

AFTER
MANY A SUMMER

A Novel by

Aldous Huxley

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CHATTO AND WINDUS
LONDON

The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.

TENNYSON

PART ONE

Chapter One

IT HAD all been arranged by telegram; Jeremy Pordage was to look out for a coloured chauffeur in a grey uniform with a carnation in his button-hole; and the coloured chauffeur was to look out for a middle-aged Englishman carrying the Poetical Works of Wordsworth. In spite of the crowds at the station, they found one another without difficulty.

‘Mr. Stoyte’s chauffeur?’

‘Mr. Pordage, sah?’

Jeremy nodded and, his Wordsworth in one hand, his umbrella in the other, half extended his arms in the gesture of a self-deprecatory mannequin exhibiting, with a full and humorous consciousness of their defects, a deplorable figure accentuated by the most ridiculous clothes. ‘A poor thing,’ he seemed to be implying, ‘but myself.’ A defensive and, so to say, prophylactic disparagement had become a habit with him. He resorted to it on every sort of occasion. Suddenly a new idea came into his head. Anxiously he began to wonder whether, in this democratic Far West of theirs, one shook hands with the chauffeur—particularly if he happened to be a blackamoor, just to demonstrate that one wasn’t a pukka sahib even if one’s country did happen to be bearing the White Man’s burden. In the end he decided to do nothing. Or, to be more accurate, the decision was forced upon him—as usual, he said to himself, deriving a curious wry pleasure from the recognition of his own shortcomings. While he was hesitating what to do, the chauffeur took off his cap and, slightly over-acting the part of an old-world

negro retainer, bowed, smiled toothily and said, 'Welcome to Los Angeles, Mr. Pordage, sah!' Then, changing the tone of his chanting drawl from the dramatic to the confidential, 'I should have knowed you by your voice, Mr. Pordage,' he went on, 'even without the book.'

Jeremy laughed a little uncomfortably. A week in America had made him self-conscious about that voice of his. A product of Trinity College, Cambridge, ten years before the War, it was a small, fluty voice, suggestive of evensong in an English cathedral. At home, when he used it, nobody paid any particular attention. He had never had to make jokes about it, as he had done, in self-protection, about his appearance for example, or his age. Here, in America, things were different. He had only to order a cup of coffee or ask the way to the lavatory (which anyhow wasn't called the lavatory in this disconcerting country) for people to stare at him with an amused and attentive curiosity, as though he were a freak on show in an amusement park. It had not been at all agreeable.

'Where's my porter?' he said fussily in order to change the subject.

A few minutes later they were on their way. Cradled in the back seat of the car, out of range, he hoped, of the chauffeur's conversation, Jeremy Pordage abandoned himself to the pleasure of merely looking. Southern California rolled past the windows; all he had to do was to keep his eyes open.

The first thing to present itself was a slum of Africans and Filipinos, Japanese and Mexicans. And what permutations and combinations of black, yellow and brown! What complex bastardies! And the girls—how beautiful in their artificial silk! 'And negro ladies in white

muslin gowns.' His favourite line in *The Prelude*. He smiled to himself. And meanwhile the slum had given place to the tall buildings of a business district.

The population took on a more Caucasian tinge. At every corner there was a drug-store. The newspaper boys were selling headlines about Franco's drive on Barcelona. Most of the girls, as they walked along, seemed to be absorbed in silent prayer; but he supposed, on second thoughts, it was only gum that they were thus incessantly ruminating. Gum, not God. Then suddenly the car plunged into a tunnel and emerged into another world, a vast, untidy, suburban world of filling-stations and billboards, of low houses in gardens, of vacant lots and waste-paper, of occasional shops and office buildings and churches—Primitive Methodist churches built, surprisingly enough, in the style of the Cartuja at Granada, Catholic churches like Canterbury Cathedral, synagogues disguised as Hagia Sophia, Christian Science churches with pillars and pediments, like banks. It was a winter day and early in the morning; but the sun shone brilliantly, the sky was without a cloud. The car was traveling westwards, and the sunshine, slanting from behind them as they advanced, lit up each building, each sky-sign and billboard, as though with a spot-light, as though on purpose to show the new arrival all the sights.

