

DANCERS
IN THE
DARK 

DOROTHY
SPEARE



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To
THE GIRLS OF TODAY

DANCERS
IN THE DARK

Joy Nelson came into the room that she was sharing with two other girls, at half-past four in the morning. She was tired. She had been dancing steadily all night; her new silver slippers were killing her; and she was not accustomed to being up late. She could hardly wait to take her slippers off and get ready to sleep for a few hours.

Her room-mates, however, looked as if repose were the last thought they would allow to enter their jazz-surrounded heads. They were sitting on the bed, smoking. She had pretended not to see them, until she realized that they were not in the least bit embarrassed. They had even offered her a cigarette!

“My word, you look shot,” said Jerry. Jerry was a fascinating girl, Joy had decided. She was not pretty—she was more than that. She had what the erudite youth of the day would describe vividly as “something about her.” Her dark hair was bobbed, and she had green eyes and a red mouth. Her nose turned up, her scintillant face was splashed with freckles; decidedly, she was not pretty; but she was fascinating. One never could tell what she was going to do next. Joy had seen her openly chewing gum in the Kappa Beta living-room. One of the chaperones had lifted her eyebrows. Jerry never missed a demonstration. In less time than it took to lift the eyebrow of censure, she had surrounded herself with a mob of laughing, delighted boys, and exacted a penny from each of them for the privilege of a chew at her gum. There was never a dull moment, with Jerry around.

Sarah was another sort. She had burst upon Joy in a flash of colour that rioted away analytical estimation. Such eyes, lips, cheeks—and wonderfully marcelled hair. Later, when Sarah’s tools were set out on the one bureau, revelation had forced analysis. Yes, Sarah was undoubtedly a Woman of the World. She oozed sophistication at every pore. As crowning touch, she even had a gold cigarette case!

“Well, I *feel* shot,” Joy said now in answer to Jerry’s comment. “This is my first Prom, you know.”

“So you have remarked, several times,” drawled Sarah. “Let me give you a tip, my dear—I wouldn’t admit anything like that so freely. Numbers,” continued the highly-coloured one, “are dangerous. Now, as for me—I wouldn’t admit that this was my first or my thirty-first.”

“The last number is more your speed, old girl,” said Jerry.

“But what is one to say?” Joy asked, stepping out of her dress. “Everyone is just lovely to me when I tell ’em it’s my first.”

The two on the bed exchanged glances. Jerry blew out a cloud of smoke. “That’s one way of starting a conversation,” she said generously.

Joy sat down on the floor and pulled off her silver slippers. Once freed, her feet hurt more than ever.

“Wait till you get callouses all over your feet,” said Jerry. “Enough steady all-night dancing does it. After that, you don’t mind anything.”

Sarah considered the tip of her cigarette. “I wonder if those wrecks have dusted themselves off and gone home yet,” she murmured. “We’ve roosted here long enough.”

“I’ll go out and potter around.” Jerry put out her cigarette, threw it in the wastebasket, and was gone from the room in one fell swoop.

“The men have almost all gone home,” Joy volunteered. “I was late coming up, because I looked for the chaperones to say good-night, but I couldn’t find any of them.”

Sarah smiled. “I guess you couldn’t. They pull in at midnight. This life would be too much

for them if they didn't."

"They pull in at midnight! Well, what are they for?"

"My dear, I've often wondered." She flicked her ash daintily on to Joy's cot. Jerry came bounding back into the room.

"They've gone, Sally! We can get away all right!" and she proceeded to pull on her evening coat.

"Why?" Joy stammered her amazement.

"We're going riding," Jerry explained. "We had to wait until our men had gone, because we're going with some others."

"There's just one thing!" Sarah had not stirred from her perch on the bed. "Are they too stewed for us to go with them, or are they only edged? I'd like to know before we start. I haven't any desire to drive over a hundred miles with a couple of boiled owls. Remember that time at Yale, Jerry——"

"I know—my back teeth are loose yet. Some smash. But this time they're taking a Freshman along who's been kept sober for the occasion, so you're safe."

"Oh, in that case," Sarah descended from the bed and allowed Jerry to press her into her evening wrap. "Good-bye, my dear—we'll see you in the morning."

As she watched them depart, Joy almost forgot how tired she was. Half-past four in the morning—and they were going riding. She limped over to the bureau and looked down at Sarah's tools. She had never seen girls like these. They did not seem to care what they did. And the way they talked—you could not pick out any one thing, but it did not sound *nice*, somehow.

But Jerry was fascinating—and one was never bored. Perhaps that was why they were all right. She turned off the light and felt her way back to her cot over a succession of wardrobe trunks and hat boxes.

Once in bed, sleep was impossible with the whirl of new events playing in kaleidoscopic glitter across a mind that was not used to so much colour and certainly not much glitter. Her first Prom. How thrilled she had been when Tom had asked her. Of course, there was no thrill to Tom, as she had known him all her life. But since she lived in a typical New England town where the always increasing numbers of boys were weary of trying to balance themselves against the always increasing numbers of girls, it was somewhat of an honour for him to single her out from all the rest. She had never been outside of Foxhollow Corners before. This was not as strange as it would have been had she come from any part of the country but New England. She had simply never made the occasion; nor had the occasion been made for her to go. Most providentially, there had been a very good boarding school in Foxhollow Corners, at which she had been a day pupil. And during the war there had been too much Red-Crossing to do, too much to keep her nose to the grindstone at Foxhollow Corners, to think of the travel that the enterprise of service might have meant to her. And this was her first Prom, and all the girls at home were green, simply green. Tom had taken some of them in times past and probably would continue to vary his program thus. "Don't encourage the girls too much," was his motto.

The first day of Prom had passed in a shimmer. The girls were, for the most part, strange, exotic creatures—something of Sarah's vintage—but the men were of varied types. It was odd, Joy reflected, that such different boys should all, or nearly all, ask the same type of girl. There was one man—one particular man—Joy was at the age where there always had to be one particular man in her dreams—and this man seemed to have stepped right out of them made to order. In the first place, he was the best looking man she had ever seen—tall and very dark,

with eyes that, when he smiled, grew tender. Tom had said that he was “a big man in college,” a star at football, and a “regular all-around prince.” His name was Jack Barnett, and although he had no girl at Prom, all the girls seemed to know him. He had cut in on Joy several times, and she still tingled from the thrill of it. Every girl knows the taking-stock preliminary to sleep after a dance. “Did he mean that? Or was he only handing a line. Did I show too much that I liked him? And is it his move now, or mine?” Joy lost herself in a dream that the football hero had cut in on her again and wouldn’t let anyone else dance with her.

She was awakened by a queer thumping noise. Pushing open her eyes, through a just-alive-to-the-world haze she saw Jerry doing handsprings about the room. Determined not to appear surprised at anything more, she sat up in bed and surveyed her with a thin glaze of calmness.

“Owl!” said Jerry conversationally, as she knocked up against a trunk and came to a full stop. Then, sitting up and rubbing her elbows: “Oh, hello; you awake? Hope I didn’t disturb you, or anything. I’m waking myself up; I’ve found this is the best way to keep me going, when I haven’t had any sleep.”

“Do you mean to say that you haven’t had any sleep at all?”

“Right the first time! We just got back—had a blow-out, of course, and now it’s too late to take in any classes!” Jerry began to change her raiment. “Look at that——” and she pointed to the bed. Sarah lay on it, evening coat and all, just as she had fallen.

“Why,” said Joy, “she almost looks as if she had fallen asleep before she landed there.”

Jerry executed a pas seul, stepping through a hatbox with careless ease. “You hit your head on the nail that time! She always passes out that way—got no more starch in her throat—she’ll have to come out of it, too, because our little playmates who are blowing us to this Prom will be here soon, and they’ll get noisy if we don’t put in a swift appearance.” She came up to the still figure on the bed, and shook it. Joy admired the vivid red of her cheeks. There was no artificiality about Jerry. Her face was fairly blazing; and what was more remarkable after a sleepless night, her eyes were very bright. On second inspection, they were even shiny. After a prolonged shaking, Sarah fell limp from her hands.

“Why! She acts as if she were dead,” said Joy.

“Dead!” exclaimed Jerry with a short laugh. “Dead or—Sal Saunders! I’d like to wring your neck—maybe that would bring a squawk!”

There was a faint stir. “That you, Jerry?”

“Yes, it’s me, and you’ve got to get off the downy. Do you expect me to ring for the cracked ice, or what?”

Sarah rose to a sitting posture and started to flop back, but Jerry’s arm shot forward and propped her up.

“Where do you think you are,” Jerry continued; “in New York? We’ve got to get down in ten minutes! Go and stick your head under the shower.” She pushed her out of the door. Returning, her gleaming eye lit on Joy. “It’s enough to make me weep, to see you. Why, you look just as well as you did last night.”

Joy pulled on her stockings without replying, as appropriate repartee did not occur to her at the moment.

“You know,” Jerry continued, running a comb through her hair, “you’re one of the best looking girls I’ve seen for I’d hate to say how many years—but the trouble is, you don’t put yourself together with any enthusiasm—you don’t drape yourself accordingly. Looks don’t count nowadays unless you’ve got push, too.”

“Just what do you mean?” Joy was almost completely at a loss.

“Use ’em! Use your face, eyes—your hair—your figure—you’ve got good clothes, too—you just need a little *push*, that’s all!”

Joy went to look at herself in the mirror. Her beauty was not tangible, and she had never made an inventory of its assets and liabilities. It was not so much her hair, which had started to be light brown and rippled into purest gold, the inimitable shade that less fortunately endowed women are prone to be catty about, or her complexion which needed none of Sarah’s artifices, as it was her eyes and the expression they lent her face. It seemed as if her name had marked her; her eyes, the colour of summer skies with the laughter of the sun caught up in them, bathed her face in radiance.

Most pretty girls never tire of admiring what the mirror gives back to them, but Joy had not had enough admiration in her life to assure her of the necessary self-appreciation. She put an experimental hand on Sarah’s tools. There was blue shadowing to go beneath the eyes, and sticky black stuff to make one’s lashes look like an advertisement of Lash-Brow-ing—

“Don’t put on any of that stuff now!” said Jerry. “Wait till evening, and I’ll help you.”

Joy began to comb her hair, singing lightly one of the songs the orchestra had played the evening before.

“I was so *young*—you were so *beautiful*—
I knew you couldn’t be true—ue—
Each time I looked at you my heart grew sad—
’Twas then I realized why men go mad—
You made me give you all the love I had—”

She stopped, suddenly aware of the other girl’s riveted attention. Jerry’s careless, carefree attitude had slipped away entirely, as she stood listening, her eyes lancets of concentration, her upper teeth pulling in her under lip.

“Where have you studied singing?” she demanded, her voice an imperative flick.

“Just a little—at the school I went to,” said Joy. “Why, what’s the matter? I——”

“Your mother must have sung, then, or someone in the family. It’s the sort of voice that sounds as if it had been bred in the family for generations—it has, hasn’t it?”

“Yes, and gotten a little stale in being handed down,” said Joy uncertainly. She was not sure whether Jerry was making fun of her or not. People who thought they could sing were awful bores, and she had no intention of being that sort of a bore.

“I mean it. How long since you’ve done anything with it?”

“I’ve never done anything with it.” Joy was a little impatient by this time. “My teacher was the kind who said ‘Can anything improve upon God?’ So you can get an idea of how hard I worked.”

“Sing something—don’t muffle it up the way you were doing.”

Sarah created a hiatus by stumbling in at that moment. She seemed to be fairly awake by this time, but cross and unlike her usual self. On Jerry’s good-natured “Brace up, old girl,” she turned and almost snarled; “Just because I haven’t got an asbestos lining like *some people!*”

“That’s your error, old dear,” Jerry retorted. “Stepped through your hat, a while back; guess I’ll take a reef in it while you slap on your kalsomine.”

“I don’t like this college, anyway.” Sarah had moved to the bureau. Her face was positively gray until she started work on it. “I think the way they treat you—the way they do things——”

“Oh, what can you expect?” mumbled Jerry, her mouth full of thread. “They live so far away,

up here in the woods, not near any city or burg large enough to call a town—naturally they want to play around a little, when they import some girls here!”

“Perhaps you think,” said Sarah suddenly, “that that freshman down there isn’t going to drop a few leading remarks when our little comrades come—unless we’re there first!” She turned to Joy. “You’re ready—won’t you go down and talk to them—tell ’em we’re coming right along?”

“I’d be glad to!” and Joy made a swift exit. She was already conscious that she liked Jerry and did not like Sarah. This, she told herself, was not because Jerry had liked her voice—there was something about Jerry. But it would be awful for her to take her voice seriously. She wouldn’t be a real girl any longer—a girl like these Prom specimens, a few of whom were floating around the halls now, pale and sleepy, with Magic Curlers in their hair—hard to recognise as the overpowering beings of last night.

She passed on down to the first floor, where things were a little more animated. A talking machine was playing and several men were sitting around in more or less expectant attitudes. Tom was not there, nor were the two “little comrades” of her roommates. Embarrassed, she was about to retreat, when one of the men detached himself from a group at the end of the room and came over to her. It was Jack Barnett.

“I was hoping I would get a chance to see you this morning.”

She was speechless with delight. If he could have known that he had been her last waking thought! It is as well that man cannot follow the intensely-flickering dreams and fancies of maidenhood. The two stood and looked at each other in a charmed silence.

“Well?” he challenged.

“You took the words out of my mouth when I saw you; what more can I say?” she retorted with a laugh.

She was very lovely. His eyes dwelt upon her with minute appreciation, as they automatically moved off to a corner. She only dared to look at him from beneath the protective fringe of lowered lashes, lest his eyes catch hers and hold them until she would have to tear them away by force. She laughed aloud.

“What are you laughing at, you funny girl?” he demanded.

“Oh, nothing. I was only wondering if—if it was wrong to *hold eyes*.”

“Not half as wrong as some other things,” he smiled.

There they were. Two sentences, and they were skimming on the thin ice of conversation towards topics youth loves to discuss “broad-mindedly and impersonally.” Joy hesitated, and drew back.

“Are you sleepy from last night? You don’t look a bit tired.”

“Oh, I’m not. It’ll take several steady nights of this to put me under.” He stretched his impressive length, which she regarded with respect.

“You’re one of these men—who the clinging vines say are ‘so big and strong and yet so kind and gentle’—aren’t you?”

“Kind—and—gentle?” he laughed. “No one ever told me that.”

This time he compelled her to look at him, and under his smiling eyes she suddenly shivered. An irrelevant thought had drifted in—that, when people were as wonderful as he, they always seemed to get everything they wanted, and—they always were wanting something else. But the thought wandered out again at his next words.

“You are the prettiest girl I have ever seen. No—don’t speak! What do *you* know about it? Last night I suspected—this morning, I know. Morning’s the acid test, you see.”

There was a clatter on the stairs and Jerry bounced into the room. She was chewing gum again. After her came Sarah, evenly pink and white, superbly arrayed, and walking with the carriage of an empress.

Jerry walked into the group of men, chewing in long, steady rolls. "Gum, gum, nothing but gum," she chanted, then looked at them piteously. "Nothing for breakfast but gum! Can't anyone bring coffee and rolls to the gum-chewer? Anyone?"

"Not unless you let me hold your gum while you have breakfast," one romantic youth threw at her.

Joy watched with breathless interest.

"I have never seen such a girl!"

"She's a marvel," conceded Barnett. "Gets younger all the time—and I gather she isn't as young as she looks."

The appearance of Tom in the doorway cut short further revelations.

"I have a feeling that I'm going to trail you to-day," Barnett said, rising. "And as for to-night at Prom—words are futile!"

His eyes caressed her. It was no moment for Tom to join them. She felt as if something within her were singing. And Tom came over to her—Tom, with his chubby red face and eyes that could never look tenderly at anything!

"Well, Joy, what's doing along the Rialto?"

"N-nothing much, so early in the day; what does one expect at this hour?" she managed to bring out, hoping that Tom did not notice anything unusual in her manner.

"You've made a dent on Jack Barnett—I can see those." He gave her a look of appraisal. "Hang it, Joy, I knew you'd put a crimp in all the gold diggers and hundredth anniversaries around."

"Speaking of hundredth anniversaries, my roommates—they're—well, I've never seen anything like them before."

He looked over to where Sarah was sitting with her hand on the coat-sleeve of a dazzled youth, gazing up at him with her shadowed, speaking eyes. Then his eyes wandered to where Jerry was singing a song for her breakfast—

"Come to my home in the sewer
Said the cock-roach to his mate—
Where the air is so foul and impew-er
And the swimming's simply great!"

"That's because this is your first Prom," he said.

The day passed in swift confusion of events and men, and chattering girls, and efforts to chatter at least as much and as entertainingly as the others did, if not more. In the afternoon they danced at the different fraternity houses; and wherever they went, Jack Barnett followed, to cut in on Joy, and to thrill her with his tenderly smiling eyes. It was a mammoth achievement to be rushed by the big man of college, and Tom was gloatingly impressed.

"You've got Jack Barnett going! I guess my taste isn't so bad—eh, what, Joy?"

"Oh—he probably rushes a new girl every day," she responded, over the leaps and bounds of her heart, which was making itself known to her in a strange, deliciously-disturbing way.

"Not a chance!" Tom disqualified her statement; "he's some picker, Barnett is—it's not very often he gives a girl any time at all—and when he does, she has to be a wonder!"

When the girls finally went upstairs to dress for Prom, Joy found that even her roommates were impressed.

“You certainly have got Jack Barnett going,” drawled Sarah. The words were almost the same as Tom’s, but her voice brought an entirely different connotation.

Jerry pirouetted around Joy. “I like to see the blasé old Barnett, who thinks he knows it all, on the trail of a new one!”

She came to a pause as Joy pulled out her Prom dress and laid it on the bed. It was a fairy-like mass of fluffy-white tulle, which Joy had saved for the big night. Jerry pounced on it and held it up.

“Will you let me add some touches to you to-night?” she demanded. “I want to see Jack’s jaw drop and watch him stagger back as you come breezing down the stairs! I want to see you overwhelm him!”

