

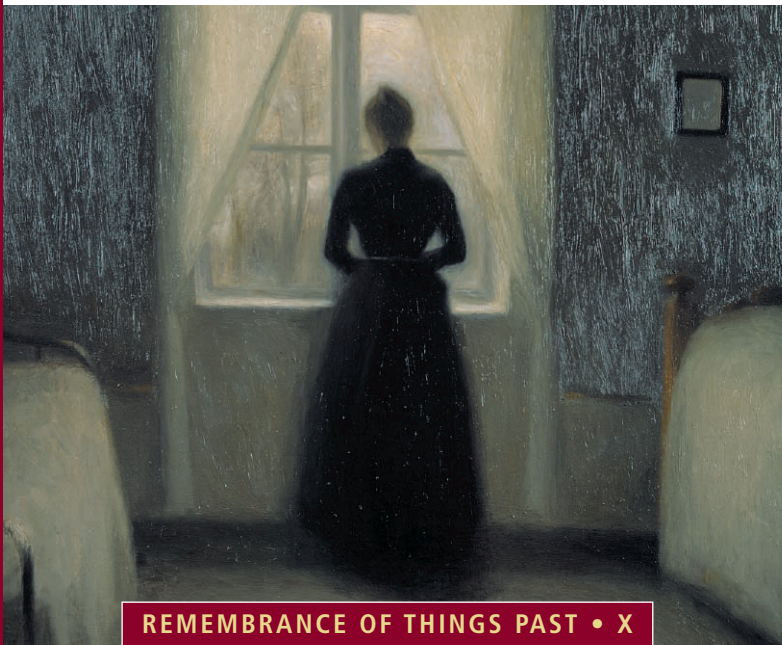
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Marcel Proust
The Captive
Part II

Read by **Neville Jason**



NA320312D

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST • X

1	Brichot alights from a tram	7:50
2	Baron de Charlus with darkened eyelids	4:54
3	The monotony of pleasures	4:50
4	Jealousies	8:25
5	Entering the Verdurin's hall	6:40
6	Tensions and pretensions at the Verdurins	5:44
7	M. de Charlus's inconstancy	13:33
8	Morel and the other musicians assemble	8:13
9	A short interval – and the septet begins again	7:54
10	The music finishes	4:40
11	M. de Charlus begins to withdraw	6:43
12	Mme Verdurin	8:04
13	My regrets and concerns	7:21
14	Still detained	4:44
15	Mme Verdurin warns Morel	10:06
16	M. de Charlus comes back	8:46
17	I arrive home	6:26
18	Recriminations about Balbec	12:50

19	'It is better that we should part...'	6:56
20	Further tests	9:45
21	'My little Albertine...'	3:32
22	In the morning...	2:50
23	Play-acting	4:55
24	A glimpse	5:14
25	More games	7:27
26	Albertine, the pianola and images	6:01
27	The old doubts	5:48
28	Winter was at an end	6:12
29	Two features of Albertine	6:50
30	Spring – and anger emerges	8:43
31	Intimate stratagems	6:28
32	'Is Albertine out of bed yet?'	5:45
33	A visit to Versailles	4:52
34	Parisian evocation	4:40
35	I rang for Françoise	2:32

Total time: 3:56:36

Marcel Proust
The Captive
Part II

Marcel, accompanied by the pedantic Brichot, attends a musical evening at the Verdurins. Marcel has decided to keep his visit secret from Albertine, because a previously unpublished work by Vinteuil is to be played, and he has heard that the composer's daughter Mlle Vinteuil and her friend are to be present. Marcel knows them to be a lesbian couple, and the revelation by Albertine of her long-standing friendship with them has confirmed his suspicions regarding Albertine's sexual proclivities. He is determined to keep Albertine from having any contact with the two women.

In the event, Mlle Vinteuil and her friend fail to appear. The music is a revelation to Marcel, and he is astonished to learn that it has been patiently pieced together from Vinteuil's notes after his death by the one person capable of doing so, his daughter's friend. Thus the person who caused Vinteuil the greatest anguish during his lifetime has done him the greatest service after his death. Marcel realises that even the sadistic scene he witnessed many years earlier, in which Vinteuil's daughter and her friend desecrated the composer's photograph, was

born out of their love and respect for him, which in the end triumphed over their perversity.