EATS. COCKTAILS. OPEN NITES.

JUMBO MALTS.

DO THINGS, GO PLACES WITH CONSOL SUPER GAS!

AT BEVERLY PANTHEON FINE FUNERALS ARE NOT
EXPENSIVE.

The car sped onwards, and here in the middle of a vacant lot was a restaurant in the form of a seated bulldog, the entrance between the front paws, the eyes illuminated.

'Zoomorph,' Jeremy Pordage murmured to himself,

and again, 'zoomorph.' He had the scholar's taste for words. The bulldog shot back into the past. ✓

ASTROLOGY, NUMEROLOGY, PSYCHIC READINGS. ✓

DRIVE IN FOR NUTBERGERS—whatever they were. He resolved at the earliest opportunity to have one. A nut-berger and a jumbo malt.

STOP HERE FOR CONSOL SUPER GAS. ✓

Surprisingly, the chauffeur stopped. 'Ten gallons of Super-Super,' he ordered; then, turning back to Jeremy, 'This is our company,' he added. 'Mr. Stoyte, he's the president.' He pointed to a billboard across the street. CASH LOANS IN FIFTEEN MINUTES, Jeremy read; CONSULT COMMUNITY SERVICE FINANCE CORPORATION. 'That's another of ours,' said the chauffeur proudly.

They drove on. The face of a beautiful young woman, distorted, like a Magdalene's, with grief, stared out of a giant billboard. BROKEN ROMANCE, proclaimed the caption. SCIENCE PROVES THAT 73 PER CENT. OF ALL ADULTS HAVE HALITOSIS. ✓

IN TIME OF SORROW LET BEVERLY PANTHEON BE YOUR FRIEND.

FACIALS, PERMANENTS, MANICURES.

BETTY'S BEAUTY SHOPPE.

Next door to the beauty shoppe was a Western Union office. That cable to his mother . . . Heavens, he had almost forgotten! Jeremy leaned forward and, in the apologetic tone he always used when speaking to servants, asked the chauffeur to stop for a moment. The car came to a halt. With a preoccupied expression on his mild, rabbit-like face, Jeremy got out and hurried across the pavement, into the office.

'Mrs. Pordage, The Araucarias, Woking, England,' he wrote, smiling a little as he did so. The exquisite absurdity of that address was a standing source of amusement. 'The

Araucarias, Woking.' His mother, when she bought the house, had wanted to change the name, as being too ingenuously middle-class, too much like a joke by Hilaire Belloc. 'But that's the beauty of it,' he had protested. 'That's the charm.' And he had tried to make her see how utterly right it would be for them to live at such an address. The deliciously comic incongruity between the name of the house and the nature of its occupants! And what a beautiful, topsy-turvy appositiveness in the fact that Oscar Wilde's old friend, the witty and cultured Mrs. Pordage, should write her sparkling letters from The Araucarias, and that from these same Araucarias, these Araucarias, mark you, at *Woking*, should come the works of mingled scholarship and curiously rarefied wit for which her son had gained his reputation. Mrs. Pordage had almost instantly seen what he was driving at. No need, thank goodness, to labour your points where she was concerned. You could talk entirely in hints and anacoluthons; she could be relied on to understand. The Araucarias had remained The Araucarias.

Having written the address, Jeremy paused, pensively frowned and initiated the familiar gesture of biting his pencil—only to find, disconcertingly, that this particular pencil was tipped with brass and fastened to a chain. 'Mrs. Pordage, The Araucarias, Woking, England,' he read out aloud, in the hope that the worlds would inspire him to compose the right, the perfect message—the message his mother expected of him, at once tender and witty, charged with a genuine devotion ironically worded, acknowledging her maternal domination, but at the same time making fun of it, so that the old lady could salve her conscience by pretending that her son was entirely free, and herself the least tyrannical of mothers. It wasn't easy—particularly with this pencil on a chain. After

several abortive essays he decided, though it was definitely unsatisfactory, on : 'Climate being subtropical shall break vow re underclothes stop Wish you were here my sake not yours as you would scarcely appreciate this unfinished Bournemouth indefinitely magnified stop.'

