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perhaps what we today brag about that naturally and therefore is no longer sinful. Perhaps it is our modern inability to recognize our living sin as a missed sign in our daily lives. I can certainly remember very easily my feeling justified in my actions when younger, who purposefully hurt others only to admit silently later that I was so very wrong. As I see it, this is what this book is about, not so much making a mistake, something irretrievably wrong, but learning to deal with the kind of consequences that will come out of our initial disgusting behavior. I tend to think that this book may have been better titled, *Odious Wrong*, a separate world. However, even if the author had considered this, he knew that it was a conclusion that was an important part, a part that makes a person being able to find forgiveness of himself rather than carry the weight around forever. It's hard enough to resist mistakes... and obviously it's an uncomfortable process for us but it's a great thing to be able to find peace, so you can continue not only but live and and ... especially since Phineas I said: I'm too busy for the sport and he went into his rambling moans and stirring words, and I thought the matter was resolved until the end he said: Look, mate, if I can't play sports, you're going to play them for me and I lost a part of myself to him then and a soaring sense of freedom showed that this should be my goal: to be part of Phineas. Switch Nav Join today and never see them again. When you enter your email address, you agree to receive emails from Shmoop and check that you are over 13 years old. The head of One! returned to Devon School not long ago and found it looking strangely newer than when I was a student there fifteen years ago. It seemed more self-confident than I remembered it, more perpendicular and strait-laced, with narrower windows and shiny wood, as if a layer of varnish had been put to everything for better preservation. But, of course, fifteen years ago the war began. Maybe the school wasn't as good as it was in those days; perhaps the varnish, along with everything else, went to war. I don't quite like this glossy new surface because it made the school look like a museum, and that's exactly what it was for me, and what I didn't want it to be. In a deep, silent way in which the feeling becomes stronger than thought, I always felt that Devon School appeared on the day I entered it, was vividly real when I was a student there, and then blinked like a candle the day I left. Now here he was in the end, retained some attentive sides with varnish and wax. Saved with it like stale air in an unopened room, there was a well-known fear that surrounded and filled those days so much that I didn't even know he was there. Because not familiar with the lack of fear and the fact that it looked like, I was unable to determine his presence. Looking back for fifteen years, I saw with great clarity the fear in which I lived, which should mean that at half-time I was able to come up with a very important case: I must have escaped from it. I felt an echo of fear, and with it I felt unhinged, uncontrollable joy, which was his accompaniment and opposite face, a joy that erupted sometimes in those days as the northern lights in the black sky. There were a few places now that I would like to see. Both were scary sites and that's why I wanted to see them. So after lunch at the Devon Inn I went back to school. It was a damp, nondescript time of year, by the end of November, a kind of wet, self-pitying November day when every speck of dirt stands out clearly. Devon, fortunately, had very little of such weather -- the icy winter clamp, or the radiant New Hampshire summer, were more characteristic of him - but that day he blew wet, moody gusts around walked along Gilman Street, the best street in town. The houses were as beautiful and unusual as I remembered. Clever modernization of old colonial manes, extensions in the Victorian forest, capacious Greek Renaissance temples lined up on the street as impressive and just as forbidding as ever. I rarely saw anyone walk into one of them, or someone playing on the lawn, or even an open window. Today, with their lack of ivy and stripped, moaning trees at home looked more elegant and more lifeless than ever. Like all old, good schools, Devon did not stand isolated behind walls and gates, but came out naturally from the city that produced it. So there was no sudden moment of meeting as I approached him and I had houses along Gilman Street becoming more defensive, which meant I was near the school and then more exhausted, which meant I was in it. There was nothing to distract me as I made my way through a wide courtyard called the Far Common, and up to a building as red brick and balanced, like other large buildings, but with a large dome and bell and clock and Latin over the doorway - First Academy Building.rdn through swinging doors I reached the marble foyer, and stopped at the foot of the long white marble staircase. Although they were old stairs, the worn moons in the middle of each step were not very deep. Marble should be extraordinarily hard. This seemed very likely, though for all my thought of these ladders, this