



DOWN THERE ON A VISIT [1st]

Christopher ISHERWOOD

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Christopher Isherwood became something of a literary rockstar. Immersing himself in sexual experimentation, alcohol, and raucous company across Europe and North America, Isherwood's hedonism pauses briefly for a dalliance with eastern mysticism. Carnal indulgence soon continues. The title refers to a verbal jibe fired at Isherwood's eponymous protagonist by another character, Paul. "You know, you really are a tourist, to your bones" laughs Paul. "I bet you're always sending post cards with 'Down here on a visit' on them. That's the story of your life. Throughout the novel Isherwood is a character of extremes. At times he pursues physical pleasure, relentlessly devoting himself to all kinds of debauchery. Yet he also interrupts these binges with discipline, by learning German or regularly meditating. Somehow, his abandon never leads to personal disaster. The second section of the novel contains a scene that figuratively illustrates Isherwood's life as recounted in "Down..." Isherwood is visiting an island where a crew of inane Greeks blast rock for the foundations of a mansion. He observes that: Despite all their experience, they seem to have no idea how much dynamite they should use. It is always too little or too much. We become completely indifferent to their yells of warning, followed by an absurd little firecracker pop. And then, just when you're least expecting it, there will be a stunning explosion which shakes the whole island and sends big rocks spinning through the air... A couple of times things have been smashed, but no one has been hurt, so far. So it is with Isherwood. Despite his experience, he never seems to know how to live his life. He often makes mistakes, such as his neglect of Mr. Lancaster, Waldemar, Dee-Ann, and Paul. But somehow he becomes wealthy, works at his leisure, and even avoids fighting in World War II. The reader is led to believe that no one has been hurt, so far

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