'Unfinished what?' questioned the young woman on the further side of the counter.

'B-o-u-r-n-e-m-o-u-t-h,' Jeremy spelled out. He smiled; behind the bi-focal lenses of his spectacles his blue eyes twinkled, and, with a gesture of which he was quite unconscious, but which he always, automatically, made when he was about to utter one of his little jokes, he stroked the smooth bald spot on the top of his head. 'You know,' he said, in a particularly fluty tone, 'the bourne to which no traveller goes, if he can possibly help it.'

The girl looked at him blankly; then, inferring from his expression that something funny had been said, and remembering that courteous Service was Western Union's slogan, gave the bright smile for which the poor old chump was evidently asking, and went on reading: 'Hope you have fun at Grasse stop Tendresses Jeremy.'

It was an expensive message; but luckily, he reflected, as he took out his pocket-book, luckily Mr. Stoyte was grossly overpaying him. Three months' work, six thousand dollars. So damn the expense.

He returned to the car and they drove on. Mile after mile they went, and the suburban houses, the gas-stations, the vacant lots, the churches, the shops went along with them, interminably. To right and left, between palms, or pepper trees, or acacias, the streets of the enormous residential quarter receded to the vanishing point.

CLASSY EATS. MILE HIGH CONES.

JESUS SAVES.

HAMBURGERS.

Yet once more the traffic lights turned red. A paper-boy came to the window. 'Franco claims gains in Catalonia.' Jeremy read, and turned away. The frightfulness of the world had reached a point at which it had become for him merely boring. From the halted car in front of them, two elderly ladies, both with permanently waved white hair and both wearing crimson trousers, descended, each carrying a Yorkshire terrier. The dogs were set down at the foot of the traffic signal. Before the animals could make up their minds to use the convenience, the lights had changed. The negro shifted into first, and the car swerved forward, into the future. Jeremy was thinking of his mother. Disquietingly enough, she too had a Yorkshire terrier.

FINE LIQUORS.

TURKEY SANDWICHES.

GO TO CHURCH AND FEEL BETTER ALL THE WEEK.

WHAT IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS IS GOOD FOR YOU.

Another zoomorph presented itself, this time a real estate agent's office in the form of an Egyptian sphinx.

JESUS IS COMING SOON.

YOU TOO CAN HAVE ABIDING YOUTH WITH THRILL-PHORM BRASSIERES.

BEVERLY PANTHEON, THE CEMETERY THAT IS *DIFFERENT*.

With the triumphant expression of Puss-in-Boots enumerating the possessions of the Marquis of Carabas, the negro shot a glance over his shoulder at Jeremy, waved his hand towards the billboard and said, 'That's ours too.'

'You mean, the Beverly Pantheon?'

The man nodded. 'Finest cemetery in the world, I guess,' he said: and added, after a moment's pause, 'Maybe you's like to see it. It wouldn't hardly be out of our way.'

'That would be very nice,' said Jeremy with upper-

class English graciousness. Then, feeling that he ought to express his acceptance rather more warmly and democratically, he cleared his throat and, with a conscious effort to reproduce the local vernacular, added that it would be *swell*. Pronounced in his Trinity-College-Cambridge voice, the word sounded so unnatural that he began to blush with embarrassment. Fortunately, the chauffeur was too busy with the traffic to notice.

They turned to the right, sped past a Rosicrucian Temple, past two cat-and-dog hospitals, past a School for Drum-Majorettes and two more advertisements of the Beverly Pantheon. As they turned to the left on Sunset Boulevard, Jeremy had a glimpse of a young woman who was doing her shopping in a hydrangea-blue strapless bathing-suit, platinum curls and a black fur jacket. Then she too was whirled back into the past.

The present was a road at the foot of a line of steep hills, a road flanked by small, expensive-looking shops, by restaurants, by night-clubs shuttered against the sunlight, by offices and apartment houses. Then they too had taken their places in the irrevocable. A sign proclaimed that they were crossing the city limits of Beverly Hills. The surroundings changed. The road was flanked by the gardens of a rich residential quarter. Through trees, Jeremy saw the façades of houses, all new, almost all in good taste—elegant and witty pastiches of Lutyens' manor houses, of Little Trianons, of Monticellos; light-hearted parodies of Le Corbusier's solemn machines-for-living-in; fantastic Mexican adaptations of Mexican haciendas and New England farms.