The concert at the Verdurins house has been arranged by the Baron de Charlus in order to promote the career of his protege, the violinist Charles Morel. Over time Charlus has ceased to worry about hiding his homosexuality; he openly flirts with the Verdurins' footman, and proudly displays his intimacy with Morel, the star performer of the evening. Due to his position in the aristocratic circle of the Faubourg St. Germain he has managed to attract members of the highest society for the occasion. But Charlus has already offended Mme Verdurin by his high-handed manner in dictating to her whom she may and may not invite, and his offence is further compounded when he fails to introduce her to the grand friends who come up to greet him. Furious, she decides to punish Charlus by destroying his relationship with Morel. She tells the violinist that the nature of his friendship with Charlus is public knowledge and is ruining his career. Morel is taken in by her story, and decides that his best course of

action is to repudiate Charlus publicly. When he does so, Marcel is amazed to see Charlus, the scourge of countless others who have dared to attack him, unable to respond. He is so devastated by the unexpected turn of events that he is rendered quite speechless. But before Mme Verdurin has time to enjoy his discomfiture to the full, the Queen of Naples, who has overheard the scene, intervenes to rescue Charlus. Whatever she thinks of the Baron, he is 'one of her own', and we witness the nobility protecting the aristocracy from an attack by the bourgeoisie.

But despite the Verdurins' perfidy and heartlessness (we have earlier seen Mme Verdurin boasting that she felt nothing on learning of the death of her friend the Princess Sherbatoff) the author is not satisfied to leave us with such a simplistic picture. He follows this scene with an account of how the Verdurins, on hearing that Saniette, the habitual object of their public displays of cruelty, has ruined himself through gambling, instantly plan a means of rescuing him financially. Time and again in the novel we are taken by surprise as Proust shows us yet another example of the complexity of human nature. It is as if, knowing the impulse for both good and evil which lie within his own personality, Proust invests his characters with similarly opposing

natures, warning us that people are never quite what they seem.

On returning home Marcel admits to Albertine that he has been to the Verdurins. She becomes incensed when he attempts to draw her out on the subject of Mlle Vinteuil and her friend. Marcel's pretence of knowing more about Albertine than he actually does leads to her revealing several lies he had never suspected, and admitting to a closer acquaintance with certain women of doubtful reputation than he had hitherto guessed. When he accuses Albertine of having relations with Andrée, she becomes furious and it is all he can do to calm her. Eventually they are reconciled, but from this time on, in a poignant reminder of his childhood experience with his mother, Albertine refuses to grant him his goodnight kiss.

In an attempt to win back Albertine's affection, Marcel plies her with gifts, ordering magnificent Fortuny dresses, and taking her for trips by automobile. On one outing they witness an aeroplane flying high in the sky, a metaphor for the freedom for which Albertine yearns. Marcel is torn between boredom with Albertine's presence, and fear of her absence. He longs to travel to Venice or to meet other women, but the thought of her indulging her desire for other women terrifies him. One morning he

awakes to be informed by Françoise that Albertine has taken her luggage and left; the Captive has flown.

Proust's novel is, of course, autobiographical. Despite his denials, the narrative broadly follows the story of his own life, given that events are altered and transposed and characters are often the amalgam of several different real-life people. But although the events of Proust's life form the basis of the novel's narrative, they are no more than the structure around which he builds his astonishingly imaginative and original edifice; the facts are no more important than the bricks used to build a cathedral, and real life for Proust is merely the raw material of artistic creation.

That said, Proust was an intriguing and extraordinary figure, and has been the subject of much biographical speculation. Although he was a very private person who spent much of his life alone, he was a prolific letter writer, and we learn a great deal about him from the vast correspondence which has gradually surfaced over the years since his death. Despite being a chronic invalid, Proust was outgoing and gregarious when he felt well, and in his youth could be extremely social. The accounts of his friends paint a picture of an exceptionally witty and amusing companion, capable of great acts of

kindness and generosity.

Whether he may or may not have loved women, it seems certain that his sexual relationships were predominantly with men, and that in the novel he transformed his homosexual relationships into heterosexual ones, and his male lovers into women.