“I—I would just *love* to overwhelm him,” said Joy, with a shaky little laugh.

“You’ll need some colour, I’ll say,” Jerry added; “you’re pale to-night.”

She was rather pale, and somehow she felt weak and worn out. And her heart kept right on pounding in this extraordinary manner——

“Hurry up with your old tools, Sal,” Jerry commanded. “I’m going to make Joy into such a riot she’ll knock ’em all cold.”

While Sarah completed the vital matter of fixing her face, Jerry did things to Joy’s dress. First, she pulled out the baby sleeves that adorned it. Then she put it on Joy, and took down the back until Joy’s back was conspicuous by its presence.

“Jerry——” her victim remonstrated——“there’s nothing holding me up but these straps—— what if they should give way?”

“Court plaster,” mumbled the oracle, her mouth full of pins, and proceeded to rummage forth a supply from one of the boxes scattered about the room. “That’ll keep your dress stuck on whether the straps stay or leave.”

When Jerry had quite finished with her, Joy looked in vain for telltale signs of alteration. “Why, Jerry! Jerry——anyone would think——” she looked again at the “creation” into which her sweet, simple and girlish gown had been evolved——“anyone would think you were—a regular dressmaker.”

Jerry’s red lips curved into a grin. Ordinarily, when Jerry laughed, one thought of the wine of good-fellowship, and the spirit of youth that knows no age, but this time one was uncomfortably conscious of the redness and wideness of her lips, which seemed to stretch into the grin of a street urchin. There was a gamin echo to her short, faint laugh, as she threw the sewing things back into their box.

“I used to do—a lot of sewing. Come on and let me daub your face up.”

The intoxication of make-up is an insidious vintage known to more girls than mere man can ever believe. Few are they who, having seen themselves glorified by the art of rabbit’s foot and cunning pencil, which presents those too-familiar features in a new, glowing charm, can resist waving the fairy wand again and yet again, until experiment becomes deep-seated habit. Joy did not know, as Jerry set to work upon her, how she was going to come to depend on the fairy wand. As she worked, Jerry threw out words of wisdom.

“The whole point is to get everything so *you* think it’s slightly underdone. It never will be. And otherwise someone always spots it, and then you never get credit for anything.”

When she was completed, Jerry pushed her to the mirror and then stood, hands on hips, surveying her work. Joy was dumb. From the chill white of her dress came the warm white of her

shoulders, skilfully dusted with some Phantom powder; and from all this neutral colour flashed the vividness of her face. Her cheeks were a rich rose; the blue of her eyes was darkened and intensified, her lashes sweeping over them, black and long. Her lips were a blazing scarlet, shaped in a perfect Cupid's bow. They fascinated her. She could not look at her hair, nor her eyes, nor her dress, very long; she had to look at those lips. They seemed almost sinful. It didn't seem right that lips should be so red.

"Well, Angel of Joy—have you fallen in love with yourself?" Jerry demanded.

Joy wet her lips, then remembered that they were painted, and was completely at a loss. "I—I certainly look—much better. But somehow I don't like the idea."

"Why not?" Sarah snapped, rubbing off a little of her bloom on one side. She did not appear to be especially pleased with Joy's transformation.

"Well—somehow—you know, bad women and everything use paint and this stuff so much _____"

"They put it on raw," panted Jerry, who now in one short moment had slipped on her scanty evening dress and was jumping into her stockings. "Nine-tenths of the rest of us try to be artistic about it."

"But you—*you* don't use it, do you, Jerry?"

Again the gamin grin, as Jerry stamped on her slippers and raked her hair through with a comb. "No, it's not my style. But I used to do—a lot of making-up."

They made Joy walk downstairs ahead of them, as they "wanted to see her pulverize Jack." And pulverize him she did. He was standing over by the mantel-piece as they came into the living-room, and his suddenly-fired eyes seemed to leap out and engulf her. She was not conscious of anyone else in the room, as she came forward shakily, a little smile quivering on her scarlet lips. His eyes were devouring her from the tip of her silver toe to the top of her golden hair. He took one step toward her—

And then Tom came dashing up to break the spell.

"For the lova fried tripe, what have you done to yourself, Joy?"

His amazement was scarcely complimentary. Jerry giggled, and Sarah tittered. Joy tossed her head, and held her coat out to him. He enveloped her in it with an almost indecent haste, and they left for the gym, she feeling Jack Barnett's glance still hot upon her.

On the way over, Tom sputtered a little; but when she descended upon him, in the gym, all objections vanished in unwilling admiration. She was so distractingly lovely that he could no longer cavil at such means to such an end.

For the first time in her life, Joy realized that she was beautiful; and as had been the case with womankind from time immemorial, that knowledge gave her power. She not only knew that she was beautiful; she knew that she was by far the most beautiful girl there. She knew this by sidelong glances the other girls cast at her, by the things she saw being murmured behind ostrich-feather fans; by the critically indignant way in which the matrons were regarding her. Up to this time she had never been able to elicit more than a friendly beam. She smiled beguilingly at the men she had met before, and they clustered about her; and always new ones who wanted to meet her, were being brought up. Prom began in a blaze of glory; she was achieving the envied distinction of being able to dance hardly a step without someone cutting in; and almost always she was surrounded by a group disputing as to who had cut in first. Boys who had scarcely noticed her before now besieged her with attentions, informing her with undergraduate modesty that they were "giving her a rush." One of them asked her to the next house-party; several asked her to ball games; and many wanted to know where she lived and if

she ever ran down to New York or Boston, and if so, when would she have a whirl with them?

She accepted everything indiscriminately. This at last was Life. She was a real belle—the kind one reads about in novels; the only kind that was ever interesting as a heroine. And through it all, her blood was thumping in her veins in queer little jerks and starts—waiting for the hero. He had been standing against the wall with the other stags—looking at her continually—and as yet he had danced with no one. She felt as if she had to talk with him, to hear his voice and see his smiling, tender eyes bent on her, before she was really awake. All this excitement was making her feel as if she were moving in a dream—except that her feet hurt her in a most undream-like fashion.

And now a disturbing thing happened. A man who had danced with her a great deal, she remembered, both that afternoon and the evening before, cut in on her. His name was Jim Dalton; he was a good looking boy of medium height, with blond, wavy hair plastered back in an attempt to make it look straight, and clear blue eyes that had a disconcerting habit of looking frankly into one's own. Joy had rather liked him until she had learned that he was that unpardonable thing, a man who was “no one around college.” He was a nonentity—at least, he did not shine in any branch of college activities. Joy was too new to college ways to realize that there was nothing deplorable in this; that in so large a college there had to be the back-bone, the unknown quantities who made up “the college type”; she only knew that even Tom, because of his bustling, busy ways, was an important and committee'd man; and she was being rushed by *the* big man of college; and the Jim Daltons didn't matter.

So when he cut in on her, she merely smiled mechanically, and as mechanically allowed her weary feet to be guided into a little corner away from the thickest press of the stags.

“What have they done to you?” he demanded, looking at her make-up and through it until she would have blushed if she could have.

“What do you mean?” she said coldly.

“I mean that I can't dance with you and put my arm around you without touching your bare skin. I mean that you are painted and rouged until you look like a typical model showing off some new undress creation. There isn't a single natural thing left about you.”

“Why! how dare you——” came stuttering from her red lips.

“I say all this,” he continued doggedly, “because when you first came up here you were different. You didn't look like the sort who gets herself up this way. You didn't need to. With a lot of girls it's the only way they can make any impression at all.”

She stopped dancing, and stepped back from the circle of his arm. “Will you please take me back to Tom? I don't care to dance with you any longer, if that's the way you feel about me.”

Great was the dignity of her delivery, but her under lip quivered as she stood there. His eyes softened. There was something very piteous in the quivering of that painted lip.

“Very well—but I shan't beg your pardon or take back anything I've said. Thank heaven this Promends to-morrow!”

It was a disagreeable incident. Joy didn't see how he could have been so unpleasant about her appearance, when everyone else was so exceedingly pleasant. And then Jack Barnett came striding across the floor, and took her from the arms of the boy she was dancing with—and they floated off together, and Joy forgot everything else.

“I thought this morning that you were the prettiest girl I'd ever seen,” he was whispering in her ear. “Now I know you're the prettiest I ever want to see!”

They were near the orchestra at this point, and the saxophone was blaring extra loud; but Joy could hear only a sweet singing, somewhere inside.

“If they make ’em any prettier than you—I don’t want to see ’em. It would finish me! You’re ripping me all to pieces as it is.” His grasp tightened and grew hot on her bare skin. “Do you know you’re ripping me all to pieces?”

“What’s that?” she asked, still lost in the wonder and thrill of his admiration. They were near a door, and he stopped dancing. “I can see you’re tired,” he said. “They’ve kept you dancing every minute—most popular girl in the room—let’s go down to the swimming-pool and sit this out.”

She hesitated. “Tom won’t know where I am.”

“Oh, Tom!” He relegated that subject to oblivion with princely carelessness. “Look here, if we start dancing again, someone’s bound to cut in on me right off—and I want to talk to you!”

She followed him as he led the way downstairs to the dark, scented stillness that was the college swimming-pool in more unromantic times. Here and there along the sides she could see the glowing ends of cigarettes; but Barnett led her down to the end of the pool, where they were far from everyone, and found a sofa underneath some leafy thing that he told her was one of the many potted palms strewn around the place. They sat down. He sat very near her.

“How old are you?” he wanted to know. “No, don’t tell me—you might be any age. Yesterday, you might have been eighteen. To-night, you are twenty-five—at least that. By gad, I like a girl to vary!”

Somehow in the darkness his hand found hers. It was moist, hot; the sensation was very disagreeable; but Joy did not take hers away. She could not think quickly about anything at all

“You—I never met anyone like you.” His voice was coming hurried, breathless; there was something in the contact of her hand that utterly changed the tone of it. “You—you’re ripping me all to pieces to-night!”

Before she could realize what was happening, he had his arms around her and had pressed her to him in the moist, warm darkness. She knew he was searching for her lips.

Joy closed her eyes in the palpitant blackness; his kiss would be mysterious, wonderful.

But when it came, it was neither mysterious nor wonderful. Cold with the shock, she tried to wrench herself free from the hideous reality of the thing; but he was holding her so tightly that she was powerless to move. She gasped for breath to speak, but he pressed her to him more closely than ever, and kissed her again and again.

When he finally released her, her breath was coming in painful sobs. “What’s the matter?” he said thickly. “Don’t you like me any more?”

“I—I—you’ve been drinking!”

She tried to cover her face there in the dark, to hide the shattering of her idol; but his hands caught hers and held them away so that he could find her lips again. In all her sheltered life, Joy had never known what it was to be afraid. But now she felt a chill, bewildering fear. She was absolutely helpless. Something her father had once said, came back to her as she gasped there in the darkness: “A girl should never be where the situation does not protect her.” She was where the situation protected her. All around there were others—within good hearing distance.

“If you don’t let me go,” she panted, “I shall scream so that everyone can hear——”

His grasp relaxed for a moment and she pulled herself free and ran away from him through the darkness—down the way that they had come, past the glowing cigarette ends, and gay little murmurs of conversation, until she came to the door and light. There she did not stop to take breath, but fled on up the stairs.

“Oh, there you are, Joy!” Tom was at the door, and hailed her as she came into the gym.

“Where have you been? Fixing your hair, I know. I told you it’d come down that new way. Come on—this is the supper dance. Say, what’s the matter? You look as if you’d seen a ghost.”

She laughed, and was appalled at the ease with which the laugh came to her lips. “What time is it, Tom?”

“Oh, only a little after midnight.”

Only a little after midnight—and she had to dance and smile until morning. She was exhausted. Her silver slippers were stabbing her feet in long jabs which went quivering all through her body. And the sweet singing in her heart had gone. Joy had had little experience with men, the youths in Foxhollow Corners preferring to try their hand at more willing material when amorously inclined. She had made of herself and all she did a temple, kept for the Unknown God who would surely come some day. And from almost the first moment, she had been sure that Jack Barnett was The One. She had fitted the mantle of her dreams upon him, and then he had turned and rent the mantle. She had not known men could be like that.

As she danced with different men and smiled and talked automatically in answer to their sallies, she found herself inspecting them with a new and fearful curiosity. Were all men like that? The thought was revolting, but could not be dismissed. Even in the days of chivalry, when a maiden in distress was the first to be protected—even then there was said to be but one Perfect Knight.

In one of the spaces, when Tom danced with her, he said, “Barnett’s getting stewed as fast as he can pour ’em down. That’s the worst of not having a girl to Prom—got to drown your sorrows some way.”

She followed his gaze to the door, where Barnett was leaning up against the wall and talking somewhat unsteadily to a group of stags. His eyes met hers; even at that distance they were bloodshot, terrible. His eyes that had been so tender—and now—now, as they looked at her with a fierce intensity, they made her think of a dog before whom red meat is dangled. Under his look she felt the dripping ice of horror’s perspiration.

“Tom!” she cried suddenly. “I can’t—I just can’t!”

“Can’t what, Joy?” In surprise he looked down at her face, which was so white that the spots of rouge flared out like little danger signals.

“I—I can’t stay at the Prom a minute longer.” Then, with growing resolve, “I really am all in, Tom. You see, I’m not used to it, and my feet are *killing* me, and—I’m so awfully tired that if I dance any longer I won’t get any fun out of it!”

She did indeed look tragically tired, and Tom was all self-reproach for not seeing it coming. They went to the fraternity booth and she said good-night to the matrons, who looked mildly surprised. Barnett was still standing at the door as they approached it and broke away from the stags with a lurch.

“Not going *now*, are you?” he demanded.

Joy insensibly retreated until Tom was between them. “Yes. I’m leaving now. Good night”; and she walked out.

Once in the cool night air, with Tom by her side keeping a comfortable silence, she felt free and almost happy. It was something to have left Jack Barnett—and soon she would have those silver slippers off.

The fraternity house was dark and empty. It was an effort to climb the steps—her last silver-slipper effort, she told herself. She watched Tom go back down the road, then sat down and pulled off her slippers. She couldn’t have kept them on another minute. Then slowly, painfully, she went in and upstairs.

The room was a wilderness of clothes and hairbrushes, powderboxes and wardrobe-trunk-drawers scattered here and there at inconsequential places, and she had hard work to guide her sore feet to the bureau. Her buoyant cheeks, waving twin flags of crimson joy while all the rest of her betrayed the weariness in which she was steeped, drew her first attention. That rouge must be wiped off—as the rest of the evening could not be. She took a limp handkerchief that trailed whiteness amid the disorder of the tools on the bureau, and scrubbed one cheek with concentrated energy. And as the handkerchief marched in its path of elimination, she heard the door swing open behind her.

She looked in the mirror, her hand frozen to her cheek; then became rigid with the shrieks and shrieks of terror that were so many and so fearful that they choked together in a hideous little rattle before they reached her throat. For Jack Barnett stood on the threshold. To her fevered fright, he towered as vast and menacing as the prehistoric man who swung a club and took what he wanted always. His eyes were swimming in red; his lips had lost the fine-chiseled lines into which they had been schooled by sobriety and civilisation, and sagged loosely back from his teeth.

“Ah-h!” Again that queer little rattle, that could not even come up in her throat. But what did it matter, whether or no she could cry aloud? They were alone; the fraternity house was dark and empty. The nearest help was half a mile away at the Prom, where jazz was shrieking its deafening stimulus.

He lurched forward into the room; she turned to confront him. He was talking in a thick, rough voice that sounded as if all thought but the actual effort of speech had left him. “Surprised, see me? . . . we’re going to . . . finish . . . now! Girls—sh’d never start anything . . . can’t finish!”

Still she could bring no sound in her throat. He stumbled over a box, kicked it aside, and said “Damn!” He was almost upon her; and she could not move, nor cry out, although what help was there in either?

Then, suddenly, a whirlwind seemed to strike the room. A figure shot in from the black hole that was the door. . . . There was but a moment of clashing, a moment full of the sound of flesh in sharp impact, of sinews cracking—and then the magnificence of Jack Barnett’s body was hurled from its massive menace and lay, a thing of sodden incompetence, spilled over a wardrobe-trunk drawer and some corsets. Jim Dalton stood over him, breathing fast, his tie riding under one ear, his usually well-subdued hair going off on several tangents.

There was a swift pause in the room. Then speech poured from Joy’s relaxed throat. “Is he—is he dead?” she quavered. “What did you do to him? He’s so—so big!”

“But drunk,” Jim responded, looking down at the incoherence stretched on the floor. “He’s only knocked out. Now to get him out of here.”

That brought her back to the situation. “Oh—and you—how did you know that I—that he _____”

“I saw you leave the gym; I—was watching you. And I saw Barnett follow. I had a hunch—and so I went after him. He waited down by the corner till Tom left you—and then went on up to the house. I didn’t say anything to him, because I thought maybe he was going out to the fraternity kitchen to get something to eat—but when I blew in he’d come upstairs here—so I came too.” He bent over Barnett for a perfunctory look. “He’s all right; he’ll sleep it off now, and won’t remember a thing about it in the morning.”

“How can I thank you ever——” Joy’s voice faltered weakly. She had become so faint that she could scarcely stand, even with both hands clinging to the bureau top.

“You can thank me—by not forgetting—what nearly happened!” he said, in a low, even voice. “By remembering it—in connection with everything else!”

Then he looked at her, as if for the first time since he had entered the room, and grinned irrepressibly: “Excuse me—but you certainly do look funny, with one side of your face so red and one side so white.”

She wheeled to the mirror, and confronted her uncompleted task. Terror had struck her white as the sheets on her little cot. The splotch of rouge on one cheek, gave a ludicrous, clown-like effect. She laughed shakily. It seemed impossible in the face of her comic appearance and Jim Dalton’s matter-of-fact manner, that but five minutes ago tragedy and ruin had been stalking in upon her. When she turned again, Jim had drawn Barnett up onto his shoulder, and was moving from the room.

“I’ll get him to the Delta-Delta house somehow,” he said in muffled tones—“and anyway, he’ll reach downstairs without being seen.”

