



***Of Mice and Men,* John Steinbeck**

*First published in 1937.*

Old Candy turned slowly over. His eyes were wide open. He watched George carefully.

Lennie said, “Tell about that place, George.”

“I jus’ tol’ you, jus’ las’ night.”

“Go on—tell again, George.”

“Well, it’s ten acres,” said George. “Got a little win’mill. Got a little shack on it, an’ a chicken run. Got a kitchen, orchard, cherries, apples, peaches, ‘cots, nuts, got a few berries. They’s a place for alfalfa and plenty water to flood it. They’s a pig pen—”

“An’ rabbits, George.”

“No place for rabbits now, but I could easy build a few hutches and you could feed alfalfa to the rabbits.”

“Damn right, I could,” said Lennie. “You God damn right I could.”

George’s hands stopped working with the cards. His voice was growing warmer. “An’ we could have a few pigs. I could build a smoke house like the one gran’pa had, an’ when we kill a pig we can smoke the bacon and the hams, and make sausage an’ all like that. An’ when the salmon run up river we could catch a hundred of ‘em an’ salt ‘em down or smoke ‘em. We could have them for breakfast. They ain’t nothing so nice as smoked salmon. When the fruit come in we could can it—and tomatoes, they’re easy to can. Ever’ Sunday we’d kill a chicken or a rabbit. Maybe we’d have a cow or a goat, and the cream is so God damn thick you got to cut it with a knife and take it out with a spoon.”

Lennie watched him with wide eyes, and old Candy watched him too. Lennie said softly, “We could live offa the fatta the lan’.”

“Sure,” said George. “All kin’s a vegetables in the garden, and if we want a little whisky we can sell a few eggs or something, or some milk. We’d jus’ live there. We’d belong there. There wouldn’t be no more runnin’ round the country and gettin’ fed by a Jap cook. No, sir, we’d have our own place where we belonged and not sleep in no bunk house.”

“Tell about the house, George,” Lennie begged.

“Sure, we’d have a little house an’ a room to ourself. Little fat iron stove, an’ in the winter we’d keep a fire goin’ in it. It ain’t enough land so we’d have to work too hard. Maybe six, seven hours a day. We wouldn’t have to buck no barley eleven hours a day. An’ when we put in a crop, why, we’d be there to take the crop up. We’d know what come of our planting.”

“An’ rabbits,” Lennie said eagerly. “An’ I’d take care of ‘em. Tell how I’d do that, George.”

“Sure, you’d go out in the alfalfa patch an’ you’d have a sack. You’d fill up the sack and bring it in an’ put it in the rabbit cages.”

“They’d nibble an’ they’d nibble,” said Lennie, “the way they do. I seen ‘em.”

“Ever’ six weeks or so,” George continued, “them does would throw a litter so we’d have plenty rabbits to eat an’ to sell. An’ we’d keep a few pigeons to go flyin’ around the win’mill like they done when I was a kid.” He looked raptly at the wall over Lennie’s head. “An’ it’d be our own, an’ nobody could can us. If we don’t like a guy we can say, ‘Get the hell out,’ and by God he’s got to do it. An’ if a fren’ come along, why we’d have an extra bunk, an’ we’d say, ‘Why don’t you spen’ the night?’ an’ by God he would. We’d have a setter dog and a couple stripe cats, but you gotta watch out them cats don’t get the little rabbits.”

Lennie breathed hard. “You jus’ let ‘em try to get the rabbits. I’ll break their God damn necks. I’ll . . . . I’ll smash ‘em with a stick.” He subsided, grumbling to himself, threatening the future cats which might dare to disturb the future rabbits.

George sat entranced with his own picture.

When Candy spoke they both jumped as though they had been caught doing something reprehensible. Candy said, “You know where’s a place like that?”

George was on guard immediately. “S’pose I do,” he said. “What’s that to you?”



***Rebecca*, Daphne du Maurier**

First published in Great Britain 1938

**Chapter One**

Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again. It seemed to me I stood by the iron gate leading to the drive, and for a while I could not enter, for the way was barred to me. There was a padlock and chain upon the gate. I called in my dream to the lodge-keeper, and had no answer, and peering closer through the rusted spokes of the gate I saw that the lodge was uninhabited.

