



CHAPTER I

The Forsytes was an upper middle-class family in full plumage¹. But no branch of this family had a liking for the other, between no three members of whom existed sympathy. On June 15, eighteen eighty-six, about four of the afternoon, the observer who chanced to be present at the house of old Jolyon Forsyte, could see the highest efflorescence of the Forsytes.

This was the occasion of engagement of Miss June Forsyte, old Jolyon's granddaughter, to Mr. Philip Bosinney. The whole family were present, even Aunt Ann, surrounded by the effigies of three generations of Forsytes.

When a Forsyte was engaged, married, or born, the Forsytes were present; when a Forsyte died — but no Forsyte had as yet died; they did not die; death was contrary to their principles, they took precautions against it. They cared a lot about their property. They were on their guard².

¹ **in full plumage** — во всем её блеске

² **They were on their guard.** — Они были начеку.

Near the piano was a man of bulk and stature who was wearing two waistcoats on his wide chest, two waistcoats and a ruby pin, instead of the single satin waistcoat and diamond pin of more usual occasions, and his shaven, square, old face, the colour of pale leather, with pale eyes, had its most dignified look. This was Swithin Forsyte. Close to the window, the other twin, James Forsyte, over six feet in height, but very lean. Not far from him, listening to a lady in brown, his only son Soames¹, pale and well-shaved, dark-haired, rather bald. Behind him his cousin, the tall George, son of the fifth Forsyte, Roger. Something had affected them all.

Seated in a row close to one another were three ladies: Aunts Ann, Hester (the two Forsyte maids), and Juley (short for Julia). With her elder and younger sister she lived now in the house of Timothy, her sixth and youngest brother. Each of these ladies held fans in their hands.

In the centre of the room, under the chandelier, stood the head of the family, old Jolyon himself. Eighty years of age, with his fine, white hair, his dome-like forehead², his little, dark grey eyes, and an immense white moustache, he had a patriarchal look. He held himself extremely upright, and his shrewd, steady eyes had not lost their clear shining.

Between him and the four other brothers who were present, James, Swithin, Nicholas, and Roger, there was much difference, much similarity. In turn, each of these four brothers was very different from the other, yet they, too, were alike.

Philip Bosinney was a young man without fortune. When he had paid his duty call³ to Aunts Ann, Juley, and Hester, in a soft grey hat, not even a new one, Aunt Hester took it for a

¹ **Soames** — Сомс

² **dome-like forehead** — лоб, подобный куполу

³ **duty call** — официальный визит

strange, disreputable cat¹. She was puzzled when “the cat” did not move.

The Forsytes called Bosinney “the Buccaneer”.

Aunts reproached June afterwards about the hat. June answered: “Oh! what does it matter? Phil never knows what he’s got on!”

What indeed was this young man, who engaged to June, old Jolyon’s acknowledged heiress? Who had done so well for himself? He was an architect. Dangerous, ah, dangerous!

June was nineteen, and she was notorious.

This Bosinney was of medium height and strong build, with a pale, brown face, a dust-coloured moustache, and hollow cheeks. His forehead sloped back towards the crown of his head, like foreheads seen in the lion-house at the Zoo. He had sherry-coloured eyes², inattentive at times. June stood in front, as somebody once said, ‘all hair and spirit,’ with fearless blue eyes, a firm jaw, and red-gold hair.

A tall woman, with a beautiful figure, which some member of the family had once compared to a goddess, stood looking at these two with a shadowy smile.

Her hands in gloves were crossed one over the another. There was warmth, but little colour, in her cheeks; her eyes were large and dark. Her lips were sensitive, sensuous and sweet like a flower.

Bosinney noticed her, and asked her name.

June took her lover up to³ the woman with the beautiful figure.

“Irene is my greatest friend,” she said. “Please be good friends, you two!”

¹ **took it for a strange cat** — приняла её за бродячую кошку

² **sherry-coloured eyes** — карие глаза

³ **took her lover up to** — подвела своего жениха

At the little lady's command they all three smiled; and while they were smiling, Soames Forsyte, silently appearing from behind the woman with the beautiful figure, who was his wife, said: "Ah! Introduce me too!"

At the window his father, James, was looking at the cups.

"I wonder at Jolyon's allowing this engagement," he said to Aunt Ann. "This young Bosinney has got nothing!"