They turned to the right. Enormous palm trees lined the road. In the sunlight, masses of mesembryanthemums blazed with an intense magenta glare. The houses succeeded one another, like the pavilions at some endless

international exhibition. Gloucestershire followed Andalusia and gave place in turn to Touraine and Oaxaca, Düsseldorf and Massachusetts.

'That's Harold Lloyd's place,' said the chauffeur, indicating a kind of Boboli. 'And that's Charlie Chaplin's. And that's Pickfair.'

The road began to mount, vertiginously. The chauffeur pointed across an intervening gulf of shadow at what seemed a Tibetan lamasery on the opposite hill, 'That's where Ginger Rogers lives. Yes, *sir*,' he nodded triumphantly, as he twirled the steering-wheel.

Five or six more turns brought the car to the top of the hill. Below and behind lay the plain, with the city like a map extending indefinitely into a pink haze.

Before and to either hand were mountains—ridge after ridge as far as the eye could reach, a desiccated Scotland, empty under the blue desert sky.

The car turned a shoulder of orange rock, and there all at once, on a summit hitherto concealed from view, was a huge sky sign, with the words, BEVERLY PANTHEON, THE PERSONALITY CEMETERY, in six-foot neon tubes and, above it, on the very crest, a full-scale reproduction of the Leaning Tower of Pisa—only this one didn't lean.

'See that?' said the negro impressively. 'That's the Tower of Resurrection. Two hundred thousand dollars, that's what it cost. Yes, *sir*.' He spoke with an emphatic solemnity. One was made to feel that the money had all come out of his own pocket.

Chapter Two

AN hour later, they were on their way again, having seen everything. Everything. The sloping lawns, like a green oasis in the mountain desolation. The groves of trees. The tombstones in the grass. The Pets' Cemetery, with its marble group after Landseer's 'Dignity and Impudence.' The tiny Church of the Poet—a miniature reproduction of Holy Trinity at Stratford-on-Avon complete with Shakespeare's tomb and a twenty-four-hour service of organ music played automatically by the Perpetual Wurlitzer and broadcast by concealed loudspeakers all over the cemetery.

Then, leading out of the vestry, the Bride's Apartment (for one was married at the Tiny Church as well as buried from it)—the Bride's Apartment that had just been re-decorated, said the chauffeur, in the style of Norma Shearer's boudoir in *Marie Antoinette*. And, next to the Bride's Apartment, the exquisite black marble Vestibule of Ashes, leading to the Crematorium, where three super-modern oil-burning mortuary furnaces were always under heat and ready for any emergency.

Accompanied wherever they went by the tremolos of the Perpetual Wurlitzer, they had driven next to look at the Tower of Resurrection—from the outside only; for it housed the executive offices of the West Coast Cemeteries Corporation. Then the Children's Corner with its statues of Peter Pan and the Infant Jesus, its groups of alabaster babies playing with bronze rabbits, its lily pool and an apparatus labelled The Fountain of Rainbow Music, from which there spouted simultaneously water,

coloured lights and the inescapable strains of the Perpetual Wurlitzer. Then, in rapid succession, the Garden of Quiet, the Tiny Taj Mahal, the Old World Mortuary. And, reserved by the chauffeur to the last, as the final and crowning proof of his employer's glory, the Pantheon itself.

Was it possible, Jeremy asked himself, that such an object existed? It was certainly not probable. The Beverly Pantheon lacked all verisimilitude, was something entirely beyond his powers to invent. The fact that the idea of it was now in his mind proved, therefore, that he must really have seen it. He shut his eyes against the landscape and recalled to his memory the details of that incredible reality. The external architecture, modelled on that of Boecklin's 'Toteninsel.' The circular vestibule. The replica of Rodin's 'Le Baiser,' illuminated by concealed pink floodlights. With its flights of black marble stairs. The seven-story columbarium, the endless galleries, its tiers on tiers of slab-sealed tombs. The bronze and silver urns of the cremated, like athletic trophies. The stained-glass windows after Burne-Jones. The texts inscribed on marble scrolls. The Perpetual Wurlitzer crooning on every floor. The sculpture . . .

