

"Sarah & Gerald" is a novel that takes place in Paris in the 1920s. In this excerpt, Sarah is remembering the rocky road that led to her marriage to Gerald.

We had been crazy in love since the day of that luncheon given by my mother as a kind of mixer for some of the families that lived near us in the Hamptons. I was there with my sisters, Gerald was there with his mother and father, and several other families had come, bringing their older children -- younger children never being seen at functions like this.

This was not the first time I had ever seen Gerald. Our families lived near each other for some years, so our paths crossed early and often. No, it was not the first time we had seen each other, but it was our first "grown up" event together, the first time he had seen me looking so beautiful, he said, and I had seen him looking so handsome.

We spent much of the luncheon together, trying to stay out of eyesight of our parents. Neither of us quite knew what was happening, but we knew we wanted to spend time together. It was a far cry from an earlier time when we were much younger and Gerald made me cry by making fun of my pony-tails, or the time I threw a rock at Gerald, hit his shin and made it bleed. We were children then and acted the way children did; but time had passed and we had changed.

We stood just inside the gazebo when it unexpectedly began to rain. We had gotten caught in a clearing and, so, were drenched by the time we made it to the safety of the shelter. Instinctively, Gerald had grabbed my hand and helped me up the stairs and into the covered opening. He withdrew his hand suddenly when he realized what he had done. I reached out and took his hand back again, smiling at him as I did so.

My parents were possessive and would have been rather alarmed had I dared to mention my feelings for Gerald. After this particular luncheon, however, we began arranging reasons to "accidentally" run into one another at other functions, shopping in New York, or perhaps at the residential club to which both our families belonged. It was at the latter when Gerald's father accidentally encountered us in an embrace that threw our lives into turmoil. Our parents just could not imagine the folly of this kind of arrangement -- not that they didn't respect each other's child; rather the differences in our ages (Gerald was nearing the end of his college days and I had just begun mine) and the disparity of our financial situation. Gerald worked for his father, who had amassed a sizable fortune creating a business that made high-end luggage and leather goods, and earned an excellent salary. However, my family were from old money, wealthy in a way quite different from the new-found wealth created by Gerald's father; they looked down on new money and people who worked in "trade" -- no matter how much money they had.

No, as far as our parents were concerned this was a marriage that could never happen. In fact both our fathers got together to chart out a plan to keep their children apart.