No smoke came from the chimney, and the little lattice windows gaped forlorn. Then, like all dreamers, I was possessed of a sudden with supernatural powers and passed like a spirit through the barrier before me. The drive wound away in front of me, twisting and turning as it had always done, but as I advanced I was aware that a change had come upon it; it was narrow and unkempt, not the drive that we had known. At first I was puzzled and did not understand, and it was only when I bent my head to avoid the low swinging branch of a tree that I realized what had happened. Nature had come into her own again and, little by little, in her stealthy, insidious way had encroached upon the drive with long, tenacious fingers. The woods, always a menace even in the past, had triumphed in the end. They crowded, dark and uncontrolled, to the borders of the drive. The beeches with white, naked limbs leant close to one another, their branches intermingled in a strange embrace, making a vault above my head like the archway of a church. And there were other trees as well, trees that I did not recognize, squat oaks and tortured elms that straggled cheek by jowl with the beeches, and had thrust themselves out of the quiet earth, along with monster shrubs and plants, none of which I remembered.

The drive was a ribbon now, a thread of its former self, with gravel surface gone, and choked with grass and moss. The trees had thrown out low branches, making an impediment to progress; the gnarled roots looked like skeleton claws. Scattered here and again amongst this jungle growth I would recognize shrubs that had been landmarks in our time, things of culture and grace, hydrangeas whose blue heads had been famous. No hand had checked their progress, and they had gone native now, rearing to monster height without a bloom, black and ugly as the nameless parasites that grew beside them.



***Passing,* Nella Larson**

*First published in 1929.*

Again she looked up, and for a moment her brown eyes politely returned the stare of the other's black ones, which never for an instant fell or wavered. Irene made a little mental shrug. Oh well, let her look! She tried to treat the woman and her watching with indifference, but she couldn't. All her efforts to ignore her, it, were futile. She stole another glance. Still looking. What strange languorous eyes she had!

And gradually there rose in Irene a small inner disturbance, odious and hatefully familiar. She laughed softly, but her eyes flashed.

Did that woman, could that woman, somehow know that here before her very eyes on the roof of the Drayton sat a Negro?

Absurd! Impossible! White people were so stupid about such things for all that they usually asserted that they were able to tell; and by the most ridiculous means, finger-nails, palms of hands, shapes of ears, teeth, and other equally silly rot. They always took her for an Italian, a Spaniard, a Mexican, or a [gipsy](http://genius.com/4986208/Nella-larsen-passing-part-1-encounter/Gipsy). Never, when she was alone, had they even remotely seemed to suspect that she was a Negro. No, the woman sitting there staring at her couldn't possibly know.

Nevertheless, Irene felt, in turn, anger, scorn, and fear slide over her. It wasn't that she was ashamed of being a Negro, or even of having it declared. [It was the idea of being ejected from any place, even in the polite and tactful way in which the Drayton would probably do it, that disturbed her.](http://genius.com/4971698/Nella-larsen-passing-part-1-encounter/It-was-the-idea-of-being-ejected-from-any-place-even-in-the-polite-and-tactful-way-in-which-the-drayton-would-probably-do-it-that-disturbed-her)

But she looked, boldly this time, back into the eyes still frankly intent upon her. They did not seem to her hostile or resentful. Rather, Irene had the feeling that they were ready to smile if she would. Nonsense, of course. The feeling passed, and she turned away with the firm intention of keeping her gaze on the lake, the roofs of the buildings across the way, the sky, anywhere but on that annoying woman. Almost immediately, however, her eyes were back again. In the midst of her fog of uneasiness she had been seized by a desire to outstare the rude observer. [Suppose the woman did know or suspect her race. She couldn't prove it.](http://genius.com/4997729/Nella-larsen-passing-part-1-encounter/Suppose-the-woman-did-know-or-suspect-her-race-she-couldnt-prove-it)

Suddenly her small fright Increased. Her neighbour had risen and was coming towards her. What was going to happen now?



***The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fizgerald**

First Published 1925

Chapter 3

Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York — every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves. There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler’s thumb.

