясняющие языковые и лингвострановедческие вопросы, исторические и культурные реалии описываемой эпохи.

В этой книге собраны блистательные повести выдающихся мастеров англоязычной прозы — Оскара Уайльда, Фрэнсиса Скотта Фицджеральда, Вашингтона Ирвинга и Джона Голсуорси. Они не похожи одна на другую: это загадочная история о Сонной лощине и мистическое происшествие в Кентервильском имении, фантастический сюжет с огромным алмазом и вдохновенный гимн жизни, любви и красоте. Но все они увлекут читателя оригинальным сюжетом и помогут улучшить свой английский.

Книга предназначена для тех, кто изучает английский язык на продолжающем или продвинутом уровне и стремится к его совершенствованию.

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# BEST SHORT NOVELS

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*Francis Scott Fitzgerald*

# THE DIAMOND AS BIG AS THE RITZ

## I

John T. Unger came from a family that had been well known in Hades<sup>1</sup> — a small town on the Mississippi River<sup>2</sup> — for several generations.

John's father had held the amateur golf championship through many a heated contest; Mrs. Unger was known 'from hot-box to hot-bed,' as the local phrase went, for her political addresses; and young John T. Unger, who had just turned sixteen, had danced all the latest dances from New York before he put on long trousers. And now, for a certain time, he was to be away from home. That respect for a New

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<sup>1</sup> Hades — Аид, в древнегреческой мифологии — подземное царство мертвых.

<sup>2</sup> The Mississippi River — крупнейшая река в Северной Америке; Миссисипи вместе с притоком Миссури является самой длинной рекой в мире.

England<sup>1</sup> education which is the bane of all provincial places, which drains them yearly of their most promising young men, had seized upon his parents. Nothing would suit them but that he should go to St. Midas<sup>2</sup> School near Boston<sup>3</sup> — Hades was too small to hold their darling and gifted son.

Now in Hades — as you know if you ever have been there — the names of the more fashionable preparatory schools and colleges mean very little. The inhabitants have been so long out of the world that, though they make a show of keeping up to date in dress and manners and literature, they depend to a great extent on hearsay, and a function that in Hades would be considered elaborate would doubtless be hailed by a Chicago<sup>4</sup> — beef-princess as ‘perhaps a little tacky.’

John T. Unger was on the eve of departure. Mrs. Unger, with maternal fatuity, packed his trunks full of linen suits and electric fans, and Mr. Unger presented his son with an asbestos pocket-book stuffed with money.

‘Remember, you are always welcome here,’ he said. ‘You can be sure, boy, that we’ll keep the home fires burning.’

‘I know,’ answered John huskily.

‘Don’t forget who you are and where you come from,’ continued his father proudly, ‘and you can

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<sup>1</sup> New England — Новая Англия, регион на северо-востоке США, включающий в себя шесть штатов; назван так капитаном Смитом в 1614 г.

<sup>2</sup> Midas — Мидас, в греко-римской мифологии — царь Фригии, известный своей глупостью и жадностью.

<sup>3</sup> Boston — Бостон, город в США на северо-восточном побережье Атлантики в заливе Массачусетс.

<sup>4</sup> Chicago — Чикаго, крупный город на северо-западе штата Иллинойс.

do nothing to harm you. You are an Unger — from Hades.’

So the old man and the young shook hands and John walked away with tears streaming from his eyes. Ten minutes later he had passed outside the city limits, and he stopped to glance back for the last time. Over the gates the old-fashioned Victorian<sup>1</sup> motto seemed strangely attractive to him. His father had tried time and time again to have it changed to something with a little more push and verve about it, such as ‘Hades — Your Opportunity,’ or else a plain ‘Welcome’ sign set over a hearty handshake pricked out in electric lights. The old motto was a little depressing, Mr. Unger had thought — but now....

So John took his look and then set his face resolutely toward his destination. And, as he turned away, the lights of Hades against the sky seemed full of a warm and passionate beauty.

St. Midas’ School is half an hour from Boston in a Rolls-Pierce motorcar. The actual distance will never be known, for no one, except John T. Unger, had ever arrived there save in a Rolls-Pierce and probably no one ever will again. St. Midas’ is the most expensive and the most exclusive boys’ preparatory school<sup>2</sup> in the world.

John’s first two years there passed pleasantly. The fathers of all the boys were money-kings and John spent his summers visiting at fashionable resorts. While he was very fond of all the boys he visited, their

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<sup>1</sup> Victorian — викторианский, относящийся к стилю в искусстве, архитектуре, литературе времен королевы Виктории (1837–1901).