That was the hardest to believe, Jeremy reflected, behind closed eyelids. Sculpture almost as ubiquitous as the Wurlitzer. Statues wherever you turned your eyes. Hundreds of them, bought wholesale, one would guess, from some monumental masonry concern at Carrara or Pietrasanta. All nudes, all female, all exuberantly nubile. The sort of statues one would expect to see in the reception-room of a high-class brothel in Rio de Janeiro. 'Oh, Death,' demanded a marble scroll at the entrance to every gallery, 'where is thy sting?' Mutely, but eloquently, the statues gave their reassuring reply. Statues

of young ladies in nothing but a very tight belt imbedded, with Bernini-like realism, in the Parian flesh. Statues of young ladies crouching; young ladies using both hands to be modest; young ladies stretching, writhing, callipygously stooping to tie their sandals, reclining. Young ladies with doves, with panthers, with other young ladies, with upturned eyes expressive of the soul's awakening. 'I am the Resurrection and the Life,' proclaimed the scrolls. 'The Lord is my shepherd; therefore shall I want nothing.' Nothing, not even Wurlitzer, not even girls in tightly buckled belts. 'Death is swallowed up in victory'—the victory no longer of the spirit but of the body, the well-fed body, for ever youthful, immortally athletic, indefatigably sexy. The Moslem paradise had had copulations six centuries long. In this new Christian heaven, progress, no doubt, would have stepped up the period to a millennium and added the joys of everlasting tennis, eternal golf and swimming.

All at once the car began to descend. Jeremy opened his eyes again, and saw that they had reached the further edge of the range of hills, among which the Pantheon was built.

Below lay a great tawny plain, chequered with patches of green and dotted with white houses. On its further side, fifteen or twenty miles away, ranges of pinkish mountains fretted the horizon.

'What's this?' Jeremy asked.

'The San Fernando Valley,' said the chauffeur. He pointed into the middle distance. 'That's where Groucho Marx has his place,' he said. 'Yes, sir.'

At the bottom of the hill the car turned to the left along a wide road that ran, a ribbon of concrete and suburban buildings, through the plain. The chauffeur put on speed; sign succeeded sign with bewildering rapidity.

MALTS CABIN DINE AND DANCE AT THE CHATEAU HONOLULU SPIRITUAL HEALING AND COLONIC IRRIGATION BLOCKLONG HOT DOGS BUY YOUR DREAM HOME NOW. And behind the signs the mathematically planted rows of apricot and walnut trees flicked past—a succession of glimpsed perspectives preceded and followed every time by fan-like approaches and retirements.

Dark-green and gold, enormous orange orchards manoeuvred, each one a mile-square regiment glittering in the sunlight. Far off, the mountains traced their uninterpretable graph of boom and slump.

‘Tarzana,’ said the chauffeur startlingly; there, sure enough, was the name suspended, in white letters, across the road. ‘There’s Tarzana College,’ the man went on, pointing to a group of Spanish-Colonial palaces clustering round a Romanesque basilica. ‘Mr. Stoyte, he’s just given them an auditorium.’

They turned to the right along a less important road. The orange groves gave place for a few miles to huge fields of alfalfa and fusty grass, then returned again more luxuriant than ever. Meanwhile the mountains on the northern edge of the valley were approaching and, slanting in from the west, another range was looming up to the left. They drove on. The road took a sudden turn, aiming, it seemed, at the point where the two ranges must come together. All at once, through a gap between two orchards, Jeremy Pordage saw a most surprising sight. About half a mile from the foot of the mountains, like an island off a cliff-bound coast, a rocky hill rose abruptly, in places almost precipitously, from the plain. On the summit of the bluff and as though growing out of it in a kind of efflorescence, stood a castle. But what a castle! The donjon was like a skyscraper, the bastions plunged headlong with the effortless swoop of concrete dams.