At least once a fortnight a corps of caterers came down with several hundred feet of canvas and enough coloured lights to make a Christmas tree of Gatsby’s enormous garden. On buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors-d’oeuvre, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold. In the main hall a bar with a real brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another.

By seven o’clock the orchestra has arrived, no thin five-piece affair, but a whole pitful of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos, and low and high drums. The last swimmers have come in from the beach now and are dressing up-stairs; the cars from New York are parked five deep in the drive, and already the halls and salons and verandas are gaudy with primary colors, and hair shorn in strange new ways, and shawls beyond the dreams of Castile. The bar is in full swing, and floating rounds of cocktails permeate the garden outside, until the air is alive with chatter and laughter, and casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot, and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other’s names.

The lights grow brighter as the earth lurches away from the sun, and now the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music, and the opera of voices pitches a key higher. Laughter is easier minute by minute, spilled with prodigality, tipped out at a cheerful word. The groups change more swiftly, swell with new arrivals, dissolve and form in the same breath; already there are wanderers, confident girls who weave here and there among the stouter and more stable, become for a sharp, joyous moment the centre of a group, and then, excited with triumph, glide on through the sea-change of faces and voices and colour under the constantly changing light.

Suddenly one of the gypsies, in trembling opal, seizes a cocktail out of the air, dumps it down for courage and, moving her hands like Frisco, dances out alone on the canvas platform. A momentary hush; the orchestra leader varies his rhythm obligingly for her, and there is a burst of chatter as the erroneous news goes around that she is Gilda Gray’s understudy from the *Follies*. The party has begun.

I believe that on the first night I went to Gatsby’s house I was one of the few guests who had actually been invited. People were not invited — they went there. They got into automobiles which bore them out to Long Island, and somehow they ended up at Gatsby’s door. Once there they were introduced by somebody who knew Gatsby, and after that they conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with amusement parks. Sometimes they came and went without having met Gatsby at all, came for the party with simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission.



***His Dark Materials – Northern Light,* Philip Pullman**

*First published in 1995*

The Decanter of Tokay

Lyra and her daemon moved through the darkening Hall, taking care to keep to one side, out of sight of the kitchen. The three great tables that ran the length of the Hall were laid already, the silver and the glass catching what little light there was, and the long benches were pulled out ready for the guests. Portraits of former Masters hung high up in the gloom along the walls. Lyra reached the dais and looked back at the open kitchen door and, seeing no one, stepped up beside the high table. The places here were laid with gold, not silver, and the fourteen seats were not oak benches but mahogany chairs with velvet cushions.

Lyra stopped beside the Master’s chair and flicked the biggest glass gently with a fingernail. The sound rang clearly through the Hall.

“You’re not taking this seriously,” whispered her daemon.

“Behave yourself.”

Her daemon’s name was Pantalaimon, and he was currently in the form of a moth, a dark brown one so as not to show up in the darkness of the Hall.

“They’re making too much noise to hear from the kitchen,” Lyra whispered back. “And the Steward doesn’t come in till the first bell. Stop fussing.”

But she put her palm over the ringing crystal anyway, and Pantalaimon fluttered ahead and through the slightly open door of the Retiring Room at the other end of the dais. After a moment he appeared again.

“There’s no one there,” he whispered. “But we must be quick.”

Crouching behind the high table, Lyra darted along and through the door into the Retiring Room, where she stood up and looked around. The only light in here came from the fireplace, where a bright blaze of logs settled slightly as she looked, sending a fountain of sparks up into the chimney. She had lived most of her life in the College, but had never seen the Retiring Room before: only Scholars and their guests were allowed in here, and never females. Even the maidservants didn’t clean in here. That was the Butler’s job alone.

Pantalaimon settled on her shoulder.

“Happy now? Can we go?” he whispered.

“Don’t be silly! I want to look around!”

It was a large room, with an oval table of polished rosewood on which stood various decanters and glasses, and a silver smoking-mill with a rack of pipes. On a sideboard nearby there was a little chafing-dish and a basked of poppy-heads.

“They do themselves well, don’t they, Pan?” she said under her breath.