The door was closed, and Joy sunk to the floor, whither she had been impending for several moments. In twenty-four hours she had run the gamut of emotions. She had gone through fearsome revelation of what can seem like love to a girl and spell something different indeed to a man. She had seen how the thrills of innocence that scarcely knows why it is thrilling, are as tinder to the flame of desire kindled by that same innocence. She had enveloped man in the white mist of maiden’s dreams—and then the mist had been torn away, leaving reality so terrible that she felt she must go mad if she could not forget. Yet Jim Dalton had told her not to forget . . . to remember it—in connection with everything else! What had he meant? As if she could forget. . . . Love was an idle dream; the reality, a hideousness that could not be borne.

There was really nothing left in life—except to laugh and be gay!

It was half-past six before the orchestra played “The End of a Perfect Day,” and hilarious groups began to straggle toward the fraternity houses. The sun was trying to break through the heavy mists that hung over the valley. Jerry halted her group on the crest of Chapel Hill to enjoy the beauty of the country below; and while everyone gazed at the valley wreathed in delicate mist split with traceries of gold, Jerry looked wistfully down the long slope to the Kappa Beta house. In this life, one has to restrain one’s impulses at times—but the question that always seems to be coming up is, is this one of those times? Jerry decided not, and shaking off her slippers, beat one of the track athletes down the hill.

Having thus ended Prom, Jerry did not stop to wait for the others to come and have breakfast on the fraternity porch. No anticlimaxes for her. She dashed in the house, and up the stairs; but when she opened the door to her room, she paused and whistled. Joy was putting the last stages of a brisk morning make-up together, in front of the mirror.

“Well—take a slant at Foxhollow Corners, New England,” Jerry announced, coming in and regarding Joy with increased respect. “I wondered where you’d gone—of all good lines to pull!”

Joy met her respect with the quiet pride of a good pupil under the approval of his master. “Are they starting breakfast?”

Jerry sank down on the bed. “Good or not—I bite—to leave Prom early, get everyone missing you and all the more keen to see you, meanwhile getting some sleep while the rest of us jazz away the morning hours! And now, when all the beauty of America looks and feels like a dish-rag—when rouge shows up like poison-ivy in the glorious morning hours—when even I don’t care to go through the let-down of breakfast with my pep trickling away—to sail down like this!”

“Does my skirt sag?” Joy asked.

“No. Does anything look worse than Prom-shot evening dresses at breakfast? And now you sail down in a little sporting model—why did I need to do anything to you?”

“Well,” said Joy defensively, “I woke up and couldn’t sleep, and I knew you’d all be coming in soon, and I didn’t want to miss any more of it than I had to. That’s all there is to it.”

Jerry had whisked herself into her pajamas by this time, and now stopped to look at Joy, hands on her hips, very much as she had last night. “Your first Prom—and you live in Foxhollow Corners,” she said slowly. “And you look like that—and have pep like that—and can sing enough so that you ought to go somewhere really good and take a jab at it. Joy, tell me—what in the name of the Seven Sutherland Sisters, is the thing that keeps you in Foxhollow Corners?”

Joy stopped on the threshold. “Why—I don’t know. I really—don’t know.”

“Is it a man?”

“No. There are no men—to speak of.”

“Well—come back here a minute and let me tell you something that’s been percolating through my Sarah Brum ever since I heard you sing way last night—you won’t miss much for a second or so, these breakfast parties are always long ones especially when the stags are edged _____”

The mention of edged stags brought Joy back into the room.

“Look here, Joy, I like you. I don’t usually like girls, either. I don’t like Sal much, and I live with her most of the time. But I like you. Look here—I want you to think over leaving Foxhollow Corners. Sal and I have an apartment down in Boston. I know a good teacher there who would trot you through anything you needed. You don’t look like the type of girl who puts in a lifetime of watchful waiting in the home town. Think it over.”

“You mean think over coming to Boston——”

“And living with us. I’ll give you my address before we kiss this brain-factory good-bye, and then you can let me know—at any time, understand?”

A shadow fell across the door. It was Sarah, who, completely jazzed out, came in with hardly a look, much less a salutation, for the two girls.

“Hello, Sal,” said Jerry comfortably. “I’m asking Joy to come down to Boston and live with us.”

Sarah wheeled with an incredibly swift motion, and looked first to one girl, then to the other. Then she spoke. “Oh—indeed!” she drawled; and the echo of her voice lingered forever in the air.

II

In a house that was a mass of Mid-Victorian odds and ends, retrospection of the dizzy whirl of Prom was unsettling. Nailed-down carpets, red velvet furniture with lace tidies, antimacassars and ponderous what-nots, cast a veil over jazz, jazzy flirtation, and jazzy routine of life—the sort of veil that enhances while deadening the sharpness of what it is thrown over. Time seemed to have halted some sixteen years ago in the Nelson household and rested with stationary breath among the old family portraits, with the death of Joy’s mother—a lovely, radiant mother, so everyone said, who would have been a sympathetic and understanding companion to her daughter during her girlhood.

Outside his business, which was very successful, Mr. Nelson lived in the gallant days of ’80’s and ’90’s, when the ordered world shone with smug serenity. He sat in his study and read back into Victorian times every evening. Joy had early learned to regard him as a figure remotely and theoretically pleasant, like Oliver Wendell Holmes or William James—a figure to be acknowledged and respected, but with whom she had little in common.

The only really beautiful thing in the house that time could not turn bizarre, was the grand piano that Joy’s mother had left behind. It stood in one corner of the high-ceilinged, wax-floored parlour, and Joy had played on it and sung with it ever since she had been so small that she had to be lifted on to the stool and held there while her baby fingers struck the loving keys and she crooned strange, tuneless accompaniments. Her mother had been a singer who had forgotten her voice when she met George Nelson . . . and Joy had been told that she was the latest of generations of wonderful voices. They rang in her mind and soul at times—hauntingly sweet, sweetly insistent. She was the heir of all the ages! All the beauty of their dead song was merged into her—what was she going to do with these riches? But when the voices became too insistent, Joy had always drawn back. She was queerly ashamed of “having a voice.” In Foxhollow Corners, people who did that sort of thing too much “got boring.” She wanted to be a real girl, to do the things real girls did, and to have a Prince Charming waiting at the end of the golden trail of girlhood.

And now the Prince Charming was no more. He was struck from her vision with rude completeness. There were moments when she mourned the loss of her ideal as a maiden mourns the loss of her innocence; but for the most part the vivid colouring of Prom shut out its dark hours. She had had a wonderful time at breakfast. Tom had gone to bed, and the stags were just starting on their second wind. They had piled into an automobile and gone rattling about the country, loudly singing “snappy” bits of ragtime in close harmony, waking everyone “in time for their morning’s work.” If Prince Charmings had gone from the world, there still was left the satisfactory substitute of high-hearted youth who would have a good time even if romance had died.

To come back to Foxhollow Corners was razing the mountain of delight that had been mounting higher and higher ever since she had left Foxhollow Corners. The girls were all so uninteresting. After Jerry’s plangency, they only contributed to the flatness of things. All they did was to embroider or go to the movies, or walk down town to see what was going on, under cover of a sundae. And those of the men who were not away all the year at college, had been put in their place by Tom as “a buncha fruits.”

And above all, there was nothing to do—absolutely nothing to do if you didn’t do it with the other girls. Joy played ragtime on the scandalized grand piano, and thought over Jerry’s words. . . . Life with Jerry, and studying singing from a real teacher! It was a thought with which

to toy. Of course, when it came right down to it, she could not go. Jerry and Sarah were too different—the New Englander in her cried out against their careless ways, and shrank from the thought of being uprooted from her native soil. And when the New Englander would give way to the French strain that was her mother's ancestors, and her blood danced in her veins at the thought of liberation from Foxhollow Corners—there was always the chilling consideration of what her father would have to say on the subject. He regarded her as something that could be put away or taken out at leisure—and for him to find that she was outside the limits he had given her, might prove revolutionary.

And then one morning at breakfast while she was fidgeting over her prunes, her father himself threw the bomb of revolution across the table:

“Joy, my child, I have been made executor of a will.”

Joy looked up vaguely from her prunestones.

“An old friend who may, or may not, have known that it would be inconvenient for me to go to California at this time. Yes, the estate is in California—I shall have to leave the first of the month.”

“How long will you be gone?” Joy asked, and a little fever of excitement began to burn within her.

“I'm sure I cannot prophesy—these affairs are sometimes indefinite in the extreme.” He frowned over his soft-boiled egg, and the fever within her quickened, as she began to vision the possibilities of this departure.

“Were you—were you thinking of taking me with you?” she asked, with no desire warming her voice.

“It would not be particularly desirable. I know that fathers do take their daughters unchaperoned upon trips with them, but I should prefer not to have you with me. I may have to be travelling constantly”—he heaved a sigh—“and I would not know where or with whom to leave you. Yet that question faces me here as well. I could not leave you alone in this house. And there are no relations nearer than your New York cousins.”

Joy's blood was pounding. The New Englander in her rejoiced that she was not to be torn from her own shores to Pacific sea lines; and the gay little French strain sang that here was her chance that might never be heaped so invitingly before her again! She opened her mouth to speak, but the prunestones in front of her balked the phrase trembling upon her lips. They looked so solid—so unchanging. How could she taste the savour of opportunity, surrounded by prunestones?

And while she hesitated—a little whistle of ragtime in the street outside caught her ear and tickled it. It was only a few bars of syncopated lure—but it dislodged the speech trembling in her throat.

“Father—I don't see why I—why I couldn't go to Boston and study music for a little while. You know I have had no one since Miss Bessie—and I do think it would be nice to polish off my singing with some real Boston teachers—don't you? I could just go down when you went away—and then decide what to do, when you came back.”

It was out; and now her fever was mingled with chills. Why had she even proposed such a thing? Her father with bent brows was looking through his egg—beyond.

“Your mother studied singing in Boston,” he said at last, in a voice so calm that Joy's mouth hung open, emotion suspended; “she lived at a Students' Club. I suppose that is what you would do.”

“I suppose—I suppose it is!” Joy echoed, while the New Englander within her whispered:

“Of course it is!” and the venturesome French blood sang: “See how far you’ve come with him—go a little farther and tell him about Jerry!”

But, lost in the marvel of his consideration of her project, she dared not venture further.

As far as Mr. Nelson was concerned, the subject was settled. Joy was to go down to Boston for a month or two, and he wrote to the Students’ Club where her mother had stayed, for a room for her. Her mother’s old teacher could not be located, and nothing daunted by this nor the fact that it was late in the season to find any teacher, he procured a name and address from “Miss Bessie,” Joy’s old teacher at the school.

And so suddenly, mechanically, things had been decided, from a fragment of ragtime whistled on the street. Joy was to leave Foxhollow Corners, New England—arrangements went forward without her aid or volition. Her father received notice from the Students’ Club that it was crowded, but that she would be well taken care of at one of their annexes. It was a letter that left him calm in the assurance that Joy would be well chaperoned; a letter that plunged Joy into gloom. The days leaped ahead with preparation to the day of her scheduled departure. It was early in June; she did not want to leave Foxhollow Corners, when she came right down to it. A little while longer, and the boys would be home from college, the gay season of Foxhollow Corners would be ushered in—but her ticket had been bought, her father superintending every detail; and he even rode with her as far as Boston.

She arrived at the Students’ Club Annex late in the afternoon. She thought it was rather a dingy looking place, as she established her things in the faded green room which the lady-who-ran-things informed her she was very lucky to get—and the girls she passed in the none-too-fragrant hallway, certainly lacked tang.

Then when she was left alone in the room, adventure suddenly pricked her. At last she was in Boston—all by herself—responsible to no one—well, practically to no one——. And she had Jerry’s address in her bag.

She was tired after her journey—but the fever of enterprise was burning high within her now. And while it burned—she’d better act!

She left the Students’ Club Annex with footsteps that repudiated the ground in their swift urge. What she had been fitfully dreaming of for so long, was now close at hand.

Jerry’s address was on the other side of the town. After a struggle with the street-car system, she landed in front of a Beacon Street apartment house near the city limits, and was informed by the elevator boy that Jerry lived on the sixth floor. Details of a strange journey lower one from fever pitch, and as Joy stood staring at the door of the apartment, after she had pressed the bell, she was tempted to turn and run. She was certainly a fool—yes, a fool, to come here. Why, Jerry would have forgotten all about her by now. Why hadn’t she considered that before?

Just as she was turning to make a dash for the stairway, the door opened a crack and a tossed head peered cautiously around it. “Who—Joy Nelson!” The door swung open to reveal Jerry in purple satin kimono and pink mules. “Joy Nelson! My God, I’m glad to see you! Come in here!” She pulled her inside, and banged the door. “How long have you been in Boston? You don’t know how I’ve kicked myself that I let you go off without getting your address—just like me——” She was leading her through the long, narrow hall, and they now came into a tiny little reception room, daintily furnished in rose and gilt, but without the fragile, uncomfortable chairs that usually go with such a setting. Jerry installed Joy on the luxurious sofa, and then switched on the lights, as rose silk curtains were lowered over all the windows.

“I’m glad you remembered me,” said Joy.

“Remember you? Didn’t I tell you you were the only girl I ever liked. That’s quite a declaration of devotion, if you know me—But now tell me everything. How long have you been down here, etc.?”

“I came to-day. Father had to go to California—and he let me come down here to study singing. I felt lonely over at the Students’ Club place, so I thought I’d come and see you.”

“Come and see me!” Jerry echoed. “I asked you to come and stay with us! You mean to say you’ve eased yourself down as far as Boston and then are planning to stay at some Students’ dive? What did I tell you to think over?”

Adventure was knocking at Joy’s pulses. “Oh—why—I never thought you were serious,” she faltered. “Because we don’t know each other very well—and everything—”

“What’s and everything?” Jerry asked. “Why board at a bum place where you can have only certain hours to practice and have to live by rules with a lot of lame ducks—I know the kind of girls in those places, their idea of jazz is Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes—when you can come here with us?”

There was a silence. Joy had not told her real reason. Of course, Jerry had not said so, but Joy felt certain that there was no chaperone in this apartment. And that was what would make it impossible for her father ever to give his consent to her staying there. . . .

“Of course I’m selfish in this,” said Jerry, “even if it seems to sound that I’m just looking at it from your side. But just Sal alone here with me is getting on my nerves. Not to slam her unnecessarily, but—three is a lot better than two.”

Joy thought: Father was en route to California. And suddenly she knew she had been thinking about this, beneath everything else, all along. Not that she meant to deceive father. But he was on his way to California, and it would take about six days for a letter to reach him, and how could he forbid at long distance, anyway—especially when things might be represented quite nicely? The New Englander in her had left in disgust. And the Southerner in her was laughing—*she* had been thinking this out all along!!!

“I—I’ll tell you what I’ll do, Jerry,” she said. “I’ll stay here with you a little while—if you really want me—just a little while—and I’ll pay you the money that father gives me for my board.”

“Sal and I get pretty rocky sometimes,” said Jerry reflectively; “a regular income will fit in O. K. But a little while has got to stretch out, Joy.”

Before she realized that things had been decided, she was being transported down the hall, with Jerry telling her that she could send for her luggage. “You don’t mind having the maid’s room, do you? It’s just called the maid’s room—we never have been known to have a maid—we chew on delicatessen delicacies when we don’t bum our meals.”

The maid’s room was striking to incoherency. It had started out with some uncompromising black walnut furniture which had certainly been compromised. The room had been recklessly done over in swift black and white effects, behind which the solid furniture pieces lurked and frowned. Just as Jerry dashed over to lift the black and white striped shades, a bell rang loudly and she struck a despairing pose: “And me not fully out of bed yet!” she wailed.

“Where’s Sarah?” Joy questioned.

“Sal? Asleep,—this is one of the days when we stoke up energy for the times to come.” The bell rang again. “Oh, what periwinkle has the nerve at this hour—”

“I’ll go,” and Joy started through the hall again. But Jerry pushed her aside as they reached the reception room.

“I might as well slide it open first as last,” she said, and marched down to the door, purple

kimono flying in the breeze, pink mules clicking on the hardwood floor. She jerked open the door, and two young men almost fell in.

“Shiver your timbers, Jerry! If you aren’t always up to the meanest tricks,” complained the first to recover, a pink-faced youth with an expansive grin and inquisitive, cocky ears. “Here I lean up against your door—only solid thing I’ve met to-day that would stand up against me—and Packy leans on *me*,—and then you come and take it right away—take away our only—only and sole means of support!”

Packy, a tall, gangly stripling with a roving eye, looked past Jerry to where Joy was standing, while chanting solemnly: “How are we, Jerry? We thought we’d drop by—drop in—for a few minutes’ bicker. Twinky has been inhalin’ ’em down right an’ left, an’ things are gettin’ a bit sticky over at the hall—Wait till I slip you the glad tale! Who’s the houri?”

“Friend of mine, come to live here,” said Jerry shortly. “Joy, these are two gay young college boys. You can tell that just to look at ’em.”

Packy and Twinky, by this time abreast of Joy, were looking at her in about the most open admiration she had ever seen. “What’d you say her name was? Joy?” questioned Packy. “One of the best I’ve heard in a long time. Has she got any other good names?”

They breezed into the nearest room which opened from the hall—a room which took Joy a matter of weeks before she had assimilated every last luxurious and clever detail. In the first place, the room was so large as to be startling in an apartment. The beautiful grand piano in the corner gave her a quick start of pleasure. But despite the piano, the room was distinctly not a music room. Remove the piano, Joy thought, and it looked as if one had walked into a men’s club. The huge fireplace, the capacious lounge in front of it, the comfortable chairs, the smoking sets, the magazines on the table, the card tables pushed against the wall—she found herself commenting inwardly that there was only lacking a billiard table.

Twinky sat down on the lounge, while Packy helped himself to a cigarette. “Doggone, Jerry, I wish you’d treat yourself to a new thingumawhich,” he complained, “that purple jiggum is so old it’s shiny.”