Aunt Ann looked up from her velvet chair. She made no reply, for she rarely spoke. Her look was as good as an answer.

"Well," he said, "Irene did not have money, too. But Soames was in such a hurry."

Aunt Ann knew what he was thinking. If Irene had no money she would not be so foolish as to do anything wrong.

"How are you, uncle?" June stood before James. The brightness faded from James's visage.

"How are you?" he said, brooding over her. "So you're going to Wales tomorrow to visit your young man's aunts? You'll have a lot of rain there."

June shook hands one by one¹ with her three great-uncles, and turned to Aunt Ann. A very sweet look had come into the old lady's face; she kissed the girl's cheek with trembling fervour.

"Well, my dear," she said, "and so you're leaving us for a whole month!"

The girl passed on, and Aunt Ann looked after her slim little figure. "Yes," she thought, "quite a lot of people come to congratulate her. She must be very happy."

She thought of June's father, young Jolyon, who had run away with a foreign girl. Ah! what a sad blow to his father and to them all. Such a promising young fellow! A sad blow, though there was no public scandal, most fortunately, Jo's wife was

¹ **one by one** — по очереди

not seeking for the divorce! A long time ago! And when June's mother died, six years ago, Jo had married that woman, and they had two children now, so she had heard.

"Well, Aunt Ann?" said a voice behind.

Soames Forsyte, flat-shouldered, clean-shaven, flat-cheeked, looked downwards and aslant at Aunt Ann.

"And what do you think of the engagement?" he asked.

Aunt Ann's eyes rested on him proudly; the eldest of the nephews since young Jolyon's departure from the family nest, he was now her favourite.

"Very nice for the young man," she said; "and he's a good-looking young fellow; but I doubt if he's quite the right lover for dear June."

"She'll tame him," he said.

"How is dear Irene?" asked Aunt Ann.

Soames's smile died.

"Pretty well," he said. "She complains that she can't sleep, but she sleeps better than I do." He looked at his wife, who was talking to Bosinney by the door.

Aunt Ann sighed.

After the party Nicholas and Roger were walking together, directing their steps alongside Hyde Park¹. The day was bright, the trees of the Park in the full beauty of mid-June foliage.

"Yes," said Roger, "she's a good-looking woman, that wife of Soames's. They say they don't get on²."

"She had no money," replied Nicholas.

He himself had married a very rich woman.

"What was her father?"

¹ **Hyde Park** — Гайд-парк (королевский парк площадью 1,4 км² в центре Лондона. Традиционное место политических митингов, празднеств и гуляний).

² **they don't get on** — они не ладят

“Heron¹ was his name, a Professor, so they tell me.”

Roger shook his head.

“There’s no money in that,” he said. “Soames will have trouble with her; remember my words, he’ll have trouble!”

Nicholas licked his lips.

“She’s a pretty woman.”

“How did he get her?” asked Roger presently. “Her dresses must cost him a lot.”

“Ann tells me,” replied Nicholas, “he was mad about her. She refused him five times.”

“That young Bosinney will never have success. He’s got an idea of improving English architecture; there’s no money in that!”

They entered the station.

CHAPTER II

Soames Forsyte had left his wife sitting on the sofa in the drawing-room, her hands crossed in her lap, waiting for him to go out. This was not unusual. It happened, in fact, every day.

He could not understand what she found wrong with him. He did not drink! Did he run into debt, or gamble, or swear; was he violent; did he stay out at night? On the contrary.

The profound, subdued aversion which he felt in his wife was a mystery to him, and a source of the most terrible irritation. She had made a mistake, and did not love him. She had tried to love him and could not love him.

Soames had never met such a woman. They could go anywhere and all the men were attracted by her; their looks, manners, voices, betrayed it. Her behaviour under this attention was beyond reproach. Soames regarded her as part

¹ Heron — Эрон

of his property. But he suspected that she could give as well as receive; and she gave him nothing!

“Then why did she marry me?” was his continual thought. He had forgotten his courtship; that year and a half he was devising schemes for her entertainment, giving her gifts, proposing to her periodically, and keeping her other admirers away with his perpetual presence. He had forgotten the day when he crowned his labours with success. He certainly did not remember the look on her face — strange, passive, appealing, when suddenly one day she had yielded, and said that she would marry him.

Soames walked eastwards. It was necessary to re-build his house, unless he decided to move into the country, and build.