She sat in one of the green leather armchairs. It was so deep she found herself nearly lying down, but she sat up again and tucked her legs under her to look at the portraits on the walls. More old Scholars, probably: robed, bearded and gloomy, they stared out of their frames in solemn disapproval.

“What d’you think they talk about?” Lyra said, or began to say, because before she’d finished the question she heard voices outside the door.

“Behind the chair – quick!” whispered Pantalaimon, and in a flash Lyra was out of the armchair and crouching behind it. It wasn’t the best one for hiding behind: she’d chosen one in the very centre of the room, and unless she kept very quiet…



***Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez**

First published in 1981

ON THE DAY THEY WERE GOING TO KILL him, Santiago Nasar got up at five-thirty in the morning to wait for the boat the bishop was coming on. He'd dreamed he was going through a grove of timber trees where a gentle drizzle was falling, and for an instant he was happy in his dream, but when he awoke he felt completely spattered with bird shit. "He was always dreaming about trees," Plácida Linero, his mother, told me twenty-seven years later, recalling the details of that distressing Monday. "The week before, he'd dreamed that he was alone in a tinfoil airplane and flying through the almond trees without bumping into anything," she said to me. She had a well-earned reputation as an accurate interpreter of other people's dreams, provided they were told her before eating, but she hadn't noticed any ominous augury in those two dreams of her son's, or in the other dreams of trees he'd described to her on the mornings preceding his death.

Nor did Santiago Nasar recognise the omen. He had slept little and poorly, without getting undressed, and he woke up with a headache and a sediment of copper stirrup on his palate, and he interpreted them as the natural havoc of the wedding revels that had gone on until after midnight. Furthermore: all the many people he ran into after leaving his house at five minutes past six and until he was carved up like a pig an hour later remembered him as being a little sleepy but in a good mood, and he remarked to all of them in a casual way that it was a very beautiful day. No one was certain if he was referring to the state of the weather. Many people coincided in recalling that it was a radiant morning with a sea breeze coming in through the banana groves, as was to be expected in a fine February of that period. But most agreed that the weather was funereal, with a cloudy, low sky and the thick smell of still waters, and that at the moment of the misfortune a thin drizzle was falling like the one Santiago Nasar had seen in his dream grove. I was recovering from the wedding revels in the apostolic lap of Maria Alejandrina Cervantes, and I only awakened with the clamour of the alarm bells, thinking they had turned them loose in honour of the bishop.

Santiago Nasar put on a shirt and pants of white linen, both items unstarched, just like the ones he'd put on the day before for the wedding. It was his attire for special occasions. If it hadn't been for the bishop's arrival, he would have dressed in his khaki outfit and the riding boots he wore on Mondays to go to The Divine Face, the cattle ranch he'd inherited from his father and which he administered with very goodjudgment but without much luck. In the country he wore a .357 Magnum on his belt, and its armoured bullets, according to what he said, could cut a horse in two through the middle. During the partridge season he would also carry his falconry equipment. In the closet he kept a Mannlicher Schoenauer .30-06 rifle, a .300 Holland & Holland Magnum rifle, a .22 Hornet with a double-powered telescopic sight, and a Winchester repeater. He always slept the way his father had slept, with the weapon hidden in the pillowcase, but before leaving the house that day he took out the bullets and put them in the drawer of the night table. "He never left it loaded," his mother told me. I knew that, and I also knew that he kept the guns in one place and hid the ammunition in another far removed so that nobody, not even casually, would yield to the temptation of loading them inside the house. It was a wise custom established by his father ever since one morning when a servant girl had shaken the case to get the pillow out and the pistol went off as it hit the floor and the bullet wrecked the cupboard in the room, went through the living room wall, passed through the dining room of the house next door with the thunder of war, and turned a life-size saint on the main altar of the church on the opposite side of the square to plaster dust. Santiago Nasar, who was a young child at the time, never forgot the lesson of that accident.

The last image his mother had of him was of his fleeting passage through the bedroom. He'd wakened her while he was feeling around trying to find an aspirin in the bathroom medicine chest, and she turned on the light and saw him appear in the doorway with a glass of water in his hand. So she would remember him forever. Santiago Nasar told her then about the dream, but she didn't pay any great attention to the trees.