“Silk generally shines, young sweetheart,” retorted Jerry, also taking a cigarette and inhaling thirstily as she sat down, giving the purple jiggum a jerk.

“Well, I’m sick of it anyhow. I’d set you up to a new one if it wouldn’t look so naughty.”

Jerry’s thin nostrils twitched sardonically. “When you drop in on me like this, you can’t expect to find a Paris knock-out,” she observed. “I never keep anyone waiting, anyhow. Well—why this little call?”

“It’s Twink, the drunken idiot. Twink, tell your tale.”

They looked over to the lounge. A gentle snore was their response.

“There, what did I tell you?” demanded Packy.

“You’ve told us nothing,” Jerry snapped, taking another cigarette, having exhausted her first in a few long pulls. “It wouldn’t be a bad idea to get to the story, while you were about it.”

“Well, you know it’s nighing unto Commencement over in Cambridge. You know, Class Day and all that sort of thing. Of course I realise that our Harvard parties are mere incidents in a crowded life to you, but you at least know it’s existent—what?”

“Go on, Packy,” spat out Jerry, with some smoke; “quit trying to impress Joy with your English. If I had that line, I’d bury it instead of airing it.”

“Well,” pursued Packy, equably: “Twink’s family are all parked here for the great event. And what does Twink do, but do what you see he has done. Ergo, etcetera. I got him away from the enveloping wet, and brought him over here to shake it. You can see ’twon’t take long. But there

is nowhere in all Cambridge he can hide from that family, and the hotels in Boston are such darn public places. It isn't as if Twink wasn't well known."

"H'm," said Jerry. "Of course if you think my friend and I enjoy having one of those dissolute college boys parked on our lounge sleeping it off——"

"Twink will make it all right with you," he interposed; "and I'll make it right yet. You wait and see!"

"Waiting's the worst thing I do," Jerry responded; "but I don't care—it's a deal. You can sit here and watch by his bedside. Joy and I have got to dress."

"Joy doesn't need to dress. She can sit here and hold my hand, can't you, Joy?"

Joy refused this entreaty, and she and Jerry left him among the magazines. In the hallway Jerry shot her a swift glance.

"Nice start-off your visit's getting," she said. "But we take things as they come; life's too complicated any other way."

Joy laughed. "There's a lot in what you say. I never thought of it that way before—but that's a pretty good philosophy of life."

She went to telephone the Students' Club. She had taken the momentous step; already things were beginning to whirl; and the guilty feeling in her excitement was growing fainter. Jerry was like one of Barrie's characters—a law unto herself. A week of this—a week only—would be an unforgettable experience!

Much later, she went back into the living-room to find Jerry in a vivid green georgette, giving Packy a manicure across one of the little card tables. Twinky was sitting up, looking a little the worse for wear, throwing in a word of conversation now and then.

"Here comes the houri back again," said Packy, waving one shining-nailed hand at her. "I've fallen in love with you, Joy. You don't mind, do you?"

"He really has, you know," said Twink. "He's been handing Jerry a noise about it ever since I can remember."

"Is it a fact you've come to Boston to study singing?" Packy inquired.

"Sing us a song, will you?"

"Go ahead, Joy," said Jerry, putting away the manicure tools. "It'll keep 'em quiet, anyway."

Joy went over to the piano. "What kind of songs do you like?"

"Slushy ones," said Twink promptly, to which Packy echoed: "Yes; the kind you can sit back and dream about."

Joy played a few chords. The piano responded to her touch almost like a human being. Jerry evidently had kept it in tune, and the action suited her. She noticed these details automatically, as her voice floated out in an old college song. Her voice was rich with a promise that made one yearn for its fulfillment; but Joy did not even know enough about singing to know her faults, or to care. There were three verses, and when she had ended, there was a little silence in the room. Twink was the first to speak. "Some voice," he said comfortably. "Got Melba and all the rest of the what-do-you-call-'ems trilling for help 's far's I'm concerned."

"You usually have to pay good money and sit in a stiff-backed chair to hear anything like that," Packy contributed.

Jerry jumped up, tossing back her hair, which had fallen around her eyes. "You two have got to go now. I must talk to Joy—and Twink's family will be sending out a search-warrant. So long!"

"All right for you," complained Packy, going over to the piano as Twink obediently climbed forth from the recesses of the lounge. He stood looking down at Joy's lovely white face, his

leisurely eyelids not quite so far down over his eyes as was their habit. "I told you I'd fallen in love with you," he said swiftly, "and I thought I meant it then, but now I realise I've never really meant anything before. I've fallen for you so hard that it's no idle jest. You did it, you know. You should never sing like that to a fellow."

Joy looked up at him with parted lips through which no words came. This was what one called "slinging a line." But didn't he do it well!

"You've got to see me soon," he said. "You've got to go to the Harvard-Yale baseball game first. After that—there'll be lots of other things. I'll call you up."

They were gone, and she turned to Jerry with comment which crumbled as she saw Jerry's intent attitude. She was standing by the fireplace with her foot on the fender, her freckles puckered into concentration.

"Of course you must realize the voice you have," she said slowly. "It's gold—gold clear through. Raw gold, of course—but gold. It's the kind of voice which, if I had, I would go through hell's seventy furies to train and refine until I was at the pinnacle of my possibility—which means the top of the world. You've got everything to put you there." She stopped with a sigh. "We'll turn in now, and talk it over to-morrow."

"Sarah?" Joy questioned as they went down the hall.

"Sal? She'll sleep right through till to-morrow—she's been run pretty ragged lately."

The morrow found Joy more at home in her new quarters, as her luggage had come and she was refreshed by sleep that was not disturbed until late in the morning. Sarah appeared in her kimono, her hair in a dead-looking braid, while Jerry and Joy were picking up a sketchy breakfast in the kitchenette. Jerry had explained the big club-room—the partition between an already large living-room and the dining-room had been removed. Hence there was no dining-room, and as Jerry said, they didn't really need one. When they were home, they ate in the kitchen, and as for having guests: "most men hate to eat formally, anyway. They like to come out in the kitchen, and then we have chafing-dish parties or sent-up spreads in the living-room."

Sarah expressed a moderate amount of pleasure at seeing Joy, permitting a line or so to cross her brow at the same time. Her attention was diverted as she seemed on the point of making additional remarks, by Jerry's information: "Packy was here last night, by the way."

"Packy was here? Why didn't you wake me?"

"Oh, I forgot to. He didn't bring it back to my memory, either. He saw Joy first."

Sarah's look was not amiable. She turned and left the kitchen, muttering something about dressing.

"Oh, Jerry, what did you say that for?" Joy demanded. "Is she in love with him?"

"In love with Packy?" Jerry laughed noisily. "Don't strain yourself so, Joy. That girl never was in love with anything. She's somewhat dashed about Packy because he's the ideal playmate—lots of income and a thoughtful disposition—the combination gets rarer all the time."

The doorbell interrupted them. "I hope no more blades to sleep off a jag," said Jerry as they went down the hall. "This is no hotel."

But it was a special messenger boy to whom they opened the door, who extended two boxes to Joy and a receipt book to Jerry. Jerry signed in a blurred scribble and the two darted to the living-room with the boxes, one of which was addressed to Jerry, and one, to Joy's surprise, marked with her name. Jerry made short work of hers, tearing it open in one swift motion. All Jerry's motions were swift—whether she exhausted a cigarette in less time than some people

take in lighting, or leaped into her clothes. She held up before her one of the most beautiful negligées Joy had ever seen—a shimmering purple brocaded satin, with folds of chiffon floating away from it.

“I knew Packy’d do that,” said Jerry; “but I must say it’s quick work. What’s your little keepsake?”

“Joy’s little keepsake” was a huge mass of American Beauties, with a note which read: “I suppose you’re used to this sort of thing, but I feel gay just to add myself onto the crowd. From—the only man who ever loved you the way I do.”

“Mine has Twink’s card, with ‘Part Payment for Hotel Bill’ written on it,” said Jerry. “This is what I meant, Joy, when I said Packy was thoughtful.”

Joy could not help being thrilled—despite the fact that she thought she never could be thrilled again. It was the first time in her life she had received American Beauties, and the accompanying note was in tune with the roses.

“Sal will be fretful,” said Jerry; “we’d best get under way before she comes out.”

“Why, where are we going?”

“To find you a singing teacher. Put on your hat and fade away quietly with me.”

There was a pause while Joy put the roses in the umbrella stand, and then the two stole out of the flat and down to the car line.

“Father has the address of a teacher I was to go to, you know,” said Joy.

Jerry threw up her hands, whereat a car stopped and they got on before she could speak. Then she exploded: “Getting the right kind of a singing teacher is more important than a safe doctor! An address that you don’t know anything about may be all right, but the chances are that the person isn’t as good as the one I’ve got lined out for you.”

“You have one all picked out, then?”

“Well, you can try him. Pa Graham is considered pretty good, but you’ll have to see for yourself. *Any* teacher may be all right for a voice that’s just a voice. But your voice isn’t going to be just a voice. It’s going to be pearls and tears and bliss and agony and all that stuff—if you start on the right road and no one hammers that quality out of you.”

Presently they descended from the car and walked through Beacon Street past innumerable tall, narrowly-wedged-in brown stone houses to one near Dartmouth Street. They were admitted to a tiny waiting room by a colored man-servant, and waited fifteen minutes before a haughty young lady, who, Jerry had whispered, was the occasional accompanist, informed them that Mr. Graham could see them now.

A high, wide room, with busts and pictures and beautiful rugs; two pianos; and Pa Graham standing at one end. The picture was one that Joy was to see so often that it would become a part of her. Just now the picture dissolved as Pa came forward with an old-fashioned bow. A little man, with high forehead and silvery hair well kept on his still gallant head; piercing light eyes which might once have been blue; a little old man who smiled when he bowed. Joy could not respond to the smile; she was going through her first attack of stage fright.

“So you have brought me someone, Jerry,” he was saying in a resonant voice that sounded oddly younger than he. “She is young and beautiful; that adds greatly; others may contradict me at leisure. But let us hear what she can do; after all, one cannot sing with golden hair and azure eyes, although sometimes it comes near to it.” He whirled upon her. “What did you bring?”

Scarlet, she opened her music roll and brought forth the two arias that she had attempted under Miss Bessie’s instruction: “Depuis le Jour,” from Louise, and “Plus Grand Dans Son

Obscurité,” from the Queen of Sheba.

“Always they bring grand opera—no matter if they are sixteen or sixty. H’m—one is for a lyric, one for dramatic. Well, I take it you are a soprano, anyway; let us hope so, at least. Come and sing; best get it over with. I am discouraged already. With that face, one cannot expect much else.”

Joy felt what little spirit she had left oozing away. “How could anyone learn anything from a man who said he was discouraged before she had set free a single note?”

The accompanist, with a resigned look that spoke of the thousands of beautiful airs she must have heard suffering, whipped the Louise air to the rack of one of the pianos. This piano was on a raised platform, and Pa Graham motioned to Joy to go and stand by it. As she stumbled up the steps, he went off to the darkness of the other end of the room, and Jerry sat down near by with a reassuring wink.

“Depuis le jour où je me suis donnée . . .
L’âme encore grisée
De ton premier—baiser!”

Poor Louise with her “soul yet drunk from thy first kiss.” A shiver ran through the words that should have been ecstatic. Joy knew that Louise didn’t know what she was talking about. Then she pulled herself together, floating a long, soft high note that left the air palpitant and hushed. She ought to try to be Louise—but somehow she couldn’t, with that man off in the shadows, and Jerry sitting so near, and such a cross accompanist, and such unpleasant memories disturbing the thought of her song.

As far as interpretive value went, the song was a failure. But the lovely floated high notes, and the golden middle register, led the song through to its soaring climax. Then on the whispered repetition, “je tremble délicieusement,” Joy broke down. She simply could not bring forth another note. The accompanist put in a few chords and stopped: Pa Graham came out of the shadows and walked up to Joy. He took her face in his hands and turned it gently to the window.

“Life and work—those are all you need, my child,” he said. “You are going to learn to sing so that the tears will flow or the smiles will dance, at your will.”

“Then you’re no longer discouraged, Pa?” Jerry demanded triumphantly from her seat.

“I do not know her well enough to say that. The greater a voice, the more work there is to do, to reach the perfection that voice demands. And there is one thing, Louise——Oh, yes, child, I’ll make you into a Louise, and many other things—it is not from lack of voices that there are so few great singers—it is because so few are willing to pay the price—the heartbreak of the years of toil and self-denial.”

Jerry rose, pulling out a box of cigarettes. It had been a great self-restraint on her part not to light up before. “Then you think it would be worth it for her to try?”

“Worth it!” He turned almost fiercely to Joy. “It’s not worth it if the years of labor will not seem pleasure—if you do not enjoy every step along the way.”

Joy felt heady with excitement. Enjoy it? Well—she had never thought so before; but with the wail of a wronged Louise air still in her ears, the magical atmosphere of music, busts, pictures, and the eager faces around her, the voices of her heritage tore her soul with their insistence. Almost as if she were mesmerised, she heard the words leave her lips: “I—would—enjoy—every step along the way.”

And then, with the familiar puffing of Jerry's cigarette, things seemed to quiet down. The accompanist, wearing a slightly altered demeanour, left the room, and Joy and Pa came down from the platform.

"Your voice is young, of course," said Pa, "and tender. But it will grow. It is bigger to start with than most, but do not be deceived by its volume and think you are a dramatic soprano. You are a lyric; and you shall learn to sing colorature in golden, matched tones. Just now you have no nasal resonance—and not much point. Don't believe you can run a scale. But your legato is not bad, your high notes are good. Come to-morrow at this time for your first lesson."

He bowed them out, and they stood in the little waiting room while Jerry finished her cigarette and threw it away. They did not speak until they were on a street car bound for home. Then Joy asked Jerry what a lyric soprano was.

"Dunno's I can explain," said Jerry; "a lyric soprano sings most of the snappy opera—I'll say you're in luck. Of course you can do Louise, as he said, and Manon and all the Puccini stuff, and one of your type will sing Rigoletto and Traviata thrown in. Never Aida—that's for a dramatic and would tear your lungs out. And colorature is super-runs and super-trills—like Melba and Galli-Curci. Do you follow me? If not, I'll fill in the blanks."

"Jerry," she asked timidly, after some minutes had gone by; "how do you know about him? I—I wish you'd tell me a little about yourself."

Jerry's red lips took a downward quirk. When she spoke, it was in a queer voice that sagged and paused. "I will, Joy—sometime when I feel like it. I—I really—am going to. I'll tell you about Pa now, though. He was a big teacher in New York a few years ago, and only came to Boston to retire. He says coming to Boston in itself is retiring—but he still takes a few pupils. He couldn't live unless he did—it's been his life for so long, and he's so bound up in music. I met him first in New York through a friend of mine who was studying with him. I even studied with him myself, until—Oh, yes, I used to do—a lot of singing."

What had Jerry said at Prom that was faintly reminiscent of this last? "I used to do—a lot of sewing." And then again: "I used to do—a lot of making-up." Jerry was what one might call a girl of mystery. The thought was pleasantly exciting. Joy speculated, and silence stayed between them until they descended from the street car in front of the apartment house. A dashing blue Marmon was poised in the road, with Sarah and a youth in the front seat—Sarah now resplendent, cheeks flaring pink under an alluring veil, and dressed in a way to make men look at her and women look at her clothes. She shrieked to them:

"Wigs and Davy just went up to leave a note saying we'd come back—come on—we're going down the Cape somewhere for luncheon and somewhere else for dinner and somewhere else to dance!"

Joy did not have time to write her father that day—and only barely time the following noon. She found herself started on a round of gaiety which she had never pictured in her most riotous moments, a routine such as she had never dreamed existed outside of fiction—with Jerry and Sarah it was just one youth after another, with an abundance over and to spare, although this abundance was never spared. Continually they streaked around, always making up new things to do, with an airy disregard of selection of hours by day or night. The men who made all this possible were nearly all college boys but not nearly all Harvard. There were New Haven men who "ran up," and Joy was constantly meeting men from the smaller colleges who had met Jerry and Sarah at house-parties and never failed to call them up when they were in town. There was also another, smaller class, non-college men who seemed to be "men about town." Joy did not like them as well as the college youths. They lacked the humour for the most part that the

college boys possessed to superfluity, and their idea of a good time travelled along fixed and set lines.

Joy welcomed everything with an eager excitement that wore her out more than the steep hours that were taken for granted by Jerry and Sarah. She had been sleeping in Foxhollow Corners all her life—storing up her energy for youth's playtime; playtime which might never have come if her father had not taken the initiative; playtime which might never have come if somebody had not whistled ragtime on the street. If she was white and tired, she applied Sarah's rouge with a liberal hand and drank a "prescription" of Sarah's from the cellarette in the club-room. Jerry objected to these "prescriptions," but since she drank more than either of them, her word did not carry much weight. Jerry drank as she smoked; thirstily, and in long pulls, like a man who needed it, while Sarah drank and smoked daintily, as a girl does to be devilish.

When finally the answer to her hurried morning's scrawl came from California, she was thrown into a guilty joy. Evidently her father had not read her letter with care. She had scribbled somewhat incoherently, it was true, of her change in address to the "rooms of two older girls" whom she had met before—but she had honestly not intended that he should misinterpret, or to scrawl so hastily that he would overlook the salient points in the matter. But the fact remained that he had merely made a note of her changed address, as if she had been placed in another Students' Annex, and then proceeded to the business of the letter, which came to the information that complications would postpone his return for possibly a month longer. Adjoining her to let him know constantly of her health and progress, he was her affectionate father.

There was no seesawing of decisions, no teetering from one course to another when she read that letter. Beneath her relief she might feel guilty, but it was the triumphant guilt as of the stout lady who takes chocolate while sighing "I ought not to take this!" She would stay—for a month longer. And then—then she would see!

Strangely enough, Packy did not appear for a long time after that first day. He called up promptly, and as Jerry had expressed it, "reneged" on his invitation to the ball game. He had invited a girl, Class Day, and it seems, he explained, that one had to take one's Class Day girl to the game. "Perhaps it's just as well, though," he said, "because when I see you, I want to see you, and not necessarily in a howling mob where I might forget and pound you in the frenzy of the moment. I'd much rather pound my Class Day girl!"

