

The Unpublished Opening of The Sun Also Rises

by Ernest Hemingway

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

THIS is a novel about a lady. Her name is Lady Ashley and when the story begins she is living in Paris and it is Spring. That should be a good setting for a romantic but highly moral story. As every one knows, Paris is a very romantic place. Spring in Paris is a very happy and romantic time. Autumn in Paris, although very beautiful, might give a note of sadness or melancholy that we shall try to keep out of the story.

Lady Ashley was born Elizabeth Brett Murray. Her title came from her second husband. She had divorced one husband for something or other, mutual consent; not until after he had put one of those notices in the papers stating that after this date he would not be responsible for any debt, etc.

He was a Scotchman and found Brett much too expensive, especially as she had only married him to get rid of him and to get away from home. At present she had a legal separation from her second husband, who had the title, because he was a dipsomaniac, he having learned it in the North Sea commanding a mine-sweeper, Brett said. When he had gotten to be a proper thoroughgoing dipsomaniac and found that Brett did not love him he tried to kill her, and between times slept on the floor and was never sober and had great spells of crying. Brett always declared that it had been one of the really great mistakes of her life to have married a sailor. She should have known better, she said, but she had sent the one man she had wanted to marry off to Mesopotamia so he would last out the war, and he had died of some very unromantic form of dysentery and she certainly could not marry Jake Barnes, so when she had to marry she had married Lord Robert Ashley, who proceeded to become a dipsomaniac as before stated.

They had a son and Ashley would not divorce, and would not give grounds for divorce, but there was a separation and Brett went off with Mike Campbell to the Continent one afternoon, she having offered to at lunch because Mike was lonely and sick and very companionable, and, as she said, 'obviously one of us.' They arranged the whole business before the Folkestone-Boulogne train left London at 9:30 that night. Brett was always very proud of that. The speed with which they got passports and raised funds. They came to Paris on their way to the Riviera, and stayed the night in a hotel which had only one room free and that with a double bed. 'We'd no idea of anything of that sort,' Brett said. 'Mike said we should go on and look up another hotel, but I said no, to stop where we were. What's the odds.'

That was how they happened to be living together.

Mike at that time was ill. It was all he had brought back with him from the two years he had spent in business in Spain, after he had left the army, except the beautifully engraved shares of the company which had absorbed all of the fifteen thousand pounds that had come to him from his father's estate.

He was also an undischarged bankrupt, which is quite a serious thing in England, and had various habits that Brett felt sorry for, did not think a man should have, and cured by constant watchfulness and the exercise of her then very strong will.

Mike was a charming companion, one of the most charming. He was nice and he was weak and he had a certain very hard gentleness in him that could not be touched and that never disappeared until the liquor dissolved him entirely. Mike sober was nice, Mike a little drunk was ever nicer, Mike quite drunk began to be objectionable, and Mike very drunk was embarrassing.

It was the boredom and the uncertainty of their position that made Brett drink as she did. There was nothing of the alcoholic about her. Not, at least, for a long time. They spent their time sleeping as late as possible and then drinking. That is a simple way of stating a very complicated process, and waiting for Mike's weekly allowance, which was always late, and therefore always spent and borrowed into a week or more in advance. There was nothing to do but to drink. The drinking was not done alone in their rooms. It was all at cafés and parties, and each day became a replica of the day before. There were very few differences. You had been to bed late or gone to bed early. You felt good or you felt bad.

You felt like eating a little something or you couldn't face the thought of food. It had been a good party the night before or it had been a bore. Michael had behaved abominably or Michael had been model of admirable behavior. But usually it had been a good party because alcohol, either brandy and soda, or whiskey and soda, had a tendency to make everything much better, and for a time quite all right.

If Michael had behaved well it was probably a good party, and Michael had a strong tendency to behave well. In fact you could always count on him to behave absolutely as he should until the alcoholic process had taken place, which always seemed rather like that old grammar school experiment in which a bone is dissolved in vinegar to prove it had something or other in it.