<sup>2</sup> Preparatory school — в США — частная школа, в которой учеников готовят к поступлению в колледж.

fathers struck him as being much of a piece, and in his boyish way he often wondered at their exceeding sameness. When he told them where his home was they would ask jovially, 'Pretty hot down there?' and John would muster a faint smile and answer, 'It certainly is.' His response would have been heartier had they not all made this joke — at best varying it with, 'Is it hot enough for you down there?' which he hated just as much.

In the middle of his second year at school, a quiet, handsome boy named Percy Washington had been put in John's form. The newcomer was pleasant in his manner and exceedingly well dressed even for St. Midas', but for some reason he kept aloof from the other boys. The only person with whom he was intimate was John T. Unger, but even to John he was entirely uncommunicative concerning his home or his family. That he was wealthy went without saying, but beyond a few such deductions John knew little of his friend, so it promised rich confectionery for his curiosity when Percy invited him to spend the summer at his home 'in the West.' He accepted, without hesitation.

It was only when they were in the train that Percy became, for the first time, rather communicative. One day while they were eating lunch in the dining-car and discussing the imperfect characters of several of the boys at school, Percy suddenly changed his tone and made an abrupt remark.

'My father,' he said, 'is by far the richest man in the world.'

'Oh,' said John, politely. He could think of no answer to make to this confidence. He considered 'That's very nice,' but it sounded hollow and was on the point of saying, 'Really?' but refrained since it would seem

to question Percy's statement. And such an astounding statement could scarcely be questioned.

'By far the richest,' repeated Percy.

'I was reading in the "World Almanac," began John, 'that there was one man in America with an income of over five million a year and four men with incomes of over three million a year, and —'

'Oh, they're nothing.' Percy's mouth was a half-moon of scorn. 'Catchpenny capitalists, financial small-fry, petty merchants and money-lenders. My father could buy them out and not know he'd done it.'

'But how does he —'

'Why haven't they put down *his* income tax? Because he doesn't pay any. At least he pays a little one — but he doesn't pay any on his *real* income.'

'He must be very rich,' said John simply. 'I'm glad. I like very rich people.'

'The richer a fella is, the better I like him.' There was a look of passionate frankness upon his dark face. 'I visited the Schnlitzer-Murphys last Easter. Vivian Schnlitzer-Murphy had rubies as big as hen's eggs, and sapphires that were like globes with lights inside them —'

'I love jewels,' agreed Percy enthusiastically. 'Of course I wouldn't want any one at school to know about it, but I've got quite a collection myself. I used to collect them instead of stamps.'

'And diamonds,' continued John eagerly. 'The Schnlitzer-Murphys had diamonds as big as walnuts —'

'That's nothing.' Percy had leaned forward and dropped his voice to a low whisper. 'That's nothing at all. My father has a diamond bigger than the Ritz-Carlton Hotel!'

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<sup>1</sup> The Ritz Carlton Hotel — роскошный отель «Ритц-Карлтон». Сезар Ритц (1850–1918) создал сеть отелей, включая отель «Ритц» в Париже (1898) и «Ритц-Карлтон» в Лондоне (1906).

## II

The Montana<sup>1</sup> sunset lay between two mountains like a gigantic bruise from which dark arteries spread themselves over a poisoned sky. An immense distance under the sky crouched the village of Fish, minute, dismal, and forgotten. There were twelve men, so it was said, in the village of Fish, twelve somber and inexplicable souls who sucked a lean milk from the almost literally bare rock upon which a mysterious populatory force had begotten them. They had become a race apart, these twelve men of Fish, like some species developed by an early whim of nature, which on second thought had abandoned them to struggle and extermination.

Out of the blue-black bruise in the distance crept a long line of moving lights upon the desolation of the land, and the twelve men of Fish gathered like ghosts at the shanty depot to watch the passing of the seven o'clock train, the Transcontinental Express from Chicago. Six times or so a year the Transcontinental Express, through some inconceivable jurisdiction, stopped at the village of Fish, and when this occurred a figure or so would disembark, mount into a buggy that always appeared from out of the dusk, and drive off toward the bruised sunset. The observation of this pointless and preposterous phenomenon had become a sort of cult among the men of Fish. To observe, that was all; there remained in them none of the vital quality of illusion which would make them wonder or speculate, else a religion might have grown up around these mysterious visitations. But the men of Fish were

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<sup>1</sup> Montana — штат в США на границе с Канадой.

beyond all religion — the barest and most savage tenets of even Christianity could gain no foothold on that barren rock — so there was no altar, no priest, no sacrifice; only each night at seven the silent concourse by the shanty depot, a congregation who lifted up a prayer of dim, anaemic wonder.