exceptional hardness did not come to me to know. Surprisingly, I overlooked this important fact. There was nothing to notice, but once it was they certainly had the same stairs I walked up and down at least once a day of my Devon life. They were the same as ever. And me? Well, I naturally felt older - I started at that point an emotional study to mark how far my recovery went - I was taller, more generally relative to those ladders. I had more money and success and security than in the days when ghosts seemed to go up and down them with me. I turned away and went back outside. The Far Common is still empty, and I walked alone down wide gravel paths among those very Republican, bankerish trees, New England elms, to the far side of the school. Devon is sometimes considered the most beautiful school in New England, and even on this dark day its power was approved. It is the beauty of small squares of order - a large courtyard, a group of trees, three similar dormitories, a circle of old houses - living together in disputed harmony. You felt that the dispute could start again at any time; in fact it was: from the dean's residence, a clean and authentic colonial house, there now sprouted ell great bare image window. Someday the dean is probably completely enclosed in a glass house and be happy like a sandbox. Everything in Devon was slowly changing and slowly aligning with what was before. So it was logical to hope that since the buildings and deans and curriculum could achieve this, I could have achieved perhaps unknowingly already reached this growth and harmony itself. I wanted to know more about it when I saw the second place I came to see. So I wandered through the past of a balanced red brick dormitory with a cobweb of leafy ivy clinging to them, through a dilapidated salient town that had invaded the school a hundred yards away, past a solid gymnasium full of students at that hour, but silent as a monument on the street, past a field house called a cage - I remembered now that the cage reference was for the first weeks in Devon I thought this must be a place of severe punishment - and I achieved a huge open sweep of the land known as Playing Fields.Devon was both scientific and very sporty, so the playgrounds were huge and, except for this time of year, constantly used. Now they have reached the damp and empty of me, the unfortunate tennis courts on the left, the huge football and football and lacrosse fields in the middle, the woods on the right, and at the far end of a small river are discovered from this distance by a few bare trees along its banks. It was such a gray and foggy day that I couldn't see the other side of the river where there was a small stadium. I started a long trudge through the fields and went some distance before I paid attention to the soft and dirty ground that dooms my city shoes. I didn't stop. Not far from the center of the field were thin lakes of muddy water, which I had to make my way around, my unrecognizable shoes making obscene sounds as I lifted them out of the swamp. With nothing to block his wind threw wet gusts at me; any other time I would feel like a fool slogging through the mud and rain, just to look at the tree. A small mist hung over the river so that as I approached it I felt isolated from everything but the river and a few trees beside it. The wind was blowing here more steadily, and I began to feel the cold. I never wore a hat, and forgot my gloves. There were several trees grimly reaching into the mist. Any one of them could have been the one I was looking for. It's incredible that there were other trees that looked like him here. It loomed in my memory as a huge lonely splash dominating the riverbank, forbidding like an artillery piece, high as a bean stalk. But there was a scattered grove of trees, none of them of any particular greatness. Moving on the soaked, rough grass I began to study each of them carefully, and finally identified the tree which I was looking for with the help of some small scars rising along its trunk, and the limb stretching over the and another thinner limb grows beside it. It was a tree, and it seemed to me standing there to remind those people of the giants of your childhood that you encounter years later, and find that they are not just less in relation to your height, but that they are completely smaller, shrivelled in age. In this double downgrade the old giants became pigs while you looked the other way. The tree was not only stripped in the cold season, seemed tired of the age, weakened, dry. I was grateful, very grateful that I saw it. So the more things stay the same, the more they change eventually - plus c'est la m'me chose, plus changes. Nothing can stand, no tree, no love, not even death from violence. Changed, I headed back through the mud. I was soaked; anyone could see that it was time to get out of the rain. The tree was a huge, angry, steely black spire next to the river. I'd be damned if I stood up to him. Hell with it. No one but Phineas could come up with such a crazy idea. He certainly didn't see the slightest intimidation about it. He wouldn't, or wouldn't admit it, if he did. Not Phineas. What I like most about this tree, he said in his voice, which is equivalent to the sound of a