For the hundredth time that month he thought about this problem. He was very rich, with an increasing income for three thousand a year. “I can manage eight thousand easily enough,” he thought.

The times were good for building. The site he had seen at Robin Hill could not be better! Within twelve miles of Hyde Park Corner, the value of the land will certain go up; so that house, if built in really good style, was a first-class investment.

To get Irene out of London, away from opportunities to see people, away from her friends and those who put ideas into her head! That was the thing!¹ She became a great friend of June! June disliked him. He returned the sentiment. They were of the same blood.

The house would please Irene, she would enjoy the decoration, she was very artistic!

The house must be in good style, like that last house of Parkes, which had a tower; but Parkes had himself said that his architect was ruinous.

¹ **That was the thing!** — Вот что самое главное!

This was why he had thought of Bosinney. Since the dinner at Swithin's he had made enquiries. The result was meagre, but encouraging: one of the new school.

Soames had not been able to discover what houses Bosinney had built, nor what his charges were. But the more he reflected on the idea, the more he liked it. Bosinney could display his talents, for this house must be no common edifice.

Bosinney's office was in Sloane Street¹, very close, so that he would be able to keep his eye continually on the plans.

Again, Irene will not object to leave London because her greatest friend's lover will get the job. June's marriage might depend on it. Irene could not decently stand in the way of June's marriage; she would never do that, he knew her too well. And June would be pleased; of this he saw the advantage.

Bosinney looked clever. He would be easy to deal with in money matters. That evening, on his return from the City, Soames called at Bosinney's office². He found the architect smoking a pipe, and ruling oil lines on a plan. Soames refused a drink, and came at once to the point³.

"If you've nothing better to do on Sunday, come down with me to Robin Hill, and give me your opinion on a building site."

"Are you going to build?"

"Perhaps," said Soames; "but don't speak of it. I just want your opinion."

"I understand," said the architect.

Soames peered about the room.

"What do you pay for an office like this?" said he.

"Fifty too much," replied Bosinney.

This answer impressed Soames.

"Yes, I think so. I'll call for you on Sunday about eleven."

¹ **Sloane Street** — Слоун-стрит

² **called at Bosinney's office** — зашёл в контору Боссини

³ **and came at once to the point** — и сразу перешёл к делу

The following Sunday therefore he called for Bosinney, and drove him to the station. On arriving at Robin Hill, they found no cab, and started to walk the mile and a half to the site.

It was the 1st of August, a perfect day, with a burning sun and cloudless sky.

“Gravel soil,” remarked Soames, and he glanced at the coat Bosinney wore. Into the side-pockets of this coat were thrust bundles of papers. Soames noted these and other peculiarities. He did not like them much, but, indeed, if the fellow can build houses, what do his clothes matter?

“I told you,” said Soames, “that I want this house to be a surprise, so don’t say anything about it. I never talk of my affairs until they’re finished.’

Bosinney nodded.

“Let women into your plans,” pursued Soames, “and you never know where it’ll end.”

“Ah!” said Bosinney, “women are the devil!”

“Oh!” muttered Soames, “so you’re beginning to...” He stopped, but added: “June’s got a temper of her own.”

“A temper is not a bad thing in an angel.”

Soames had never called Irene an angel. He made no reply.

Tussocks of feathery grass covered the rough surface, and out of these the larks soared into the haze of sunshine. On the far horizon, over a countless succession of fields and hedges, rose a line of downs.

It was the chosen site.

“The agent lives in that cottage,” said Soames; “he’ll give us some lunch. We’d better have lunch before we go into this matter.”

“Hallo! Forsyte,” said Bosinney, “I’ve found the place for your house! Look here!”

Soames stood and looked, then he said, coldly:

“You may be very clever, but this site will cost me more.”

“But just look at the view!”

A plain of fields and hedges spread to the distant grey-blue downs. In a silver streak to the right could be seen the line of the river.

The sky was so blue, and the sun so bright, that an eternal summer seemed to reign over this prospect. The heat danced over the corn.

Soames looked.

“I could build you a house here,” said Bosinney, breaking the silence at last.

“So,” replied Soames. “You haven’t got to pay for it.”

“For about eight thousand I could build you a palace.”

Soames had become very pale. He dropped his eyes, and said stubbornly:

“I can’t afford it.”

