

The Circe

JAMES JOYCE

"The new girl"—a term catholic throughout all grammar schools—was quite pretty. Naturally, being twelve and susceptible, I promptly fell in love with her. It was my first affair.

School immediately took on a new meaning for me. No longer did I view it as an evil to be tolerated since it could not be ignored. Instead, to my jaundiced eye it became a veritable Utopia where *she* reigned supreme. I would leap out of bed in the morning, prepare my toilet without waiting for the usual intimidations from downstairs, and dash off to school a half-hour before the first bell.

My parents were almost dumbfounded by this singular behavior, which they ascribed to a newly-acquired thirst for knowledge. I never enlightened them as to my true motive, for the schoolboy's most inviolate and, I might add, most unusual rule is that his first love be a secret shared by no one, including—and here is the paradox—the object of his affections! What he hopes to accomplish by this reticence he nor anyone else seems to know.

But to return to the classroom. With *her* desk but two rows from mine, my school work became sadly neglected for, although I was careful to dissemble it, my eyes were constantly on those golden

locks and that tiny, tilted nose, and my mind was continually filled with thrilling escapades in which, in the course of an average day, I would joust with a dozen knights for the honor of having *her* wear my colors in the tournament, save *her* from the Sioux and a fate worse than death by my cunning and bravery, and fight the entire eighth grade (I was in the seventh) for one smile from *her* lips. Whenever a classmate would have the audacity to speak with her, I would bitterly—albeit tacitly—upbraid him, for was he not a mere mortal creature like myself, unworthy even to gaze upon such an angelic vision as she?

This sort of thing continued for about three months, during which time I said not a word to her nor divulged to anyone my "great secret." But then came the summer holidays, and into the vortex of activities which occupy a vacationing twelve-year-old was swept my infatuation, and there it perished.

The following year I returned to school quite rational again, and today, six years later, that same young lady is one of my best friends, although she is still unaware of the turmoil she once enkindled in my young soul. Someday I think perhaps I shall tell her about it.