hypnotist's eye, what I like is that it's such a cinch! He opened his green eyes wider and gave us his maniac look, and only a smirk on his wide mouth with his droll, a slightly protruding upper lip assured us that he was not completely blunt. Is that what you like the most? I said sarcastically. I said a lot of things sarcastically that summer; it was my sarcastic summer of 1942. Hey, he said. This strange New England affirmative - maybe it's written by Ay - always made me laugh like Finney knew, so I had to laugh, which made me feel less sarcastic and less scared. There were three more with us - Phineas in those days almost always moved in groups the size of a hockey team - and they stood with me, looking with camouflaged apprehension from him to the tree. Its soaring black trunk was mounted with rough wooden pegs leading to a substantial limb that lengthens further to the water. Standing on this limb, you could have a huge effort to jump far enough into the river for safety. So we heard. At least a 17-year-old bunch can do it; but they had a decisive advantage of the year over us. No Upper Middler, which was the name for our class at Devon School, has ever tried. Naturally, Finney had to be the first to try, and just as naturally he was going to inveigle the others, us, in trying him out with him. We weren't even Upper Midler for sure. For this was a summer session, just set up to keep up with the pace of war. We were in transit that summer from groveling the status of the Lower Middlers to the near-respectability of Upper Middles. Class above, the elderly, the call of bait, practically soldiers, rushed rushing of us to war. They were caught in accelerated courses and first aid programs and a physical tightening regime that included jumping from that tree. We are still calm, numb reading Virgil and playing tag in the river further downstream. Until Finney thought about the tree. We stood looking at him, four locks terrifying, one of excitement. Do you want to go first? Finney asked us, rhetorically. We just looked at him quietly and he started undressing, undressing up his underpants. For such an extraordinary athlete - even as Nizhny Midler Phineas was the best athlete in school - he was not spectacularly built. He was my height - five feet eight and a half inches (I was claiming five feet nine inches before he became my roommate, but he said in public that the simple, shocking self-acceptance of him, no, you're the same height I am, five to eight and a half. He weighed a hundred and fifty pounds, a bilious ten pounds more than I, who flowed from his legs to his torso around his shoulders to his arms and full of strong neck in a continuous, unemphatic unity of strength. He began clambering up a wooden peg nailed to the side of the tree, his back muscles running like a panther. The pegs didn't seem strong enough to hold his weight. Finally he set foot on a branch that reached a little further to the water. Is this the one they're jumping with? None of us knew. If I do that, you're all going to do it, aren't you? We didn't say anything very clearly. Well, he exclaimed, that's my contribution to the fighting! and he jumped out, fell through the tops of some lower branches and crashed into the water. Great! He said, bouncing instantly to the surface again, his wet hair plastered in droll bangs on his forehead. That's the most interesting thing I've had this week. Who's next? I was. This tree flooded me with anxiety all the way up to my tingling fingers. My head began to feel unnaturally light, and the vague rustles from the nearby forest came to me as if muted and filtered. I must have been in a mild state of shock. Isolated by this, I took off my clothes and started to climb the pegs. I don't remember saying anything. The branch from which he jumped was slimmer than it looked from the ground, and much higher. It was impossible to get out on it far enough to be well over the river. I'll have to spring away or risk falling in the shallows next to the bank. Come on, Finney drew from below, stop standing and bragging. I recognized with automatic tension that the view was very impressive from here. When they torpedo the troops, he shouted, you can't stand around admiring the view. Jump! What did I even do here? Why did I let Finney talk me into such stupid things? Was he getting some sort of hold Me? Jump! With the feeling that I was throwing my life away, I jumped into space. Some tips of branches snapped past me and then I crashed into the water. My feet hit the soft dirt bottom, and immediately I was on the surface congratulated. I felt good. I think it was better than Finney, said Alvin - better known as Leper - Lebellier, who was bidding for an ally in a dispute he foresaw. Okay, mate, Finney said in his heartfelt, penetrating voice that the tool reverberating in your chest, don't start awarding prizes until you've completed the course. The tree is waiting. The leper closed his mouth as if forever. He didn't argue or refuse. He didn't back down. He became inanimate. But the other two, Chet Douglas and Bobby zine, were quite vocal, complaining shrilly about school rules, the dangers of stomach cramps, physical disabilities that they had never mentioned before. It's you, mate, Finney finally