



He fell in love with people he did not know how to meet. He began carrying around with him the momentary faces of men seen in restaurants, on streetcorners, in the subways, and fed on their imagined loves as a roach feeds on crumbs. He knew from the looks on faces he surprised by looking up, that he too was being stored in other human hearts. Then he might have fallen victim to the great homosexual disease—the sanctity of the face seen and never spoken to—but fortunately for Malone this hopeless romanticism was not given time to develop further, for he met someone and fell in love.

"But you see," he said, "I don't think two men *can* love each other ... in that way. It will always be a sterile union, it will always be associated with guilt. Sometimes I think that God was sitting up above the world one day, after He had created it," the boy sighed, "and someone said, 'Now what could we throw in to spoil it? You've created such a perfect existence, how could it go amuck?' And someone said, 'Confuse the sexes. Have the men desire men instead of women, and women desire women. That would do it!' And that's what they did," he said. "You see, life *would* be marvelous if we weren't homosexual. To grow up, to fall in love, to have children, grow old and die. It's rather nice. But then God threw in that monkey wrench. As if out of sheer mischief!" he said.

...

"He is deeply in love of you," said Sutherland to Malone the moment the door had closed. "What do you mean?" Malone said. "He hates being gay and said that he doesn't believe in love between men." "My dear, that was all for your benefit!" said Sutherland. "He wasn't talking to me, he was talking to you! He was pouring out his innermost doubts, and fears and despair! He was putting forward all the reasons he couldn't believe in love, while he was already dreaming of your damp kisses!

You see, I think what really explains Malone is that he was religious: He had grown up with those nuns in the tiled colonnades in Ceylon, under the thorn trees at noon, and if he loved the sailors sitting on the veranda drinking beer, he loved Christ and Mary and the Saints in the darkness of that church too. I think the sunlight, the palm trees, the transparent sea, the bronzed sailors, the happiness of his childhood, and the death of Christ all got mixed up and he never knew where the aesthetic stopped and the religious began, and vice versa. You know, when people who were once religious no longer believe in God, they never really change; they just go on, hunting for the ecstatic food, trying to satisfy that hunger. You must admit this search took Malone places he never would have gone otherwise; and who knows where it has taken him now? Because he dreamed with the best of us, my dear, dreamed even more outlandish dreams—and then when they failed him, he left. In silence, for what could one say? You remember what Sutherland said to me coming back on the train one day when I asked him why Malone was so restless, and talking about moving to Denver, San Francisco, Charleston. "Dreams decompose, darling," he said, "like anything else. And they give off gases, some of which are poisonous and all of which are unpleasant, and so one goes away from the place in which the dreams were dreamed, and are not decomposing before your very eyes. Otherwise, you might die, dear, of monoxide poisoning. Tant pis," he said. Well maybe that is why Malone split. You think? Decomposed dreams?