On this June night, the Great Brakeman<sup>1</sup>, whom, had they deified any one, they might well have chosen as their celestial protagonist<sup>2</sup>, had ordained that the seven o'clock train should leave its human (or inhuman) deposit at Fish. At two minutes after seven Percy Washington and John T. Unger disembarked, hurried past the spellbound, the agape, the fearsome eyes of the twelve men of Fish, mounted into a buggy which had obviously appeared from nowhere, and drove away.

After half an hour, when the twilight had coagulated into dark, the silent negro who was driving the buggy hailed an opaque body somewhere ahead of them in the gloom. In response to his cry, it turned upon them a luminous disk which regarded them like a malignant eye out of the unfathomable night. As they came closer, John saw that it was the tail-light of an immense automobile, larger and more magnificent than any he had ever seen. Its body was of gleaming metal richer than nickel and lighter than silver, and the hubs of the wheels were studded with iridescent geometric figures of green and yellow — John did not dare to guess whether they were glass or jewel.

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<sup>1</sup> Brakeman — в США — тормозной кондуктор на железной дороге.

<sup>2</sup> Protagonist — главное действующее лицо в пьесе, литературном произведении или реальном жизненном событии.

Two negroes, dressed in glittering livery such as one sees in pictures of royal processions in London, were standing at attention beside the car and as the two young men dismounted from the buggy they were greeted in some language which the guest could not understand, but which seemed to be an extreme form of the Southern negro's dialect.

'Get in,' said Percy to his friend, as their trunks were tossed to the ebony roof of the limousine. 'Sorry we had to bring you this far in that buggy, but of course it wouldn't do for the people on the train or those Godforsaken fellas in Fish to see this automobile.'

'Gosh! What a car!' This ejaculation was provoked by its interior. John saw that the upholstery consisted of a thousand minute and exquisite tapestries of silk, woven with jewels and embroideries, and set upon a background of cloth of gold. The two armchair seats in which the boys luxuriated were covered with stuff that resembled duvetyn, but seemed woven in numberless colors of the ends of ostrich feathers.

'What a car!' cried John again in amazement.

'This thing?' Percy laughed. 'Why, it's just an old junk we use for a station wagon.'

By this time they were gliding along through the darkness toward the break between the two mountains.

'We'll be there in an hour and a half,' said Percy, looking at the clock. 'I may as well tell you it's not going to be like anything you ever saw before.'

If the car was any indication of what John would see, he was prepared to be astonished indeed. The simple piety prevalent in Hades has the earnest worship of and respect for riches as the first article of its

creed — had John felt otherwise than radiantly humble before them, his parents would have turned away in horror at the blasphemy.

They had now reached and were entering the break between the two mountains and almost immediately the way became much rougher.

‘If the moon shone down here, you’d see that we’re in a big gulch,’ said Percy, trying to peer out of the window. He spoke a few words into the mouthpiece and immediately the footman turned on a search-light and swept the hillsides with an immense beam.

‘Rocky, you see. An ordinary car would be knocked to pieces in half an hour. In fact, it’d take a tank to navigate it unless you knew the way. You notice we’re going uphill now.’

They were obviously ascending, and within a few minutes the car was crossing a high rise, where they caught a glimpse of a pale moon newly risen in the distance. The car stopped suddenly and several figures took shape out of the dark beside it — these were negroes also. Again the two young men were saluted in the same dimly recognizable dialect; then the negroes set to work and four immense cables dangling from overhead were attached with hooks to the hubs of the great jeweled wheels. At a resounding ‘Hey-yah!’ John felt the car being lifted slowly from the ground — up and up — clear of the tallest rocks on both sides — then higher, until he could see a wavy, moonlit valley stretched out before him in sharp contrast to the quagmire of rocks that they had just left. Only on one side was there still rock — and then suddenly there was no rock beside them or anywhere around.

It was apparent that they had surmounted some immense knife-blade of stone, projecting perpendicu-

larly into the air. In a moment they were going down again, and finally with a soft bump they were landed upon the smooth earth.