Anyway the vinegar quite changed the bone and made it very unlike itself, and you could bend it back and forth, and if it were a long enough bone and you had used enough vinegar, you could even tie it into a knot.

Brett was very different from Mike about drinking. Brett had a certain grand vitality. She had her looks too. She was not supposed to be beautiful, but in a room with women who were supposed to be beautiful she killed their looks entirely. Men thought she was lovely looking, and women called her striking looking. Painters were always asking her to sit for them and that flattered her, because she herself considered that her looks were not much, and so she spent much of her waking time sitting for portraits, none of which she ever liked. She did not seem to mind how bad the painters were. The worse they were they more it amused her. It was the

being asked to sit for her portrait that she liked.

One painter was as good as another. Of course the best portrait painters had done her a long time before.

Brett drank much more than Mike liked, but it never dissolved her in any way. She was always clear run, generous, and her lines were always as clear. But when she had been drunk she always spoke of it as having been blind.

‘Weren’t we blind last night, though?’

It was short for blind drunk, and the curious part was that she really became, in a way, blind. Drinking, and this does not mean the odd drink, or two or three cocktails before dinner and wine at the meal, but real drinking of that sort that kills off the good drinkers because they are the only ones who can do it, affected Brett in three successive stages. Drinking, say whiskey and sodas from four o’clock in the afternoon until two o’clock in the morning Brett first lost her power of speech and just sat and listened, then she lost her sight and saw nothing that went on, and finally she ceased to hear. And all the time any one coming into the café would never know she had been drinking. To any one greeting her she would respond automatically, ‘Hullo, I say I am blind,’ or something of the sort.

In sleeping and in drinking, playing bridge in the afternoon, usually having her portrait painted by some socially climbing artist who knew the value of a title on a portrait, a party somewhere every night, Brett and Mike passed the time in Paris. They were rather happy. Brett was a very happy person. Then Mike had to go to England, to London to see a lawyer about something connected with the divorce Brett was trying to get, and then to Scotland to visit his people and prove by residence that he was a dutiful son, in order that, among other things, they should not stop his allowance. Brett was left alone in Paris. She had never been very good at being alone.

CHAPTER II

I did not want to tell this story in the first person but I find that I must. I wanted to stay well outside of the story so that I would not be touched by it in any way, and handle all the people in it with that irony and pity that are so essential to good writing. I even thought I might be amused by all the things that are going to happen to Lady Brett Ashley and Mr. Robert Cohn and Michael Campbell, Esq., and Mr. Jake Barnes. But I made the unfortunate mistake, for a writer, of first having been Mr. Jake Barnes. So it is not going to be splendid and cool and detached after all.

‘What a pity!’ as Brett used to say.

‘What a pity!’ was a little joke we all had. Brett was having her portrait painted by a very rich American from Philadelphia, who sent his motor-car around each afternoon to bring her from her hotel in Montparnasse up to his Montmartre studio. Along about the third sitting Brett stopped posing for a little while to have tea, and the portrait-painter asked her: ‘And

when you get your divorce, Lady Ashley, what will you do then?’

‘Marry Mike Campbell,’ Brett answered.

‘And what will your name be then?’

‘Mrs. Campbell, of course!’

‘What a pity,’ the portrait-painter said. ‘What a pity!’

So my name is Jacob Barnes and I am writing the story, not as believe is usual in these cases, from a desire for confession, because being a Roman Catholic I am spared that Protestant urge to literary production, nor to set things all out the way they happened for the good of some future generation, nor any other of the usual highly moral urges, but because I believe it is a good story.

I am a newspaper man living in Paris. I used to think Paris was the most wonderful place in the world. I have lived in it now for six years, or however long it is since 1920, and I still see its good points. Anyway, it is the only city I want to live in. They say New York is very fine but I do not care for night life. I want to live quietly and with a certain measure of luxury, and a job that I do not want to worry about. Paris provides all these things. Paris is also a lovely town to live in once you get an apartment and give up various American fetishes such as all the year round B.V.D.s and too much exercise.