It is likely that there were several originals of Albertine, although the most important one seems to have been his chauffeur Alfred Agostinelli, who Proust described as 'a young man whom I loved probably more than all my friends'. There were probably several captives as well, young men hired as 'secretaries', who lived in Proust's apartment and occupied the room next to his. Certainly the great tragedy of his emotional life – that he was only able to love what he could not have – was implicit in his relationships with young, basically heterosexual men. His love for Albertine is conditional on her unavailability. As long as he fears she might escape from him, Marcel cannot part with her. Once he feels he possesses her, he becomes bored and wishes to escape himself. Proust has described this dilemma with such vivid insight that there can be little doubt that *The Captive* was wrought out of the author's own deep and painful personal experience.

Notes by Neville Jason

The previous books

Swann's Way, set in the village of Combray, introduces the reader to Marcel's family, their servants including the redoubtable Françoise, and their neighbour Charles Swann, the scholarly man of fashion. There are two country walks favoured by Marcel's family; Swann's Way, which lies in the direction of Swann's property, and the Guermantes Way, which skirts the estate of the noble Guermantes family.

Swann in Love tells the story of Swann's passion for the former courtesan Odette de Crecy. In pursuit of Odette, Swann is drawn into the bohemian circle of Monsieur and Madame Verdurin. Some years later, after Swann has married Odette, Marcel falls in love with their daughter, Gilberte.

Within a Budding Grove – Part I sees the end of Marcel's first love affair and his separation from Gilberte. Following an illness he is sent to recuperate at the seaside resort of Balbec. He is accompanied by his grandmother, who renews her acquaintance with an old school friend who is staying in the same hotel, the Marquise de Villeparisis.

In *Within a Budding Grove – Part II* Marcel meets a band of enchanting young girls, and is particularly drawn to one of them, Albertine. The painter, Elstir, whom the reader has met earlier as a member of Mme Verdurin's 'little band', is instrumental in bringing Marcel and Albertine together. Madame de Villeparisis introduces Marcel to her nephew, the dashing Marquis Robert de

Saint-Loup, and her cousin, the sinister Baron de Charlus.

The Guermantes Way – Part I finds Marcel's family recently installed in an apartment which forms part of the Paris mansion of the Guermantes family. Marcel becomes obsessed with the Duchesse de Guermantes, who does not reciprocate his interest. At a reception given by the Marquise de Villeparisis Marcel discovers that his father's colleague, the former diplomat the Marquis de Norpois, has been the lover of the Marquise for many years. Out walking in the Bois de Boulogne with Marcel, his grandmother suffers a stroke.

The Guermantes Way – Part II sees the death of Marcel's beloved grandmother. Once she sees that Marcel is no longer in love with her, the Duchesse de Guermantes's attitude towards him changes, and she invites him to dine. Seeing the aristocracy at close quarters, Marcel is made aware how different they are in reality from his fantasies about them. He receives an invitation from the Baron de Charlus, and is outraged by the manner of his reception. Charles Swann announces that he is suffering from a terminal illness.

In *Sodom and Gomorrah (Cities of the Plain) – Part I* Marcel witnesses a homosexual encounter between the Baron de Charlus and the tailor Jupien, which leads to the author's meditations on the theme of homosexuality. Marcel's rise in the world of high society is marked by an invitation to a

ball given by the Prince and Princesse de Guermantes. He pays a second visit to Balbec, where he meets Albertine again. But his feelings of grief for his grandmother vie with his desire for her.

In *Sodom and Gomorrah (Cities of the Plain) – Part II* Mme Verdurin has taken a house for the summer in the locality of Balbec and invites Marcel and Albertine to join her 'little band' on her 'Wednesdays'. A young violinist, Charles Morel, whose father was valet to Marcel's uncle, is picked up by the Baron de Charlus, who pursues him into Mme Verdurin's circle. Marcel's suspicions regarding Albertine's lesbian tendencies seem to be confirmed when she tells him of her friendship with Mlle Vinteuil and her friend, who are expected to arrive in Balbec. In order to prevent Albertine from seeing them, Marcel makes a sudden decision to return to Paris, and persuades her to come with him.