They spent some time there going into particulars of the projected house, and then Soames returned to the agent’s cottage.

He came out in about half an hour, and, joining Bosinney, started for the station.

“Well,” he said, hardly opening his lips, “I’ve taken that site of yours, after all.”

And again he was silent.

CHAPTER III

On the evening of August 8, a week after the expedition to Robin Hill, in the dining-room of this house, Soames and Irene were seated at dinner.

Soames liked to talk during dinner about business, or what he was buying, and so long as he talked Irene’s silence did not distress him. This evening he had found it impossible to talk.

The decision to build had been weighing on his mind all the week, and he had made up his mind to tell her.

She had not looked at him once since they sat down; and he wondered what she had been thinking about all the time.

Out of his other property, out of all the things he had collected, his silver, his pictures, his houses, his investments, he got a secret and intimate feeling; out of her he got none.

He had married this woman, conquered her, made her his own, and her behaviour seemed to him contrary to the most fundamental of all laws.

She was always silent, passive, gracefully averse; and he asked himself: Must I always go on like this?

Like most novel readers of his generation (and Soames was a great novel reader), he thought that it was only a question of time, in the end the husband always gained the affection of his wife.

He often took Irene to the theatre, instinctively choosing the modern plays with the modern problem, so fortunately different from any conjugal problem in real life. He found that they too always ended in the same way, even when there was a lover in the case.

But Irene's silence this evening was exceptional. He had never before seen such an expression on her face. When she had left the room, Soames filled his glass with wine and said:

"Has anybody been here this afternoon?"

"June."

"What did she want? She came to talk about her lover, I suppose?"

Irene made no reply.

"It looks to me," continued Soames, "that June loves her Buccaneer more than he loves her."

Irene's eyes made him feel uncomfortable.

"Don't say so!" she exclaimed.

"Why not? Anybody can see it."

“They cannot. And if they could, it’s disgraceful to say so.”

“You’re a pretty wife!” said Soames. But secretly he wondered at the heat of her reply; it was unlike her. “I can tell you one thing: you’re mad about June! But you won’t see her often in future; we’re going to live in the country.”

He had expected a cry of dismay; but he received the silence.

“You don’t seem interested,” he was obliged to add.

“I knew it already.”

He looked at her sharply.

“Who told you?”

“June.”

“How did she know?”

Irene did not answer. Soames said:

“It’s a fine job for Bosinney. I suppose she’s told you all about it?”

“Yes.”

There was another pause, and then Soames said:

“I suppose you don’t want to go?”

Irene made no reply.

“Well, I can’t tell what you want. You never seem contented here.”

She took the vase of roses and left the room. Soames remained seated. For this he had signed that contract! For this he was going to spend some ten thousand pounds! Bosinney’s phrase came back to him: “Women are the devil!”

But presently he grew calmer. He lighted his cigarette. After all, it was no good worrying¹. A beautiful, warm night. ...

In truth, June had come in that afternoon with shining eyes, and the words: “Soames is a good fellow! It’s splendid for Phil!”

¹ it was no good worrying — не стоило волноваться

Irene's face remaining dark and puzzled, she went on:

"Your new house at Robin Hill, of course. What? Don't you know?"

Irene did not know.

"Oh! I suppose I talk too much..." Looking impatiently at her friend, she cried: "You look as if you didn't care. Phil was wanting for the chance all this time. Now you'll see what he can do;" and thereupon she told Irene the whole story.

Since her own engagement she had not seemed much interested in her friend's situation. Moreover, she was sorry for the woman who had made such a mistake in her life, such a vast, ridiculous mistake.

"He will make all the decorations as well. It's perfect!" June broke into laughter¹, her little figure quivered gleefully. She stopped; and presently, finding her friend so unresponsive, went away. She looked back from the pavement, and Irene was still standing in the doorway. In response to her farewell wave, Irene put her hand to her brow, and, turning slowly, shut the door.

Soames went to the drawing-room presently, and peered at her through the window. He came back to the dining-room unnoticed.

CHAPTER IV

Soames's determination to build went the round of the family. It was not his fault, June, in the fulness of her heart, had told Mrs. Small, Mrs. Small told Aunt Ann at once, who, smiling as she lay back on her pillows, said in her distinct, trembling old voice:

¹ **June broke into laughter** — Джун расхохоталась