In 1916 I was invalided home from a British hospital and got a job on The Mail in New York. I quit to start the Continental Press Association with Robert Graham, who was then just getting his reputation as Washington correspondent. We started the Continental in one room on the basis of syndicating Bob Graham’s Washington dispatches. I ran the business end and the first year wrote a special war-expert service. By 1920 the Continental was the third largest feature service in the States. I told Bob Graham that rather than stay and get rich with him the Continental could give me a job in Paris. So I made the job, and I have some stock, but not as much as I ought to have, and I do not try to run the salary up too high because if it ever got up past a certain amount there would be too many people shooting at my job as European Director of the Continental Press Association. When you have a title like that, translated into French on the letter-heads, and only have to work about four or five hours a day and all the salary you want you are pretty well fixed. I write political dispatches under my own name, and feature stuff under a couple of different names, and all the trained-seal stuff is filed through our office. It is a nice job. I want to hang on to it. Like all newspaper men I have always wanted to write a novel, and I suppose, now that I am doing it, the novel will have that awful taking-the-pen-in-hand quality that afflicts newspaper men when they start to write on their own hook.

I never hung about the Quarter much in Paris until Brett and Mike showed up. I always felt about the Quarter that I could sort of take it or leave it alone. You went into it once in a while to sort of see the animals and say hello to Harold Stearns, and on hot nights in the spring when the tables were spread out over the sidewalks it was rather pleasant. But for a place to hang around it always seemed awfully dull. I have to put it in, though, because Robert Cohn, who is one of the non-Nordic heroes of this book, had spent two years there.

The Quarter is sort of more a state of mind than a geographical area. Perfectly good

Quarterites live outside the actual boundaries of Montparnasse. They can live anywhere, I suppose, as long as they come to the Quarter to think. Or whatever you call it. To have the Quarter state of mind is probably the best way of putting it. This state of mind is principally contempt. Those who work have the greatest contempt for those who don't. The loafers are leading their own lives and it is bad form to mention work. Young painters have contempt for old painters, and that works both ways too. There are contemptuous critics and contemptuous writers. Everybody seems to dislike everybody else. The only happy people are the drunks, and they, after flaming for a period of days or weeks, eventually become depressed. The Germans, too, seem happy, but perhaps that is because they can only get two-week visas to visit Paris, and so they make a party of it. The frail young men who go about together and seem to be always present, but who really leave in periodical flights for Brussels, Berlin, or the Basque coast, to return again like the birds, even more like the birds, are not gay either. They twitter a good deal, but they are not gay. The Scandinavians are the regular, hard-working residents.

They are not very gay either, although they seem to have worked out a certain pleasant way of life.

They only really gay person during the time I frequented the Quarter was a splendid sort of two-hundred-pound meteoric glad girl called Flossie, who had what is known as a 'heart of gold,' lovely skin and hair and appetite, and an invulnerability to hangovers. She was going to be a singer, but the drink took away her voice, and she did not seem to mind particularly. This store of gladness made her the heroine of the Quarter. Anyhow, the Quarter is much too sad and dull a place to write about. and I would not put it in except that Robert Cohn had spent two years in it. That accounts for a great many things.

During these two years Robert Cohn had lived with a lady who lived on gossip, so he had lived in an atmosphere of abortions and rumors of abortions, doubts and speculations as to past and prospective infidelities of friends, dirty rumors, dirtier reports and dirtier suspicions, and a constant fear and dread by his lady companion that he was seeing other women and was the point of leaving her. Somehow during this time Robert Cohn wrote a novel, a first and last novel. He was the hero of it, but it was not too badly done and it was accepted by a New York publisher. There was a great deal of fantasy in it.