The Captive – Part I finds Marcel and Albertine living together in Marcel's family home in Paris, from which his parents are absent. Marcel lavishes gifts and luxuries on Albertine, hoping to keep her from contact with her women friends, with whom he suspects her of having lesbian affairs. He trusts her so little he has her followed by the chauffeur he has engaged to drive her about town. Although Albertine does not complain and attempts to calm Marcel's fears about her, it is evident that in keeping her a virtual prisoner he is making her more and more

unhappy. Marcel learns of the death of Bergotte.

The Author

Marcel Proust was born on July 10, 1871 in Auteuil on the outskirts of Paris, in the house of his great-uncle. His father, Adrien Proust, was a distinguished professor of medicine from a modest Catholic family in Normandy. His mother, Jeanne Weil, came from a wealthy and sophisticated Jewish family of bankers. At the age of seven Marcel had his first attack of asthma, from which he was to suffer for the rest of his life. Although he aspired to become a writer from an early age, he doubted his talent and was slow to start on his chosen career. He was immensely social, and this, together with his chronic illness, compounded his reluctance to get down to work. Only in retrospect did it become clear that Proust's early life was a necessary preparation for the creation of his great work, *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu (Remembrance of Things Past)*.

During his twenties he co-founded a short-lived review, *Le Banquet*, and contributed to *La Revue Blanche*. His first book, *Les Plaisirs et les Jours*, a collection of short stories, was published in 1896. He was an enthusiastic admirer of Ruskin, and translated two of his books into French: *The Bible of Amiens and Sesame and Lilies*. His novel *Jean Santeuil*, an early version of *Remembrance of Things Past*, was

abandoned, and the manuscript remained lost and unpublished until thirty-two years after the author's death in 1954.

For much of his youth Proust led the life of a Parisian man about town, frequenting fashionable drawing-rooms and literary salons. These formed the background of many of his early stories and sketches as well as sections of *Remembrance of Things Past*. When the Dreyfus affair surfaced, splitting French society into two opposing camps, Proust, himself half-Jewish, campaigned actively for the release of the Jewish officer wrongly imprisoned for spying for Germany.

The death of his adored mother in 1905 resulted in Proust's nervous collapse and a period of recuperation in a sanatorium. But despite his grief and the sense of loss from which he never completely recovered, his mother's death freed him with regard to his homosexual emotional life, and allowed him to address homosexuality in his writing, albeit in a way which treated his own experiences as happening to others.

In 1907 he moved into an apartment at 102 Boulevard Haussmann, where in a bedroom he had had lined with cork to keep out the noise, he embarked on his great work *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu* (*Remembrance of Things Past*). This long autobiographical cycle was originally published as follows: *Du Côté de Chez Swann* (*Swann's Way*) in 1913; *A L'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* (*Within a Budding Grove*) in 1918; *Le Côté de Guermantes I*

(*The Guermantes Way I*) in 1920; *Le Côté de Guermantes II* (*The Guermantes Way II*) and *Sodom and Gomorrah I* (*Cities of the Plain I*) in 1921; *Sodom et Gomorrah II* in 1922; *La Prisonnière* (*The Captive*) in 1923; *Albertine Disparue* (*The Sweet Cheat Gone*) in 1925; *Le Temps Retrouvé* (*Time Regained*) in 1927.

Proust was obliged to publish the first volume, *Swann's Way*, at his own expense after it had been famously rejected by André Gide on behalf of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. Gide subsequently realised his mistake, and offered to publish all the following books. The next part, *A L'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* (*Within a Budding Grove*) met with considerable acclaim and was awarded the Prix Goncourt.

By the time Proust died, on November 18, 1922, the first four books had been published, leaving the rest to appear posthumously. The English translation from which this abridged version has been prepared was made by C.K. Scott Moncrieff.

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Private Collection

Marcel Proust

The Captive Part II

Read by **Neville Jason**

Marcel, pathologically possessive, continues to keep Albertine a virtual captive in his Paris apartment, while the Baron de Charlus, obsessed with the young violinist Charles Morel, receives an unexpected shock.

A deeply perceptive study of love and jealousy.



Neville Jason trained at RADA where he was awarded the Diction Prize by Sir John Gielgud. He has worked with the English Stage Co., the Old Vic Company and the RSC as well as in films, TV and musicals. He is frequently heard on radio. As well as *Remembrance of Things Past*, he also reads Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, *Far From The Madding Crowd*, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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