‘The worst is over,’ said Percy, squinting out the window. ‘It’s only five miles from here, and our own road — tapestry brick — all the way. This belongs to us. This is where the United States ends, father says.’

‘Are we in Canada?’

‘We are not. We’re in the middle of the Montana Rockies<sup>1</sup>. But you are now on the only five square miles of land in the country that’s never been surveyed.’

‘Why hasn’t it? Did they forget it?’

‘No,’ said Percy, grinning, ‘they tried to do it three times. The first time my grandfather corrupted a whole department of the State survey; the second time he had the official maps of the United States tinkered with — that held them for fifteen years. The last time was harder. My father fixed it so that their compasses were in the strongest magnetic field ever artificially set up. He had a whole set of surveying instruments made with a slight defection that would allow for this territory not to appear, and he substituted them for the ones that were to be used. Then he had a river deflected and he had what looked like a village built up on its banks — so that they’d see it, and think it was a town ten miles farther up the valley. There’s only one thing my father’s afraid of,’ he concluded, ‘only one thing in the world that could be used to find us out.’

‘What’s that?’

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<sup>1</sup> The Montana Rockies — Скалистые горы на западе штата Монтана, район высоких горных вершин и глубоких ущелий.



Percy sank his voice to a whisper.

‘Aeroplanes,’ he breathed. ‘We’ve got half a dozen anti-aircraft guns and we’ve arranged it so far — but there’ve been a few deaths and a great many prisoners. Not that we mind *that*, you know, father and I, but it upsets mother and the girls, and there’s always the chance that some time we won’t be able to arrange it.’

Shreds and tatters of chinchilla, courtesy clouds in the green moon’s heaven, were passing the green moon like precious Eastern stuffs paraded for the inspection of some Tartar Khan. It seemed to John that it was day, and that he was looking at some lads sailing above him in the air, showering down tracts and patent medicine circulars, with their messages of hope for despairing, rockbound hamlets. It seemed to him that he could see them look down out of the clouds and stare — and stare at whatever there was to stare at in this place whither he was bound — What then? Were they induced to land by some insidious device there to be immured far from patent medicines and from tracts until the judgment day — or, should they fail to fall into the trap, did a quick puff of smoke and the sharp round of a splitting shell bring them drooping to earth — and ‘upset’ Percy’s mother and sisters. John shook his head and the wraith of a hollow laugh issued silently from his parted lips. What desperate transaction lay hidden here? What a moral expedient of a bizarre Croesus<sup>1</sup>? What terrible and golden mystery?...

The chinchilla clouds had drifted past now and outside the Montana night was bright as day. The tapestry brick of the road was smooth to the tread of the

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<sup>1</sup> Croesus — Крез (VI век до н.э.), последний царь Лидии, древнего государства в Малой Азии; Крез славился своим несметным богатством, и позднее его имя стало символом богатства.

great tires as they rounded a still, moonlit lake; they passed into darkness for a moment, a pine grove, pungent and cool, then they came out into a broad avenue of lawn and John's exclamation of pleasure was simultaneous with Percy's taciturn 'We're home.'

Full in the light of the stars, an exquisite château<sup>1</sup> rose from the borders of the lake, climbed in marble radiance half the height of an adjoining mountain, then melted in grace, in perfect symmetry, in translucent feminine languor, into the massed darkness of a forest of pine. The many towers, the slender tracery of the sloping parapets, the chiselled wonder of a thousand yellow windows with their oblongs and hectagons and triangles of golden light, the shattered softness of the intersecting planes of star-shine and blue shade, all trembled on John's spirit like a chord of music. On one of the towers, the tallest, the blackest at its base, an arrangement of exterior lights at the top made a sort of floating fairyland — and as John gazed up in warm enchantment the faint acciaccare<sup>2</sup> sound of violins drifted down in a rococo<sup>3</sup> harmony that was like nothing he had ever heard before. Then in a moment the car stopped before wide, high marble steps around which the night air was fragrant with a host of flowers. At the top of the steps two great doors swung silently open and amber light flooded out upon the darkness, silhouetting the figure of an exquisite lady with black, high-piled hair, who held out her arms toward them.

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<sup>1</sup> Château — дворец или замок, расположенный в сельской местности.

<sup>2</sup> Acciaccare — музыкальный термин, обозначающий короткий, сжатый, форсированный звук.

<sup>3</sup> Rococo — изысканный стиль в искусстве и архитектуре XVIII в.