told me, it's just you and me. We were best friends at the time. You were very good, Finney said good-naturedly, as soon as I shamed you for it. You haven't shamed anyone into anything. Yes, I did. I'm good for you this way. You have a tendency to back away from things otherwise. I never give up on anything in my life! I cried, my indignation on this charge is naturally stronger because it was so true. You're stupid! Phineas just walked quietly, or rather, flowed, rolling forward in his white sneakers with such thoughtless unity of movement that the walk did not describe it. I went beside him through huge playing fields to the gym. Underfoot a healthy green lawn was brushed with dew, and ahead of us we could see a faint green mist hanging over the grass, shot through the twilight sun. Phineas stopped talking this time, so now I could hear the cricket noises and the bird cries of dusk, the gymnasium truck shooting on an empty sports road a quarter of a mile away, the explosion of faint, isolated laughter carried to us from the back door of the gym, and then over all, cool and matriarchal, six-hour bells from the Academy Building Dome, the calmest, most bearable bell in the world civilized, calm, invincible, and final. The toll swam over the vast peaks of all elms, large oblique roofs and formidable chimneys of dormitories, narrow and fragile old roofops, through the open skies of New Hampshire to us, returning from the river. We better hurry up, or we'll be late for dinner, I said, breaking into what Finney called my West Point pitch. Phineas was not much fond of West Point in particular or power in general, but simply considered power a necessary evil against which happiness was achieved by a reaction, a spin-holder who brought back all the insults he threw at him. My West the pitch was unbearable, but he had his right foot flashed in the middle of my quick walk, and I went pitching forward into the grass. Get those one hundred and fifty pounds from me! I screamed because he was sitting on my back. Finney got up, brilliantly patted me on the head and moved further down the field, not having to look around for my counterattack, but relying on his extrasensory ears, his ability to feel someone in the air, go at him from behind. As I jumped on it he side-stepped easily but I just managed to kick it as I shot past. He caught my leg and had a short wrestling match on the turf, which he won. Better hurry, he said, or you'll be put in the guard. We walked again, faster; Bobby, Leper, and Chet were calling us in front, for God's sake, to hurry up, and then Finney locked me in his strongest trap again, so I suddenly became his collaborator. As we walked fast along I abruptly resented the bell and my West Point pitch and rushing and matching. Finney was right. And there was only one way to show him that. I threw my hip against him, catching him off guard, and he was instantly down, certainly pleased. That's why he liked me so much. When I jumped down, knees on his chest, he couldn't ask for anything better. We struggled in some equality for a while, and then when we were sure we were late for dinner, we interrupted. He and I walked past the gym and approached the first group of dormitories that were dark and quiet. There were only two hundred of us in Devon in the summer, not enough to fill most of the school. We passed the director's sprawling house -- empty, he was doing something for the government in Washington; past the chapel - empty again, used only for a short time in the morning; past the Building of the First Academy, where there were some dim lights shining from several of its many windows, the Masters at work in their classrooms there; down a short slope into a wide and well-cropped common on which light fell from the large surrounding Georgian buildings. A dozen boys lounging there on the grass after lunch, and the kitchen rattle from the wing of one of the buildings accompanied their conversation. The sky was constantly darkened, which brought up light in dormitories and old houses; Loud phonograph far from playing Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree, rejected it and played They are either too young or too old, became more ambitious with the Warsaw concert, mellow with the Yuekunchik Suite, and then stopped. Finney and I went to our room. Under the yellow lights of the study we read our hardy assignments; I was halfway through Tess from the d'Urbervilles, he continued his bewildered struggle with the Far From the Madding Crowd, amused that there must be people named Gabriel Oak and Bathsheba Everden. Our illegal radio, turned out to be too low to be understood, broadcast the news. There was rustling in the early summer of the wind movement; the elderly, allowed later than we were, came rather quietly back as the bell sounded ten times. The boys wandered past our door to the bathroom and there was a period of constantly dousing the shower water. Then all over the school began to put out the lights. We undressed and I put on my pajamas, but Phineas, who had heard that they were non-military, did not; there was a silence in which it was clear that we were praying, and then that summer school day came to an end. 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