When Joy told Jerry, she turned up her snub nose. "I thought he'd give you a rain-check on that. It's their Commencement game, you see—families thick all round—maybe he got faint at the thought."

"What do you mean?" Joy had demanded.

Jerry shrugged her shoulders and took another cigarette. "Merely that never in all my intercollegiate activity, have I been asked to a Commencement, or any affair where all the proud families have come to gaze on their angel sons—and neither has Sal—and he probably thought you followed suit!"

Nevertheless, in spite of Packy's "rain-check," hardly a day passed without some reminder from him whether it was more flowers or tickets to some show, with always a scrawly note enclosed. Sarah waxed acidulous at these times, but Jerry remained amused.

Her lessons she attended regularly, and found herself an increasing eagerness to do so. There was some sort of fascination in going to the studio and having Pa do things to her voice. Before two weeks had passed it was hard to believe that she had not always been interested in

song. Not that there was much song about it. The scales and exercises that Pa made her go through were horrible to her, as they plainly showed the imperfections in her voice. She pled for songs, and he gave her old Italian airs which required even, smooth perfection of tone and discouraged her deeply. And then it was impossible for her to run up and down a scale with any degree of swiftness, and this inability made her almost weep at times.

“Colorature!” she said bitterly to Jerry, one time when Jerry had come in and found her sitting in despair at the piano, her head in her hands. “When I can’t run up and down eight notes without sliding!”

“You’ve got to begin slowly,” said Jerry. “*Walk* up and down the scale, and when you’ve got it evenly matched and pointed, you’ll run like everything! Good God, Joy, if you get so down-in-the-mouth over a little scale work, what will you do when you get on a trill? I prophesy a nervous decline!”

“But when I hear of Tetrizzini—studied seven months or so——”

“That’s a thing you don’t hear about very many. And anyway, Pa mentioned colorature to you in an unguarded moment. With a lyric, it’s not born, but acquired—these stories about voices that are discovered one day and conquer the world the next, make me laugh.”

One day late in July, Packy finally called her up. He said he wanted to see her at once—to take her to a dance that night, down on the seashore. It happened that both Sarah and Jerry were going out and as Joy for once had not arranged to accompany them, she gladly accepted. Jerry put a few skilful touches to a deep midnight blue satin of Joy’s, and when Joy had supplied her rouge—she had some of her own by this time—the effect was entrancing. Sarah would not wait to greet Packy, still cherishing resentment at his desertion, and so Joy was left alone before he arrived.

He greeted her as if there had been no lapse of time in between, and they went down in the elevator to a waiting closed car.

“Where are we going?” she asked him as he began to fuss with the self-starter.

“Down to one of those summer-hotel dances, where I’m staying. It may be pretty stiff and boring, after Jerry’s parties; but on the other hand the novelty might appeal to you, and I’ve got rather an urge to see you in that sort of a place.”

“It won’t bore me,” said Joy; “you’re not a boring type.”

He laughed. “It’s awful to be in love with you and not know a thing about you. Of course I know you’re Jerry’s pal, and a singer—how did you happen to connect up with Jerry, anyway? Of course, she’s an international character, but——”

“But what?” Joy combatted. “I met her at a Prom. Then when I came to Boston—I looked her up. Staying with her is lots more fun than a boarding-house. Sarah and I don’t get on very well together—but I don’t see her much.”

“H’m.” There was a pause. “H’m—I don’t know just how to take you now. Maybe you like being an enigma. Do you?”

“I suppose every girl likes being *told* she is an enigma.”

“Well, you are one. I never had any trouble sizing up a girl before—maybe I can’t size you up because I’m in love with you.”

“I wish,” said Joy, irritated, “that you would stop talking about love so—so fluently. I object to taking its name in vain just to make conversation.”

He screeched the horn derisively. “What do you want to talk about? Politics? What do other men talk to you about? The weather? Besides, I really am in love with you. Lord knows I’ve said it enough—and written it—and said it with flowers—I thought I’d paved the way

quite neatly!"

"If you think you're—in love with me—well, you just plain don't know what love is."

"Well, do you?" She was silent. "I've got my own little working idea that's large enough for me. I'd show you some of it right now if I didn't have to drive this car."

"That isn't love!" she cried sharply.

"Maybe not the whole of it. I see your point. There are many girls that could get me going without falling for 'em. Sal's that kind. But there's something more with you—I'm really interested in you as a person, besides wanting to kiss you and all that."

"Well, I'm glad you're interested in me as a person, because you're not going to kiss me and all that," Joy retorted.

"Oh yes, I am. Don't fool yourself."

"Oh, no, you're not. Don't fool yourself."

The conversation resolved itself into a spirited argument along this theme with variations. An old theme, but one which never fails to keep the debaters keyed to a white-hot pitch of concentration. In this case Joy and Packy were so intent that they nearly passed the Ocean House, the long line of automobiles parked on the shore-drive arresting their attention just in time.

"Well, we can continue this in our next," said Packy as they climbed out.

Joy had never been in a summer hotel, a fact that she did not tell Packy. There was an assortment of all ages in the ball room, with a predominance of the "younger set." Pretty girls with healthily-flushed or tanned faces and sunburnt necks which ended before their evening gowns began, spoke to Packy as they whirled by on the arms of equally tanned youths, and looked wonderingly at Joy, whose white skin proclaimed her no member of the summer band. She watched the dancers over his shoulder. The young girls all seemed so wholesome—as innocent and adorable as kittens——

"You're not peeved, are you, Joy?" asked Packy. "You haven't spoken a word since we got on the floor."

"I was thinking about something else," she said—marking the close scrutiny bent on her by an older woman sitting on the side lines. She was rather an attractive woman—but her eyes were chill, and they rested on Joy as if there was something wrong with her. It was the Boston frigidity she had heard so much about, she supposed.

The music stopped, and he led her across the floor. "The girls are losing an eye on you," he said, "so I might as well satisfy them first as last." They went to a corner where two sunburned couples were seeing which could hang out of the window the farthest, and he effected a somewhat informal introduction.

"Come in out of the night, Betty Grey," he added as one of the girls was still hanging over the sill and shrieking back that she had won—"here's a singer—you're always saying you never meet any interesting people."

The waving feet righted themselves, and a brown, eager face turned to Joy. "Oh, are you *really* a singer?" Betty cried breathlessly. "That's what's been the dream of my life—to be a singer—but I can't even keep on the key! What do you sing?"

"Nothing, yet," said Joy; "I'm just studying."

"You ought to hear her sing," put in Packy. "She's got everyone I ever heard surrounded."

Betty fairly wriggled with excitement. "I *must* hear you! When will you sing for me?"

Joy had no time to expostulate, as the music struck up again and Packy whirled her off.

"Betty's a crazy kid," said Packy paternally. "Seems to me a girl between sixteen and

eighteen has got absolutely no sense at all. I like 'em when they've had enough experience to—well, to be interesting.”

“How much experience does it take to make a girl interesting?” Joy asked.

“Well, it takes a large order, for me. You've interested me so far, but the rest, like our little argument, remains to be proved!”

“I've noticed,” said Joy, “that nowadays it's the girl who always has to be interesting and 'prove something'—the man's duty seems mainly to sit by and be amused. If she can amuse him, he sticks around; if not, he drifts on to the next and resumes his attitude of expectant passivity. Am I right?”

“I'll hand it to you for the line of Noah Webster's specials, anyway,” he drawled. “Didn't you know little girls shouldn't use such long words?”

“Well, I don't care, it's true! I've noticed it everywhere I've ever been, except at Jerry's. You—even you—have changed a little since we got down here.”

The smile left his face. “That's what I get for trying to treat you as if you'd never seen Jerry's.”

“Why—what on earth do you mean?”

Before her amazed directness he turned away his face. “I can't understand you at all,” he muttered.

At the end of that dance, Betty came running up to her, a different man in tow. “You *must* meet my brother Grant,” she panted; “and he wants to meet you, too!”

Laughing, the two shook hands, and Joy found herself looking into eyes of the richest blue she had ever seen. Betty's brother was very tall, very brown, and either very quiet or temporarily overcome. And at the very first survey, Joy decided that he was by far the nicest looking man she had met since she came to Boston.

“She sings, and everything,” chanted Betty, “and Packy brought her, and he's danced every dance with her so far, and it's only fair he should dance a little with some of the rest of us, don't you think? Come on, Packy!”

Packy, looking volumes, moved off with Betty. Left alone, the two looked at each other and laughed. “That's the way she always is,” explained Grant. “Mind if we sit this out? I've been sailing all day, and was dragged here under protest.”

They sat out on the porch, under the stars, and talked of various indifferent things. He discovered that she had not been there before, and insisted on taking her down the Promenade to the beach. There they sat on the sand and talked again upon indifferent things. It was calm and cool with the water sipping in front of them and the music from the hotel faintly behind them. Joy found herself liking Grant Grey very much indeed for so short an acquaintance. There was something so boyish and straightforward about him, a something that was decidedly different from the men she had been meeting at Jerry's. Even if they were only college boys, they had a great deal of slangy sophistication that “Grant” did not possess. Then, too, the way he treated her was less—the only fitting word she could think of was *hectic*—than the way she had been treated lately. His grave respect and quiet talk of sailing, boats and similar neutral subjects were especially welcome after the argument with Packy on the way down in the car. And when he did abruptly shift the conversation to personalities, it was done in such a way that she did not mind.

“You know—I never thought before that I'd enjoy talking to a girl so much.”

“I've enjoyed it, too,” she replied; and then they were both silent, looking ahead of them at the indifferent waters. Neither knew exactly what to make of the magnetic current that seemed

to flow from one to the other, even in the simplest sentences that they spoke.

"I know now when it was," said Grant finally, after a little silence had been growing.

"When what was?"

"When I felt the way I do, about you. When I first saw you come into the room with Packy."

Joy felt herself growing warm. How had things come as far as this—in half an hour? She rose, and shook the sand from her skirts. "We must go in. I don't know how many dances we've missed. I never lost track of the time so before."

"Neither did I——" said the boy beside her as they faltered back over the way they had come.

At the door they encountered Packy, who had hailed them with reserved cordiality. "Where in blazes have you two been? The dance was over fifteen minutes ago and I've been looking for you ever since."

They had not even noticed that the music had stopped. "All my fault, Packy," said Grant. "I took her down to see the Promenade."

And then the two stood looking at each other. "When may I see you again?" he asked.

Joy had been hoping for those words, but now that they had come, she was incoherent with relief. "I—why——" she stammered. Packy intervened while she hesitated.

"You've got your nerve, Grant—I'll hand it to you. But I brought Joy down here—dost follow the trend of my remarks?"

Grant paid no attention to him. "So that's your name—Joy? It—fits you."

"Let's discuss names for awhile," said Packy acidly. "We've nothing to do but ease back to Boston, and it's only one-fifteen."

"You have to go back to Boston at this hour?" cried Grant, incredulous.

"Certainly. Why not?" Joy was a little amused, thinking of the hours Jerry and Sarah accepted as a matter of course.

He towered over her, acute distress in every line of his face.

"Come on," said Packy. "It's only an hour's run, Grant—less, at this time of night."

He followed them to the automobile, still objecting to their ride. Joy got in the car and held out her hand. "Good-bye," she said softly. He took her hand, forgetting to release it as he whispered: "Tell me your telephone number—quick!"

Packy was going around to get in at the other side, and in a heartbeat she had whispered the number. When Packy was installed, they had every appearance of finishing a casual leavetaking.

Once off, Packy refused to sulk unduly over the evening, instead taking a jocose attitude which was much more trying. "Well, Joy, I might have known you were like all the rest. Don't you think, though, that you were crowding things—to run off on a nice little party like that with someone else, the first time I take you anywhere? And after all that whiffle all the way down about how *I* couldn't get away with it——"

Joy was stunned. She paused and weighed her words, searching for thoughts that would reach his point of view. "Coming down, you talked in a way that made me doubt whether I would ever go out with you again. Now, you are merely clinching my determination."

To her stupefaction, he immediately grew humble. "Oh, Joy, I'll swallow everything I said. You—you can't blame me, though. I—I know so little about you—and I'm so crazy about you. Doesn't that make absolutely no impression?"

"Why should it?" she asked wearily.

"That fellow Grant Grey isn't lingering in your mind, is he? He's all right, but O, so stiff, Joy.

Typical Bostonese family—mother’s the Gorgon of the beach. Now listen—Joy—I may be crazy about you, but I’m willing to wait if there’s any danger about mixing the drinks. Yes, I’ll wait. I won’t say any more to-night—you can sleep all the rest of the way home, providing you don’t snore. A girl ought never to get so tired as you and Jerry and Sal—bound to snore when you get that way—nothing more unromantic.”

Joy counted every mile, she was so anxious to get back home and into her black walnut bed. When they finally drew up in front of the apartment house, she gave a sigh of relief. Packy laughed:

“I don’t blame you,” he said. “I’ve been rotten to-night, Joy—but next time I’m absolutely the genuine blue-ribbon Pomeranian. I told you—I can wait any reasonable length of time.”

He left her at the door of the apartment, and she flew in, eager to talk the evening over with Jerry. But they also had evidently motored afar for their party, and had not come in yet. She went to the cellarette and poured herself out a small “prescription,” making a wry face as she did so. Not long ago she would have recoiled at the idea of taking liquor. Now, ever since Sarah had first shown her how some drinks would brace her if she felt dead, and others would send her off to sleep if she had time to sleep some unexpected hour and couldn’t, she had come to look upon alcohol as a friend in need. Her father would think this horrible. And what would the family portraits think?—The thought trickled away as the liquor went down her throat, and she reviewed the events of the evening. Packy had been a great disappointment, adding to her growing cynicism about men. But were all men so—materialistic? She poured herself another glass, reaching for a more suitable phrase. Not materialistic, necessarily; rather, “of the earth, earthy.” Were they—all? She thought of Grant Grey, seeing again the clear eyes that seemed a reflection of his young boy’s soul. No, not all men were like Packy. A wave of feeling swept over her, so strong that she was left trembling. She must see Grant again—soon!

The wave passed, leaving her limp, a questioning almost of terror knocking at her pulse. *How could she feel so, about a man she had just met?*

III

” Look at that sailboat,” said Grant Grey.

“Yes,” said Joy contentedly.

The two were sitting on the piazza of the Grey’s summer home, which fronted the beach.

It had not been Grant who had finally called Joy up, but Betty, all thrills and eagerness. She asked Joy to come down for the week-end—“and Grant wants you to come, too!” she added, as if that settled it.

It had.

Sarah was frankly envious, Jerry rejoiced, at her invitation.

“You’ll get some rest,” said Jerry; “you never do here.”

“I wish *we* could get away,” Sarah grumbled; “I get so sick of summer in the city.”

“Why don’t you go somewhere for a few weeks?”

Jerry shrugged her shoulders, and knocked the ashes off her cigarette. “No funds, as the banks tell me constantly. I have to stick around town and do a little work once in awhile.”

“Work!”

Jerry laughed. “It’s time I took in washing on the side again. I am not a young lady of independent means.”

Sarah gave forth a groan. “Oh, dear, Jerry, are you going to start again?”

“Must, my lady, the situation spells must, if I am to continue to buy our delicatessen breakfasts. At times, food seems scarcely worth while to me.”

“It seems to me,” said Joy, “that we are pretty extravagant for people having no visible income.”

“How?” demanded Sarah. “We hardly ever buy any meals except breakfasts——”

“But look at the stuff we drink and pass around—so far as I can see, keeping the cellarette filled is as expensive as running a free bar——”

“Little one,” Jerry drawled, “our cellarette is endowed. Some day when I have a lot of time I’ll take you around to the wine closet and tell you the names of who has contributed to which. To send a case of spirits to a young lady was ever a delicate mark of attention. We had a wonderful collection this spring, and before the first of July—don’t you remember the cases and cases of supplies that were pouring in around then? We have to go easy on those Prohibition allotments, though. The donors collect on them every once in so often.”

Joy realized that she was learning something new every day. She travelled down to the Grey’s in a rather sombre frame of mind. Her father had returned home and she had just escaped his descending upon her on the way by business necessity which had made him haste on through and write her, wishing her to return as soon as she could. She had written him that she was at a critical period in voice-placing and did not want to leave her teacher just now, especially when she was so lucky as to have him in Boston during the summer. It was true, she was going through a critical period in voice placing. In spite of her irregular hours, under Pa Graham’s magical touch and through the scales she practised regularly, her voice was coming forth in a way that now bewildered her, now filled her with an exultant sense of power. But the moments of exultation were few and far between. It was baffling to let loose one pure, golden note, and while yet tingling from the joy of it, to follow it with half a dozen that were edgy, or swallowed, or had a thread in them—there seemed to be no end to the variety of ways one could defeat tone production. She had just achieved sufficient grasp in the art of singing to know how little she knew, and instead of discouraging her as it might have at first, she was

lured on and stimulated to further endeavour. She was right not to leave Pa,—but she knew that was not the real reason she had signified her wish to remain in Boston. Was it this boy—this boy whom she had seen only once? She ought to know by this time how transient her fancies were. But this was so different from her other affair. She knew more about men now.

Betty met her at the station in a little runabout, and had driven away the flurry in Joy's brain with her eager chatter. Grant had been intending to come to the station, too, she informed her; but at the last minute Mrs. Grey had found a number of things for him to do. Grant humoured mother a lot. Betty didn't believe in it; encourage mothers too much, and they'll expect everything of you.

It had been a shock to meet Mrs. Grey. She was the woman who surveyed Joy so critically the night of the dance. A tall, large woman, with independent demeanor, marcelled white hair and snapping eyes still almost as blue as Grant's. She was gracious, but far from cordial. Very little appeared to escape the scrutiny of those eyes, and she made Joy feel exceedingly uncomfortable. Joy remembered what Packy had said: "Mother's the Gorgon of the beach;" she decided that Packy had great descriptive powers. Mrs. Grey inspired the "what-have-I-done-anyway" feeling in one. Mr. Grey was only a shade more approachable. He seemed to consider Joy Betty's age, to be talked to as such at convenient moments, and ignored as such most of the time.

