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5 It turns out that my misgivings about Chicago were justified. No sooner do we step
down from the train than the genie-soul of Chicago flaps down like a buzzard and perches on
my shoulder. During the whole of our brief sojourn I am ridden by it — brief sojourn, I say
briefer even than it was planned to be, since it was cut abruptly short by the catastrophe
10 Monday night, the very night of our arrival. All day long before the catastrophe I stand sunk
in thought, blinking and bemused on street corners. Kate looks after me. She is strangely at
home in the city, wholly impervious to the five million personal rays of Chicagoans and the
peculiar smell of existence here, which must be sniffed and gotten hold of before taking a
single step away from the station (if only somebody could tell me who built the damn station,
15 the circumstances of the building, details of the wrangling between city officials and the
railroad, so that I would not fall victim to it, the station, the very first crack off the bat. Every
place of arrival should have a booth set up and manned by an ordinary person whose task is to
greet strangers and give them a little trophy of local space time stuff — tell them of his
difficulties in high school and put a pinch of oil in their pockets — in order to insure that the
20 stranger shall not become an Anyone). Oh, son of a bitch but I am in a sweat. Kate takes
charge with many a cluck and fuss as if she had caught sight in me of a howling void and
meant to conceal it from the world. All of a sudden she is a regular city girl not
distinguishable from any other little low-browed olive-skinned big-butted Mediterranean such
as populates the streets and subways of the North.

20 I am consoled only to see that I was not mistaken: Chicago is just as I remembered it. I
was here twenty five years ago. My father brought me and Scott up to see the Century of
Progress and once later to the World Series. Not a single thing do I remember from the first
trip but this: the sense of the place, the savor of the genie-soul of the place which every place
has or else is not a place. I could have been wrong: it could have been nothing of the sort, not
25 the memory of a place but the memory of being a child. But one step out into the brilliant
March day and there it is as big as life, the genie-soul of the place which, wherever you go,
you must meet and master first thing or be met and mastered. Until now, one genie-soul and
only one ever proved too strong for me: San Francisco — up and down the hills I pursued him,
missed him and was pursued, by a presence, a powdering of fall gold in the air, a trembling
30 brightness that pierced to the heart, and the sadness of coming at last to the sea, the coming to
the end of America. Nobody but a Southerner knows the wrenching rinsing sadness of the
cities of the North. Knowing all about genie-souls and living in haunted places like Shiloh and
the Wilderness and Vicksburg and Atlanta where the ghosts of heroes walk abroad by day and
are more real than people, he knows a ghost when he sees one, and no sooner does he step off