At that time Robert Cohn had only two friends, an English writer named Braddocks, and myself, with whom he played tennis. He beat me regularly at tennis and was very nice about it. Cohn gave the novel to Braddocks to read and Braddocks, who was very busy on something of his own and who, as the years went on, found it increasingly difficult to read the works of writers other than himself, did not read the novel, but returned it to Cohn with the remark that this was excellent stuff, some excellent stuff, but there were a part, just a small part, he wanted to talk over with Cohn some time. Cohn asked Braddocks what the part was, and Braddocks replied that it was a matter of organization, a very slight but important matter of organization. Cohn, eager to learn and with an un-Nordic willingness to accept useful criticism, pressed to know what it was. 'I'm much too busy now to go into it, Cohn. Come around to tea some time next week and we'll talk it over.' Cohn insisted Braddocks keep the manuscript until they should have a chance to discuss it.

That night after dinner Braddocks called at my flat. He drank a brandy.

'I say, Barnes,' he said, 'do me a favor. That's a good chap. Read this thing of Cohn's and tell me if it's any good. Mind you, I don't think it can be any good. But be a good chap and run through it and let me know what it's all about.'

The next evening I was sitting on the terrace of the Closerie des Lilas watching it get dark.

There was a waiter at the Lilas named Anton who used to give two whiskeys for the price of one whiskey owing to a dislike he had for his boss. This waiter raised potatoes in a garden outside of Paris, beyond Montrouge, and as I sat at the table with someone else, Alec Muhr I think it was, we watched the people going by in the dusk on the sidewalk, and the great slow horses going by in the dusk on the Boulevard, and the people going home from work, and the girls starting their evening's work, and the light coming out of the bistro next door where the chauffeurs from the taxi line were drinking, and we asked the waiter about his potato crop, and the waiter asked about the franc, and we read the Paris-Soir and the l'Intransigeant. It was very nice, and then along came Braddocks. Braddocks came along, breathing heavily and wearing a wide black hat.

'Who's that?' Alec asked.

'Braddocks,' said I, 'the writer.'

'Good God,' said Alec, who thereafter took no further part in the conversation, and does not again appear in the story.

'Hullo,' said Braddocks. 'May I join you?' So he joined us.

'Did you have a look at that thing of Cohn's?'

'Yes,' I said. 'It's a fantasy. Lot of dreams in it.'

'Just as I thought,' Braddocks said. 'Thanks awfully.'

We looked out on the Boulevard. Two girls went by.

'Pretty good-looking girls,' I said.

'Do you think so?' asked Braddocks. 'My word.'

We looked at the Boulevard again. The waiter came and went. Braddocks was haughty with him, speaking literary French through his moustache. Along the sidewalk came a tall, gray, lantern-jawed man, walking with a tall woman wearing a blue Italian infantry cape. They looked at our table as they passed, saw no one they knew, and went on. They seemed to be looking for some one.

Braddocks clapped me on the knee.

'I say, did you see me cut him? Did you see me cut him? Can't I cut people though!'

'Who is he?'

'Belloc. Hasn't a friend in the world. I say. Did you see me cut him?'

'Hilaire Belloc?'

'Belloc. Of course. He's absolutely done for. Absolutely through.'

'What did you row with him about?'

‘There was no row. Simply a matter of religious intolerance. Not a review in England will touch him, I tell you.’

I was very impressed by this. I can see Braddock’s face, his moustache, his face in the light from the Lilas window. I did not know that the literary life could become so intense. Also I had a valuable piece of information and gossip.

The next afternoon I was sitting with several people at the Café de la Paix having coffee after lunch. Along the Boulevard des Capucines came the tall, gray-looking man and the woman wearing the blue Italian infantry cape.

‘There’s Hilaire Belloc,’ I said to the people at the table. ‘He hasn’t a friend in the world.’

‘Where?’ asked several people eagerly.

‘There,’ I nodded, ‘standing with the woman in the blue cape.’

‘You mean that man in the gray suit?’

‘Yes,’ I said. ‘There’s not a review in England who will publish him.’

‘Hell. That’s not Belloc,’ the man on my right said. ‘That’s Allister Crowley.’

So I have never felt quite the same about Braddocks since, and I should avoid as far as possible putting him into this story except that he was a great friend of Robert Cohn, and Cohn is the hero.

(The novel begins here.)