Immediately upon arriving, Joy had had to dress for dinner, which was an absurdly formal meal for a beach house, and then after dinner the whole family had gone for a moonlight sail. She had no moment alone with Grant, and both were silent most of the evening, acutely conscious of each other's presence, while Betty chattered and Mr. and Mrs. Grey admired the light effects of the moon on the water, and spoke of art and science and other impersonally interesting subjects to which none of the three young people listened.

Betty came in while Joy was undressing, her eyes dancing with excitement. "Joy—mother thinks Grant's crazy about you—I heard her tell father. Do you think so? It would be so screaming! He never gets that way!"

"I think so? Why, Betty——"

"Well—can't you always tell when a man's crazy about you? I can!"

Joy laughed hysterically. "Maybe I haven't had as much experience as you, Betty," she suggested.

After Betty had gone, something happened that terrified her. For no concrete reason she burst into tears, and the more she cried, the more hysterical she became at the thought that she was crying with no apparent reason. Of course, she was very much excited. And her nerves were pretty raw, and she had not had the usual "prescription" with which to deaden them. But it couldn't be because she had no recourse to alcohol that she felt this way. That was the way only awful people got, and after they had been drinking for years and years and years! She finally fell into a tear-tinted slumber, from which she awoke barely in time for breakfast.

And now she and Grant found themselves miraculously left alone. Betty had gone to play tennis with some friends, and to Joy's stupefaction, Mr. and Mrs. Grey had motored up to town together. And so the two sat on the piazza, still wrapped in an anticipatory silence.

They watched the sailboat out of sight, then Grant turned to her. "I say—let's get away from everything. Let's take the roadster and some lunch and go way off into the country—will you?"

There are few perfect days in life that stand out golden, untarnished, with no flaws or worrisome little details to bar the way of loving memory; but that Saturday was one for Joy. As

they rode far into the country, past orchards and immaculate white New England farmhouses, the hours seemed to be resting motionless, while they talked aimlessly and with long, happy silences, shyly sitting as near together as they dared. Time, as well as everything else, had gone away and left them alone.

They ate beside a pebble-hindered brook, with tall trees gossiping above them. There were not even mosquitoes to hum their way through the rainbow haze in which the two were lingering. A large and elaborate repast had been put up for them, but Joy could not eat. He, too, seemed to find difficulty in raising any enthusiasm over the luncheon, and looked at her instead. Finally they gravely repacked the almost unimpaired repast, then looked at each other over the basket. Because they were young and American, they laughed.

"It's too hot to eat now," said Grant, recovering hastily; "we'll take out the basket again later, when we get hungry."

"That's what I thought, too," said Joy, with dancing eyes.

It was so peaceful by the brook; she had not realised how the hectic life in the apartment had been wearing upon her. She closed her eyes with a little shiver of ecstasy. "Let's stay here a little while," she said. "It's nice under the trees."

"I was just going to suggest that," said Grant. "We think the same in almost everything, don't we?"

How many millions of lovers have "thought the same"—lovers are distanced in tastes, likes and dislikes, ideas and ideals, as the poles are distanced one from the other!

"Yes," said Joy dreamily. By now they had passed into the "you and I" stage. They drifted into what they thought was a discussion of modern education; but he was telling her about his years at Harvard. He had just graduated; Packy's class.

"But Packy and I never ran together much," he said. "Packy is a natural-born fusser; I've always been more or less of a woman-hater."

"They say woman-haters are really the most romantic," said Joy lightly.

"Well, they usually have the highest ideals; that's what makes 'em dislike most women. I had almost impossibly high ideals; so high that I was getting afraid I'd never meet her."

Silence. A twig fell from a tree, and the two started.

"I said," said Grant, looking up at a patch of sky through the branches while Joy plucked a blade of grass into tiny bits; "I said—I was getting afraid I'd never meet her."

A throbbing stillness in the woods; then Joy spoke breathlessly. "So—was I," she said.

A blue-jay shrieked discordantly from near by, and with a hitch, they resumed more general subjects. Somehow, when one talks about ideals, one always gets personal.

"Girls nowadays don't encourage men to look up to them," said Grant. "There isn't the respect there used to be—and the girls don't seem to miss it."

"Some girls miss it," said Joy; "but what can they do about it? If they object, and try to bring back past conditions, they are labelled old-fashioned, slow, stiff,—and let alone. Respect and what men consider a good time can no longer be combined."

"That's the girls' side, I suppose. But a man's position is hard, too. No man wants to fall in love with a girl who is unattractive to other men. Probably you would call that sheep-like, but it's something we can't help. And the popular girls nowadays, the girls that men run after, are spoiled by that very quality that makes them popular. Betty says I'm awfully stuffy—but most of them seem to me hard—flippant—and—well, unreserved. Do you see what I mean?"

"Yes," said Joy, amazed at his putting into words the half-formed thoughts that had been sifting through her brain ever since she had begun to observe boys and girls together, which

had been at an early age, as with most small-town girls.

"It seems," Grant went on, "it seems almost as if girls were trying to break down every difference that exists between them and men—smoking and drinking are only two examples ____"

She winced. Vaguely conscious of her unrest, he turned to her with an impulsive gesture. "The only reason I'm saying all this is because it's so wonderful to find a girl like *you* nowadays——"

"Oh, I don't think things are as bad as all that!" she said. He sensed her withdrawal, and they left the Modern Girl to return to Modern Education.

They started back when the sun began to gleam redly through the trees. The way seemed shorter than coming, and they talked more, whirling through a world of fiery golden sun. Before they had even thought of opening the luncheon basket, they were back at the beach house where Betty with an accusing face awaited them on the piazza.

"We're back," said Joy. The sun had gone, and everything seemed suddenly grey and flat.

Betty came dashing down to them. "Do you call this nice, to go off and leave me for a whole day?" she demanded, pouting. "Lucky mother and father haven't got back yet. And now you'll have to hurry like everything to get ready for the dance!"

They realized that she was in evening dress.

"Oh, yes, there's a dance to-night," said Grant intelligently.

"There usually is, Saturday nights at the club house," Betty retorted with fine sarcasm appreciated by no one but herself. "I'm not going to wait for you two—here comes my man now and there's a wonderful orchestra!" She waved to her "man," a gentleman about town, possibly all of seventeen, who was boiling up the driveway in a racer, and ran off to meet him.

Joy and Grant looked at each other. "I had forgotten all about the dance," said Grant.

"Let's not go!" It was Joy who spoke impulsively. "I—I dance so much up in town—and it's so beautiful just here, by the sea——"

But the golden day had faded, the perfect moment passed. "We ought to go," Grant considered. "Mother would think Betty and I weren't entertaining you very well. Besides, there are some duty dances I've got to work off, that mother's been after me about for a long time."

Joy bowed her head. What was this feeling of impending distress—it must be only that the sun had set!

"We'll get dressed," said Grant, "and then we can decide whether it's too late to go or not." He met her eyes with a twinkle in his. "I dress—very slowly!"

"I've torn my evening gown—and it will take me a long time to mend it!" Joy returned with a laugh, and they separated.

Joy dressed as slowly as she dared. Her head was aching—two days now without her prescription. Was that why she felt so depressed? She had brought the same blue evening dress, and when the work was over, even to her anxious eyes she had never shone more gorgeously. The only question was color. Her face was temporarily red from driving in the wind; but she knew it wouldn't stay, and it would leave her pale and dragged looking, as she had been lately most of the time. Which was preferable; to put on some rouge and run the risk of looking conspicuously painted until the wind-burn died down, or to omit the rouge and face the certainty of looking ghastly later?—She put on some rouge.

When she finally went down, about nine o'clock, Grant was on the piazza. She stood in the doorway and looked at him, as he came towards her. Why couldn't all boys be like Grant—Grant, with reverence and purity shining in those clear blue eyes——

“I was hoping you’d wear that dress,” he was saying. “It’s the one you wore the first time I ever saw you——”

The first time already seemed impossible ages away.

“That’s why I wore it,” said Joy, in a matter-of-fact tone.

Neither kept the other in doubt by word or look. They looked now—and then, because they were human, they went and ate a fairly good meal from the lunch basket. Now there was no excuse for not starting to the dance—but still they lingered.

“I never heard you sing, you know,” said Grant. “Can’t you sing after eating—or will you sing to me before we go?”

They went into the music room, where Joy had already sounded out the piano. “Singing right after a meal gives me an excuse for not doing it well,” she smiled, but her fingers trembled as she played a few chords. What if he shouldn’t like it? That would be something she could not bear. Unconsciously music was already a part of herself. It would be so hard to sing to him—the hardest singing she had ever done! “I’ll sing a song called ‘The Unrealized Ideal,’” she said.

To most singers it is a handicap to play for themselves, but for Joy, to whom playing was as natural and spontaneous as breathing, it was only an added delight. She could almost hear her heart trembling as she modulated into the song.

The accompaniment stole out—a sound as of little bells chiming from far away—and then Joy’s voice, muted and shaky, but all the more poignant for that reason——

“My only love is always near
In country or in town
It seems that he must feel, must hear
The rustle of my gown.

“I foot it after him, so young
My locks are tied in haste—
And one is o’er my shoulder flung
And hangs below my waist.

“He runs before me in the meads
And down the world-worn track
He leads me on—but as he leads
He never glances back.

“Yet still his voice is in my dreams
To witch me o’er and o’er
That wooing voice! Ah, me—it seems
Less near me than before.”

A pause—a little wistful interlude of tinkling notes in a minor key.

“Lightly I speed while hope is high
And youth beguiles the race
I follow—follow still—but I
Shall never see his face.”

Grant had risen and had come over to her, his eyes blazing.

“You have never sung that to Packy, have you? Joy——”

“No—I haven’t ever sung it to anybody.”

“Somehow—I couldn’t have borne it, if you had, Joy——”

A cool voice from the doorway smote in upon their throbbing hearts. “Dear me! Have you two not gone to the dance yet?”

Mrs. Grey came forward into the room, her chill eyes dwelling first on Grant, then upon Joy, lingering on her face where the mixed colours strove for supremacy. “It was a great pity Mr. Grey and I were delayed in town.” She turned to Joy. “So you’re a—singer! I rather thought you—expressed yourself in some way.” Her eyes still rested with emphasis upon Joy’s colour; it was almost as if she wished Grant to follow her gaze and see what she saw. But Grant was not looking at Joy with his mother’s eyes. “What are you going to do with your voice?”

Joy took a deep breath. “I am going to study for opera.” It was the first time she had admitted it, even to herself. Once the statement was out, she contemplated it with delight.

“Oh, indeed. A professional—with all that that entails.” The bleak words fell between Joy and Grant; and although neither dreamed it then, with the rose flush of the vanished day still upon them, they stayed between them.

Almost without words, it was determined that they start at once for the dance. Grant remarked that he and Joy would walk up the beach. A snowbound glance from the blue eyes, and the two left the house, with the understanding that they would meet Mr. and Mrs. Grey over there.

The tide had gone out, leaving long stretches of hard sand. The moon was up, full and round, staring down upon them with friendly curiosity.

“I always used to wonder why people raved so about the moon,” said Grant. A little farther on, and they were out of sight of the house, on a lonely stretch of beach and sky. “Joy, when you sang, I felt—I can’t explain how I felt. It’s wonderful, it’s—you.”

Somehow they came to a pause on the sands looking out on the moon’s arlight reflection on the water.

“I—I once read some of Shelley—in college,” and Grant looked down at her, suddenly scarlet——

“See the mountains kiss high heaven
And the wavelets kiss the sea
What is all this kissing worth
If thou kiss not me?”

Almost a gasp in the murmuring ocean air—and then their lips met, brushing shyly, in a frightened thistledown of contact.

“Joy—I worship you.” His trembling whisper in her ear. “I love you—I love you so! Joy——”

This time they clung together, half frightened at the passion that surged to their lips.

And then a long interval without words—until they found themselves sitting on the sand, she with her head on his shoulder, he stroking her hair.

“You have the prettiest hair I’ve ever seen. Everything about you is the most wonderful I’ve ever seen. Your eyes, your voice, your lips—” Another interval. “Joy—I never knew what it was to feel like this. You—you’re the only girl I’ve ever kissed.”

“I didn’t know a man existed, who could say that,” said Joy with a happy laugh which died away on his next words.

“And I didn’t know there were girls like you—until I met you. For I am the first with you—am I not?”

“I’ve been kissed before—once.”

An intake of breath. Then, before she could continue: “Don’t tell me about it, Joy, dear—” a pause to accustom oneself to the unfamiliar “dear”—“don’t tell me about it—I’d rather not hear any more. I’ll make you forget him—just once isn’t much—”

After a month of whiles, they walked slowly up the beach. Their conversation was incoherent, but adequate.

“The dance will be almost over—what does it matter to *us*—isn’t it all strange and wonderful—your mother will think we were drowned—”

They came into the club house with unmistakably luminous faces. There is something about young love that stands starkly revealed, and they were as patent as if they had been hung with sandwich-man signs.

At times life seems to move in a quick succession of scenes until the scenes begin to seem unreal, and one feels apart from the drama of events, watching impersonally while life plays on with oneself. So Joy felt, as she saw Packy at the far corner of the room, and so she watched with impartial interest as he looked at them, first carelessly, then in swift incredulity, then with a face that grew thunderous, as, hands in pockets, he strode across to where they were about to join the dancers.

“Hello, Joy,” he said shortly. “Doesn’t take you a long time to change running mates, does it?”

“My goodness, look at Packy, entirely surrounded by a frown,” she tossed back at him—how easily Jerry’s line came to one’s lips.

“Is that all you’ve got to say?” he demanded, blocking their way as they started again to join the dancers.

Joy remembered a saying of Jerry’s which seemed peculiarly pat at this moment: “A girl never has the right amount of men. If she has few, it’s boring; if she has many, they get in the way and cramp her style.” She laughed. Packy was really a grotesque figure, with his glowering face and childish remarks. “You make me feel like a dancing school, with all this talk of changing partners,” she observed, and turned to Grant. She was amazed at the transformation. Grant’s lips were drawn back over his teeth, his eyes glittering.

“Would you mind stating what business it is of yours, who Joy goes to a dance with?” he asked, in a voice as chill and cold as Mrs. Grey’s herself; a voice with the ring of generations of Boston ancestors behind it.

It was the end of the dance; and Joy now realized, in a sort of detached horror, that they were becoming conspicuous. Grant and Packy were facing each other in the same tense, bristly pose that dogs assume before a pitched battle; faces were turning their way; she could see Mrs. Grey rising, in impotent protest, across the room—

A voice assailed her memory. “Is it really you, Miss Nelson?” Standing close at hand, his

eyes upon their little group in grave attention, was a good-looking boy of medium height, with blond, wavy hair that had been plastered back in an attempt to make it look straight—At her look of vague recognition, he stepped nearer, said to Grant and Packy in an undertone: “Couldn’t you talk it over just as well out-doors?” then smiled at Joy, and in a normal, bread-and-butter voice that seemed to have the effect of suddenly bringing everything back to an everyday basis, said: “You don’t remember me, do you? I met you at Prom this spring—my name’s Dalton.”

“Mr. Dalton—of course!” she exclaimed. “I remember you very well—” she stopped, and twinkled. The echo of his blunt lecture seemed for a moment to hang in the air. She turned to introduce him to Grant and Packy; but Packy had gone. The scene was over, and she relaxed.

“I’ll cut in later,” said Jim Dalton, and moved away. The music had started again, the orchestra-leader announcing that this was “the last dance.” In Grant’s arms she floated off to the strains of “I Love You Truly.”

“Hope that fellow who said he’d cut in, will have sense enough not to do it on the last dance,” he growled, clasping her almost fiercely to him.

“If that fellow hadn’t come up just then, I don’t know what might have happened,” Joy suggested.

“Damn Packy! Forgive me, Joy; but don’t you think Packy rates a damn or two? Of all the cake-eating parlour pythons——”

“Your mother was watching us. In fact, she still is. That was an awful scene to make, Grant.”

“Scene! Asking him one question. It was nothing to what I wanted to do. At that, though, he faded away pretty quick. Joy you dance like—like nothing at all.”

“So do you!” she thrilled up at him; and they drifted rapturously past Mrs. Grey, whose eyes, freshly iced, followed them everywhere.

Jim Dalton did not cut in until the very last encore. Grant relinquished Joy, then went revengefully to cut in on Betty, who looked far from delighted to be interrupted in the midst of “I Love You Truly” by a *brother*.

“I want to thank you for coming up when you did,” Joy said.

“It was nothing; I wanted to see you. How have you been? You look——”

“I look—what?”

“It’s not easy to describe the change. I would hardly have known you if I hadn’t overheard one of those two young men—ah—mentioning your name.”

Joy’s lips twitched. “Do I look like ‘a typical model showing off some undress creation?’” She was as surprised as he at the ease with which she remembered his words. Certainly, being with Jerry sharpened one’s wits.

“No. Of course not. You look older, for one thing—and——”

“And—what?”

“And as if—well, as if you were—unsettled in your mind—looking for something you hadn’t found.”

“Everyone—always is looking for something they haven’t found—don’t you think so?” she countered, watching Grant from the corner of her eye, while her heart beat a painful tattoo of triumph against her side. She had—found what she had always been looking for! Girlhood’s tentative dream was victorious certainty.

“I haven’t asked you how you happened to be around these parts?”

She told him she was studying music in Boston, and living with Jerry. This he received in a silence which became so long that she did not know what thread he was taking up when he

finally demanded:

“Did you mean that?”

“Mean what?”

“That you were living with Jerry. Were you serious?” Receiving an affirmative answer, he fell back again into a silence which lasted until Grant cut back at the end of the dance.

They rode home with Betty and her “man,” thus escaping Mrs. Grey, and Joy and Betty went upstairs before Mr. and Mrs. Grey returned. Betty was full of thrills. She confided to Joy that she “had found someone harmonious, even to dancing, at last.” He was her escort of the evening, and they were engaged.

“Engaged!” Joy exclaimed. “You, at your age—you don’t want to be married at sixteen, do you?”

“Of course not!” Betty tossed her head. “My goodness, Joy, I’ve been engaged three times already—being engaged and getting married have got nothing to do with each other!”

Saying which, she departed, leaving Joy undecided whether to laugh or be horrified. Decidedly, there was more to these naïve, sunburned kittens than met the eye of the innocent bystander.

Sunday breakfast at the Greys’ was a late affair, and the table was not fully assembled until eleven. Joy dreaded meeting Mrs. Grey’s scrutiny again; she even shrank from seeing Grant, for in the morning sun she blushed at the memory of things under the white heat of the moon, and longed for another moon with no glaring day intervening; but finally she could not longer postpone it. Mrs. Grey was presiding at the table, immaculate and unruffled as ever, not a hair of her marcel straying from its designated path. She enquired meticulously if Joy had slept well, then talked past Joy on one side and Grant and Betty on the other, to Mr. Grey at the head. Joy and Grant met each other’s eyes for one glowing moment, then devoted their attention to their plates. After all, it was the first real meal they had had since yesterday morning. Conversation flitted its way about as noncommittally as a feather-duster, ignoring the vital corners. It was Mr. Grey who grew expansive after his soft-boiled eggs and toast.

“In my day,” he remarked with a chuckle, “we didn’t choose a club-house dance in which to pick a fight. We chose some vacant lot.”

“We weren’t fighting,” said Grant curtly.

Mrs. Grey allowed her sea blue eyes, cold and sparkling as salt water, to rest on Joy for one pungent moment. The air tingled with omission. She spoke finally, as she rose from the table: “We shall hope to hear you sing later in the day, Miss Nelson.”

A stupid, hot Sunday, composed of working through the Sunday papers, sitting on the piazza talking about weather probabilities, and keeping maids perspiring to bring cooling drinks. Grant and Joy had no excuse to slip away, with the events of the day before stalking in the minds if not the words of the Greys, and the stubborn fact that Joy was nominally Betty’s guest. Betty remarked that it was a pity church attendance had gone out of style; it did fill in part of Sunday, anyway. She had suggested golf, which Joy did not play, and tennis, which Joy had expressed a willingness to watch; and everyone had unanimously declared that it was too hot to go down on the beach in the blaze of the sun. Motoring was voted down, since on Sunday “there was such a fearful rabble in the road,” and the day groaned away in an agony of repressions for Grant and Joy.

Towards evening, as it grew cooler, some callers arrived, and Betty pointed out that now was the time for Joy to sing. So Joy sang—not the “Unrealized Ideal” this time, but some little French songs which evoked polite murmurs of appreciation from the guests who were of the

type that know nothing about music and care less, but know that it is the thing to appreciate it. And then Betty, rolling her eyes in a manner she considered romantic, requested “Last Night.”

The room with its conventional puppets of listeners faded away; Joy was only conscious of one intent brown face. What if all day they had been and still were hedged about by tiresome details; she could speak to him if there were thousands listening. Oh, to make love with one’s voice:

“I think of you in the daytime
I dream of you by night
I wake and would you were here, love
And tears are blinding my sight.
I hear a low breath in the lime-tree
The wind is floating through
And oh, the night, my darling,
Is sighing, sighing for you, for you.”

Her emotion was mastering her, so that her voice came forth in bursts of gorgeous tone or died away in a tremulous whisper; but it carried a quality that made her listeners look uncomfortable, as conventional people tend to do when they feel that their emotions are being aroused in a public place.

She ended, and there was a small moment of recapitulation before the polite murmurs started again. She left the piano and crossed to Grant—veiled under the general chatter, it was the first moment they had to speak to each other.

“I sang to you,” she said; and the Chinese masks which they had both been assuming all day, made easier by the breath-taking weather and the environment, fell away from them as they looked at each other.

“You must always sing to me, Joy—your singing’s you—and I can’t bear to have anyone else even get a part of you.”

She smiled up at him, seeing only the worship of the idea. The callers stayed to a “simple” Sunday supper of three courses and “on the sides,” then left the Grey family to settle down to a repletely quiet Sunday evening. Not so Betty; she announced that “Mr. Cortland” was coming to take her riding, and Joy and Grant could come along too. Mrs. Grey made a few quiet remarks about the ordinary people who rode Sunday evenings, but “Mr. Cortland,” Betty’s newly-acquired fiancé, arrived about that time, and the four set off without even a pretense of asking Mr. and Mrs. Grey to accompany them. They went in “Mr. Cortland’s” racer, which necessitated three-in-one seat and one-on-the-floor, always a piquant combination.

“No use taking a larger car,” said the fiancé, in a bored-man-of-the-world tone: “everyone would scrap as to who wouldn’t drive, and I’d have to, and I can’t drive with one arm—I can only stop.”

“Oh, Nick, you do tear off the worst line,” trilled Betty. “Come on—take the Jerusalem road—of course we’ll go to Nantasket. I want to ride in the roller-coasters!”

Grant turned and looked up at Betty. “You’re not going to Nantasket to-night,” he said. “I suppose you want to ride the merry-go-round too, and dance in the Palm Garden! Where do you get your lowbrow tastes?”

Betty played a tune on Nick’s shoulder. “Drive straight to the border,” she told him in a sepulchral voice, then to Grant: “Stuffy old thing! I’ve been cooped in all day till I could *scream*

—, thank goodness, we can forget it's Sunday at Paragon Park!"

What was there about visiting an amusement park on Sunday to call forth such dignity from Grant? It was almost like his mother might have spoken—Joy anxiously intervened before the brother-and-sister controversy became too distressing: "It's Mr. Cortland's car, so we can't help where they go;—but we can sit and wait for them."

So they sat in the car outside Paragon Park, while Betty went in to try her fiancé's endurance on the roller-coaster and in eating pop-corn. The time raced by as swiftly as their heart-beats; they had a whole day to catch up with, Grant said. "Our whole lives, too, Grant," Joy whispered against his lips.

"To think that we never knew each other—before!"

"But—loving this way is much more beautiful! If we had known each other always—love would have made no more impression than a—a candle lighted in a room blazing with electricity. But what a difference—when the candle is lit in the darkness!"

"Joy, how can you say such wonderful things? You say them all—everything that I can only feel, you say—or sing! How can a girl like you ever be satisfied with me?"

"Don't, Grant—that's blasphemy! Or something!"

"I can't bear to think of you going away to-morrow. We've seen each other so little. I'll be coming up to Boston every day, though."

"Every day!—Every single day? Could—could we honestly keep that up?"

"Silly girl. . . . Now you make me feel almost up to your level. Do you realize how much we'll have to see of each other before we dare spring an engagement on my people?"

"Oh . . . I had forgotten all about . . . people and things," she mumbled and the exalted rhythm of her heart-beat sagged ever so little. Mrs. Grey had such adequately discouraging eyes. . . .

IV

” Pa,” said Joy, “would you let me sing Louise to-day?—I—feel—just—like it!”

It was nine o’clock of a Monday morning; Joy had ridden up to town on an early train and gone straight to her lesson. She had burst into the studio, cheeks aflame, singing almost before she entered. Her scales had gone well; her tones were carrying more point, and were delivered with a resonance that made the windows vibrate. Pa was looking exhilarated; his old eyes were almost shining.

“We shall make a Louise out of you!” he said now for the first time since that first day. “As well as a tender Mimi and a piteous Butterfly and a heart-torn Gilda! But not yet. There is no use in toying with those airs for quite a while.”

“But I want to show you,” said Joy. “Please let me, Pa—I may never be in Louise’s mood again!”

Pa threw up his hands and the accompanist played the two opening measures. Joy abandoned herself to the ecstasy of the song . . . so recently—she had been there herself. When the last blissful echo had died away, she threw back her head and looked at Pa in triumph. He looked back at her, and shook his head.

“Of course, you must remember that mood,” he said, “so that some day you may sing it, and set people to dreaming of their first love. But you must be able to take your moods out of your pocket, and hold them in your hand. Do you see, my dear? If you give yourself up to the mood, it gets out of hand—When one is thrilled oneself, one is rarely thrilling one’s audience. Mind! Mind over all—or the result is artistic chaos.”

“I don’t want to sing so that people will think of my mind—” Joy objected, rebellious. “No; but you must have yourself under control or you cannot control your audience. Be blissful, or passionate, or dreaming; but plan it out first; don’t rely upon the moment’s mood for spurts of inspiration.”

She left the studio, her spirits more dashed than a newly-engaged girl’s should have been over such a matter. The singer’s road was so long, so hard—so nerve-racking—She whiled away the trolley journey to the apartment in finding adjectives, none of which were sufficiently comprehensive. Yet, remembering the way her scales had soared—and the windows vibrated—the exultant sense of power that had been hers—the voices within her were more contented lately, she liked to fancy—Yes, music drew one on even while one despaired.

The apartment seemed changed. Had Jerry been house-cleaning in her absence? There was more furniture in the hall than usual, furniture that belonged in the reception room; and everything shone as if it had been newly scrubbed. Ordinarily, while the apartment was not really untidy, it bore an air of very light housekeeping. Joy poked her head inside the reception room, and dropped the suitcase at what she saw.

A strange woman sitting on the comfortable sofa—a woman with very blonde hair and a figure which would have been expansive if given a chance by her potent corsets. An earringed, bejewelled woman, with dark, hard hollows for eyes in a face whose pink and white layers gave her skin an ironed-out look which trembled into telltale wrinkles and creases in the neck. Jerry was standing before her—a changed Jerry in a bright, bizarre gown of some rough green silk which clung to her like a wet bathing-suit—her hair pulled back straight and confined by a ribbon of the same bright silk—jade earrings tilting from her ears. Her face was rouged; her lips a splotch of scarlet. She swayed lithely as Joy stared, spellbound, and was saying, in a silken, rustling voice which reminded Joy oddly of the dress she wore: “I am sure you will enjoy the

little frock, Mrs. Bowman. Florence Fay was in Saturday, and I am creating one for her that is very similar.”

Joy felt her jaw dropping, and closed it with a click that made Jerry turn swiftly on the toes of the cream-coloured sandals she wore on her bare feet. “Mrs. Bowman” followed her glance, and lifted a jewelled lorgnette to stare at Joy. “One of your models, Madame?” she asked, in a voice as thick and flabby as her eyelids.

Jerry nodded languidly, with a swift, impinging wink at Joy.

“She’s just my colouring—better than the other,” the doughy voice went on. Joy reacted from the blow by staggering back a step and tripping over the suitcase. “I’d like to see her in some negligées—I’m looking for just the right kind and I must say it’s hard to suit me in them.”

“Let me see,” Jerry wafted her hand to her forehead. “You do not wish light colours, I take it.”

“You know I don’t.” The voice became stickily peevish, although the face did not alter its bland, open look. “My figure is impossible in light colors, you know that quite well.”

“Of course you are at your best in dark, which brings out your hair to a vividness,” Jerry murmured. “I have in mind something all made up, which is distinctly your negligée from the first moment one looks at it. But should I even show it to you?” Her hands interrogated, “Florence Fay saw it, and said she was almost sure she would want it for the bedroom scene in ‘Making a Night of It,’ her new fall vehicle.”

“Oh—h, I *must* see it!” Mrs. Bowman appealed, her neck working with emotion. “I *must*, Madame Géry!”

Jerry shrugged her shoulders, a quick, theatrical gesture that threw her gown into all sorts of new ripples and cadences. “Well, possibly there is no harm in *showing* it to you,” she conceded. “Pardon me for one swift moment—” and she curved out into the hall, gathering Joy after her. “Joy,” she whispered, a goblin grin disturbing her blobby lips, “Joy—do you mind going and putting on that purple negligée Packy and Twink sent, and coming back here to show her how she won’t look? Sorry, but you peeked yourself into this!”

Joy went back to Jerry’s room fighting a wild desire to laugh hysterically and completely. Would there ever be an end to the surprises of this apartment? Sarah was sitting on the bed, hugging a decidedly cross expression. A large, creamy pasteboard box which she had evidently just done up, judging from the papers and string scattered about the room, was lying beside her.

“Will you please tell me,” said Joy, “how long since Jerry has turned modiste?”

“Oh, you’re back,” said Sarah brilliantly. “Have a good time? Is that sunburn or rouge?”

Joy went to the closet for the negligée without replying. “That” was nothing more or less than a hectic flush which had been on her ever since Grant had left her on the train that morning. The ecstatic distress of their first parting had keyed her up to almost fever pitch. Her pulses had been pounding, her blood had mounted to her face, and even the coldwater spray of that singing lesson had not succeeded in bringing her back to normal. Her lips parted now in dramatic recollection, as she slipped into the gorgeous purple brocade of Twink’s settlement. It was beyond belief that there could be such rapture—

“I thought Jerry’d better play that off, too,” said Sarah. “She’s never worn it, and she ought to be able to stick old Mrs. Messy in deep for it.”

Joy snapped the clasp that held the thing together, and went down the hall again. It was a wonderful negligée—it would make even “Mrs. Messy” look like a fresh young twig of a girl. For although not yet a gnarled old bough, one might call her considerable of a branch. How did

models walk? She took her cue from Jerry's modulated ambulations, and swayed into the reception room. "Mrs. Messy's" lorgnette surveyed her.

"That negligée," the voice sighed, "is mine. I have to have it. I couldn't even consider anything else—after seeing it."

Jerry's hands fluttered. "But, my dear Mrs. Bowman, Florence Fay——"

"I tell you I must have it! I'll pay you twice as much as she would!"

"The works of art that I put out," said Jerry smoothly, "as works of art, contain in their price no relation to material or cost of labour. My years of study and design, of creating lesser works of art—they set the price. Mrs. Bowman, I do not change my values. For you, or for Florence Fay, they remain the same. And since Miss Fay did not absolutely reserve it, I might let you take it—although it is against my custom to disappoint my patrons in a gown they have partially optioned. The negligée is three hundred and fifty dollars, as it now stands."

Joy's pose almost disintegrated at this. Although not the type of girl who generally indulges in such remarks, she longed to ask Jerry if that included her too. But Mrs. Bowman showed no sign of shock.

"Have it done up at once, and have the two boxes carried out to my car," she said in thick satisfaction.

When the door finally closed on Mrs. Bowman and the two boxes which Sarah carried uncordially to the car, Joy turned to Jerry, who was smoking swiftly:

"So this is what you meant, when you said you were going to take in washing on the side!"

Jerry pulled off her green bandeau. "You pinned it on the wall that time—It's my only regular calling now. I hold these receptions four times a year—in all of the four off-season intervals, when the stores are marking down—the mid-summer sales are on now, you know—and the newly and oozily rich, like our friend Mrs. Bowman, don't want to demean themselves by going to markdowns—yet want to go right on spending. It gives 'em a thrill to come here to private exhibits of 'advance models,' where they get individual attention from a jazzy person who looks like a double life. Isn't my make-up temperamental?" And she waved her sandals.

"Jerry, I think you're—wonderful. Were you—were you ever an actress?"

The downward quirk to Jerry's mouth again. "No. I could have been, couldn't I?"

Joy was amazed at the depth of her disappointment. She had been cherishing the exciting belief that that was Jerry's "past," for so long.

"I like designing and sewing things together," said Jerry; "it's the only kind of work I *do* like. If I liked it better than having a good time, I'd do it all the year around. As it is, whenever I see a dress of good material marked down because of lack of style, I buy it—the same with remnants of materials. Then from time to time I get an idea on a way to change the dress so it will look like Irene Castle improved on. I cut it all over, probably—drape it on Sal, who does an imitation of Mrs. Jarley's Wax Works while I polish it off. So when the time comes for me to call it a week and I phone announcements to my patrons—telling each of 'em I'm especially calling *them* instead of sending 'em a printed slip—I have quite a little collection of made-over markdowns to parade. Sal shows 'em off well, too—that girl's got style—but if she ever was cast on a desert island without a rouge-box and a marcel-iron and a few other little things I'd hate to look at her. Put her in clothes, and she crashes through. An old friend of mine used to say, and it's true any way you look at it: 'Without clothes, you can't get very far.'"

"But how about that purple negligée?"

"That was pure profiteering. I got into the mood of roasting the old marshmallow; the negligée was handy, you dropped in—Say, tell me about the visit. I haven't half looked at you

yet.”

They were in the living room, and Joy without answering went over to the cellarette. With a leap, Jerry was there before her. “Listen here, Joy—you’ve been without it for several days now. Don’t you think it’s a good time to begin to stop?”

“Why? You drink three times as much as I do——”

“I’m hopeless. You’re not. You’ve just started in, and you can stop—easily.”

Joy considered the lights and shadows of the glass in her hand. “I wonder—if it’s really doing me any harm.” She drank it reflectively, while Jerry went back to her seat with a shrug. “I—I cried a long time, the first night down at the seashore. Jerry, do you suppose this had anything to do with it?”

Jerry shrugged her shoulders again. Having made her appeal, she evidently did not intend either to repeat or reinforce it. There was a brief silence between the two, broken by Joy, who suddenly found that she must pour forth the story of the week-end just passed; such glowing wonder could not be bottled up within her. Jerry listened, first smoking at her usual gait, but as the story wore on sitting with a fresh cigarette unlit between her teeth. When Joy’s narration finally came to an end, she bit into the cigarette.

“Well?” said Joy. It was the first time she had ever approached Jerry with a serious matter, the first time men had entered their conversation as anything but incidentals to a good time, and she did not know how a hint of permanency would hit her.

“Well?” Jerry repeated. “What do you want me to say?”

“Say?” Joy’s look of breathless bliss crumbled as a toy balloon under a pin prick. “Why—why, nothing, if you don’t want to. I’m sorry—if I bored you about it. But you see—I owe him to you, in a way. Because I never would have met Packy if I hadn’t come here, and I never would have met him if it hadn’t been for Packy—I didn’t mean to bore you.”

Jerry lit another cigarette. “Look here, Joy, I don’t want to be a thrill-dispeller or anything, but I can’t put on a quiver I don’t feel. This thing may turn out all right, but at present quoting it sounds to me like a bad case of beach and moon. The whole thing has dusted along with that summer swiftness we all read about.”

“Oh, we realize it’s been swift,” said Joy, “and just to test ourselves, we’re not going to see each other until Wednesday, when I am going to meet him at the Copley for dinner.”

“Wednesday,” Joy murmured. “And to-day’s Monday. Oh, well, absence at this stage of the game only makes you keener—you should have stayed down there a week!”

“Bon soir—a week down there! I couldn’t stand that—not with his mother!”

“I gather from what you said that his mother is a riot. Is he anything like her?”

“Of course not——” Joy began indignantly, but the rise of recollection checked denial. Grant ossifying at the idea of Paragon Park on Sunday. . . . But anyone might do that. She rose, gathering conviction about her as a Shakespearean actor whips his cloak about him before an exit on a sounding phrase. “I can’t talk about it any more, Jerry. But when you know, you know.”

And so for a day or two, things remained as static as unexploded dynamite. Joy received a letter over which she wept ecstatic tears; Jerry shrugged her shoulders at both the tears and the ecstasy.

On Wednesday evening, Joy came to her for inspection, sheathed in defiance. “Do I look all right?”

Jerry was doing up a “little model” in one of her long cream paste-board boxes. She snapped the string around and tied it without replying. Then she said: “For the love of mud put

on a veil or something to take the edge off those eyes. It isn't fair to hit a place like the Copley looking like you do."

"One should never wear a veil after six in the evening," Joy retorted. "So I even *look* as if I were in love, do I?"

"You look—something," said Jerry. "I haven't got time to decide what—Bring him back afterwards; Sal and I are going down to Sonntaug with Baldy and his gang, so you'll have it all to yourself."

Joy thought, as she trolleyed to the door of the Copley, that Jerry was peculiarly unresponsive about the wonderful turn things had taken. The two days' separation had made her nervous, and Jerry's attitude did not tend to make her less so. But she forgot her nervousness in the warm tide of anticipation sweeping over her that she had not dared to allow before.

In coming through the swinging doors, the first person she saw was Jim Dalton, in the act of checking his hat. His recognition was as swift as hers, and he came forward to meet her. "I was just thinking about you," he said without background. "I was wondering whereabouts Jerry's apartment was, because I wanted to look you up."

"How long are you going to be in town?" she asked perfunctorily, as they moved up the "Peacock Alley" of Boston, the long narrow way of chairs and sofas facing each other, with a few stuffy people seated thereon, all glaring at one another.

"I'm working here now, so I expect to be here right along. May I come and see you?"

"I don't know." She could not tell him about Grant—But what other excuse was there?" "I—I really don't know—you see, I'm so awfully busy all the time."

She had forgotten how keen his eyes were. They were now boring into hers until she cast hers down. "I am coming up sometime, if I may," he said, "and if I can't see you, I'll see Jerry, and talk about you with her."

They had come to a halt by an empty sofa, and now, as Joy looked at him in a hope that if she looked long enough she could think of something to say, Grant came swiftly up to them from the lobby.

"Good evening, Joy," he said quietly.

"Oh—Grant—have you met Mr. Dalton—" There was no particular reason for being confused, and showing it, but she was and did. Grant's demeanor, while not rude, bordered on the glacial as he bowed, then stood waiting for Jim to go. Jim looked from one to the other, a swift, earnest look.

"I'll see you again, Miss Nelson," he said, and with a negligent nod to Grant, was gone.

The two went into the dining room in silence. It was only after they had ordered, that Grant spoke.

"Who is that fellow, Joy—where did you meet him and what did he mean when he said he'd see you again?"

Joy put down the roll she had been fingering. In the first keen disappointment over the flatness of their meeting, his words bit like acid. "I met him at a Prom this spring," she said, striving to keep a pleasant and normal tone. "The only other time I have seen him was at the dance last week. I ran into him by accident here. That is all."

The waiter brought their first course, and Grant began to talk of impersonal matters. Why, oh, why, had they chosen such a place as this for their first meeting? Joy thought. He had not once looked at her—the way he had always looked at her, before.

When the waiter had taken their plates away, they met each other's eyes steadily for almost

the first time that evening, and Grant's face softened. "You look rather tired to-night, Joy darling," he said. "Whatever on earth have you been doing to yourself? You work too hard on your singing."

"Oh, no, Grant—I've been neglecting it really—I'll have to work much harder to get it where I want it——"

"You sing well enough for me already—and after you belong to me, you'll not have to peg away at it any more." He attacked his salad; the subject was closed as far as he was concerned.

She was gazing at him wide-eyed. "You mean you wouldn't want me to—oh, of course—you—wouldn't." She moved her fork in and about her salad aimlessly. Her mother had forgotten her voice—when she had met the man she loved. She had forgotten it, in the rapture of *belonging* to him—that phrase had such an unpleasant sound. And the generations before her mother had forgotten their voices for those they loved. She was the result; and all the repression of generations lay within her—simmering. She gave Grant a sudden alive, direct glance. This was the man she loved and she had not forgotten her voice. How could this be? He must teach her—teach her to forget—and not make her so vaguely unhappy over such immaterialities as Jim Dalton.

"Hi, Joy! Cheerio, old dear!" She jerked her head up from contemplation of nothing to see Davy Carter and Wigs Smith, Jerry's and Sarah's most competent playmates, with some other youths, hailing her boisterously while passing to a table close by. She managed a smile from her abstraction, and fell to pushing her fork about again.

"You seem to have an unlimited supply of casual young men acquaintances," came from across the table in a voice that weirdly reminded Joy of Mrs. Grey's chill blue eyes.

"Grant, what a silly attitude to take!" she exploded. "There are nineteen years in which you have not known me. It certainly would be strange if in that time I had met no other men——"

She realized just that fatal fraction of an inch too late, that she had said the wrong thing, and stopped, leaving the appeal in mid air, where it stayed. His face had queerly altered, and the air tingled with silence.

"Let's go," he said finally, in an even tone; "that is, if you do not care to eat any more."

She had eaten practically nothing throughout the dinner; but it was so different from the day when they had both lost their appetites!

As they came through the dining room, Joy collided with a showily-dressed woman who was entering with a large, greasy-looking man. There had been sufficient room for them both to pass, but Joy's mind had been far away. The woman drew back and raised a monocle upon her.

"Oh—it is one of Madame Géry's models!" rolled out an unforgettably doughy voice. "How fortunate—will you tell Madame Géry, my dear, that I am coming Saturday instead of to-morrow?"

Joy nodded and made her escape, walking swiftly, battling an insane desire to shriek with laughter and startle the inmates of the Copley out of their stodgy repose. Grant kept his silence on ice as they left the hotel and he signaled for a taxi. When he helped her into the machine that finally drew up, Joy burst forth with the hysterical giggles she had been fighting.

"Will you please stop laughing long enough to tell me your address?" Grant asked, in the same tone with which he told the driver where to go, when she gasped out the number. What nonsense—Grant knew her address. Everything was getting to be nonsense—

They rode for some minutes with no sound but Joy's laughter. Grant spoke at last. "Did I hear right? Did that—that woman say you were—a model? Is that true, Joy?"

"No—yes,—that is,—well, I was once in a manner of speaking——" She went off again into

what sounded like perfect carillons of laughter.

“Joy—can’t you control yourself any better than this—don’t you know how you are hurting me?”

She was suddenly quiet. “You are hurting me, too, Grant. I don’t know what’s happened—but something has—and everything is so awful that I can’t seem to believe that it used to be so wonderful.” She started to sob in pitiful little hiccoughs. He made no move to comfort her, but stared ahead of him in the taxi.

“You’re right, Joy—something has happened. I saw Packy this week—and he said certain things about you that made me pound the everlasting daylight out of him. Knowing you—and everything that had passed between us—naturally I called him a liar and ramm’d his words back in his throat.”

Joy had stopped sobbing; her hysterics were shocked out of her. “What did he say about me?” she cried sharply. “What did he say about me?”

“He told me—what kind of girls you were living with and the kind of life you led—from man to man instead of from hand to mouth is the way he put it——”

The numbness of utter bewilderment possessed her. In a choked silence she listened to his voice droning over the rattle of the taxi.

“And then—I come to meet you—and find you talking with a man—who seems to think he knows you pretty well—a man who as good as told Packy and me what to do with ourselves, the other night down at the dance, as if he owned you—and then a bunch of would-be speeds that I happen to know are no living good, hail you as a boon companion—call out to you in a way no girl should be spoken to in a public dining-room——”

“Where the Cabots speak only to Lowells, and the Lowells speak only to God!” Joy murmured. A nebular recklessness, as if she were moving in a dream, had settled upon her. “Go on—you haven’t reached the part where I became a model!”

“Joy, for God’s sake, don’t make this any worse by being flippant. You must be frank with me for once and tell me what to think. I never asked any questions about you—but now I have the right to know.”

Their taxi came to a scunching stop in front of the apartment house, and there was an enforced silence while he paid the man and they journeyed up to Jerry’s apartment. In the living-room they faced each other, pale and vibrant.

“You say, ‘be frank with me *for once*,’” Joy panted; “I’ve never told you anything about my life, it is true; but that’s only because there wasn’t—time. I’ll tell you the story of my life now—just as fast as I can. But first—oh, Grant—don’t you love me any more—not the smallest bit?”

“I—I don’t know what I love, Joy. Help me—help me to get back to where we were two days ago!”

Standing there, his eyes imploring her, he looked like a pathetic little boy. Joy’s tenderness came back suddenly, with a rush. “Grant, dear—what’s all this about, anyway?” and she took a step toward him.

And then as the gravitation of two bodies who like to speak of such affairs as of the heart or soul, hung imminent—a breath more, and the questioning would have rested in each other’s arms—Grant stumbled over something on the floor. There was a sound of glass shattering to shivery bits,—and the gravitation shattered. He stooped to reclaim the damage he had chanced to wreak—and straightened up again. They were standing by the sofa. On the floor by the head of the sofa was a bottle, a bottle of unmistakable denomination, surrounded by three friendly looking glasses that gave forth the impression of having lived through much. It was one of

those glasses, strayed from its brothers, that Grant had rendered incapable of further service.

There was a busy silence in the room. Joy found herself thinking dryly that it must have been Sarah who had left those there; Jerry would never have been quite so more than careless. Grant slowly turned and looked about him—at the clubroom furnishings—and back down at the bottle with those three evil witches of glasses:

“Joy,” he said, his breath making patchwork of his voice; “tell me what Packy meant—tell me what he meant!”

“I don’t know *what* he meant!” she cried. “You have to tell me just what he said——It’s true I am living here with two girls who are neither Cabots nor Lowells——”

“That’s—quite—evident.” His eyes were again visiting different pungent details of the room. “And how in the name of all that’s fitting—did you happen to come here?”

She wanted to beat her fists against the air—against the wall that was rising between them. She tried to speak, but the full tide of what she had to say clogged her utterance. “I—why—I can’t explain—at a moment like this! At a moment like this! There’s too much to tell!”

He was moving away from her—moving away down the room. With the sharp needle-prick of incredulity she watched him go.

“Joy”—his voice was a long way off, like the echo of a vanished heart-beat—“I—must—think. I’ve—got—to—think.”

Still incredulous, she stood motionless, watching.

“I’ve got to—think!”

And she was alone in the big living-room.

” What kind of girls you were living with and what kind of a life you lead—from man to man instead of hand to mouth——”

Joy had turned the words over in her whirling brain all night. One thing alone was certain; she must see Packy, find out what he meant—what Packy had insinuated about herself in particular—what he knew, about Sarah and Jerry——

Jerry came in about ten o’clock in her favourite purple satin and pink mules, first poking a freckled nose around the door to see if she was awake. “Didn’t disturb you last night because I thought if there was any sleep to be had, you ought to have it,” she announced.

She regarded Jerry from beneath tired eyelids, with a sick feeling of disloyalty. Jerry was the best friend she had; she knew that;—and yet, she knew just as surely that she could not picture Grant meeting her. What could Packy have meant——Watching Jerry’s unconscious face, she could not bring herself to repeat Packy’s quoted words—to tell Jerry anything of what had passed.

“Why don’t you try and sleep some more?” Jerry was saying, after a keen scrutiny of her. “You look dead, and you’ve got nothing on hand this A.M.—it’s just as well to hang off when you can.”

Joy fell back into bed, and Jerry pulled down the black and white-striped shades before tiptoeing out. From the first moment that she had known Jerry, she had liked her. Jerry had never been anything to Joy but an unselfish, true friend. If it had not been for Jerry, the glory of music that Pa was unfolding to her would never have been hers. If it had not been for Jerry, she would never have met Grant—never have known. . . . But now—now, what did she owe Jerry? Grant had said, he had to—think. How long—how long would he—think?

She had had only a few hours of fitful slumber—something that Jerry had divined with one solicitous glance. Jerry had gone out and left her without trying to talk, which might fully have awakened her. What had Packy meant? She sank into a comatose state from which, contrary to the will of her weary brain, she fell into a heavy sleep.

About four o’clock, she woke with a raging headache. Jerry had closed the windows, as the room faced on a court and was noisy in the daytime, and the air was envelopingly turgid. She dressed slowly, realizing as she became more awake that she had not really eaten for more than twenty-four hours. To ransack the kitchen at this time of the day was hopeless, she knew. There was no solution but to walk down to the nearest dairy lunch, which was quite a distance.

Hatted for the street, she passed through the hall, giving a fleeting look to the living-room before leaving the apartment. Sarah and Jerry were “rolling the bones” on the floor, with Wigs and Davy and several other youths in full cry.

“Honey, what am them?”

“Oh, babe—what will the harvest be?”

“Shine out, little seven!”

“Root, hog, or die!”

Wigs caught sight of Joy as she was about to leave, and sang out: “Oh, Jo-oy! What d’you mean, going to dinner at the Copley with Boston’s Best? We saw you getting gay in there with Whosis—sitting up just like you were at a funeral and all that!”

“Come on in!” invited Davy. “Chance to make your everlasting fortune—never saw good coin change hands so fast——”

She made her escape hastily. *What had Packy meant!* The kind of life she led—from man to

man instead of from hand to mouth—At the Dairy lunch, over some poached eggs, she reflected that it was rather hand to mouth to-day.

It was nearing evening as she paid her check and started to walk back. There could be no explanation of Packy's words except that he had deliberately lied. Yet that did not sound like Packy. Fast and flippant he undoubtedly was, but she could not picture him lying about a girl.

Suddenly, as she approached the apartment house, her heart came up in her mouth. Surely that was Packy's car in front—and Packy himself in the act of stepping into it. She waved her veil at him wildly. If he should drive away now just as the solution to her questionings presented itself—But he saw her, and jumped out again as she came up to him.

"Joy! What doggone good luck. Jerry said she didn't know where you'd gone or when you'd come back——"

"I think it's good luck, too," she said quietly. "I have a lot of questions to ask you."

A window banged six stories up, and Jerry shrieked above them: "That you, Joy? Come on up—there's somebody to see you!"

"That blond ninny who bumped into Grant and me at the dance that night," Packy elucidated.

Jim Dalton! Life was too full of complications. She had as much as told him so—"I told him I was too busy to see him," said Joy.

"Come on—we'll go riding," said Packy, and called up to Jerry—"Joy's coming riding with me—better tell her company not to wait."

"Where are you going?" Jerry cried, hanging her head farther out of the window.

"Where are we going?" Joy repeated, as he hesitated.

"Down the Shore Road a ways!" he answered finally, and Jerry's face disappeared.

"Hang Jerry—she acts like a regular old chaperone," he grumbled as he helped her in the car.

"According to what you think of me, I need one," she retorted. They were well under way before he replied, in a cool, even tone:

"Pretty crude, Joy—that's not like you. I suppose Holy Boy Grant has been spilling a lot of chatter in your shell-pink ear."

"Then you *did* say something to him! Packy—how could you do such a thing!"

The small, pitiful voice evoked a quick glance from him. "How couldn't I, you'd better say. May I remark in passing that he certainly didn't leave the ground long untrampled. Came up late last night, did he? I had to nurse myself along a bit before I staggered about and got under way."

A mile flashed by them while Joy thought desperately: His profile bent over the wheel looked hard and even cruel. He had admitted talking to Grant as calmly as he would have admitted sending her a box of candy. He seemed to be in a repressed state below the level of which anything might be lurking.

"I—I want to know—just what you told him," she said at last, after coining and discarding many different methods of putting the question.

"What did he tell you?" Packy countered, eyes on the road ahead.

"He told me—he told me that you told him—that I led a man-to-man existence——"

"Yes, and for once you overdid the thing," he said smoothly. "I told you, I could wait any reasonable length of time; but I wasn't corked up to the extent of standing by and smirking while you paraded Old Maid Grant around under my nose. You ought to have had more sense of proportion, Joy, than to go outside your line like that. And jealousy, my dear girl, is a little

item you absolutely glanced over.”

“What do you mean?” cried Joy, the wind tearing the words out of her mouth almost before they came. “What right have I given you to be jealous?”

“That’s absolutely ruled out as beside the point.” Still that level voice, although the speed of the car had increased to a breathless, horrible race that left no room for analysis. “You’ve got me so I don’t know whether I’m drinking booze or water—and I don’t propose to have you meanwhile carrying on a nice, pink-and-white little time with our mutual friend Grant. It gets me—see?”

“But—I don’t see yet why you were cad enough to go and tell him such lies about me——”

“Lies!” His lips twisted back from his teeth in silent mirth. “That’s what he said. The funny part of the whole thing is that I told the truth.”

“You can’t mean what you’re saying. You must have been drinking before you came to-day——”

“Now listen, Joy—you had me buzzing for awhile there—I didn’t know exactly where to place you. Of course, living with Jerry and Sal gave me a fairly good idea——”

“Idea of *what*?” she screamed. “*That’s what* I want to know—that’s what I’ve been asking you. What did you say, when you told Grant what kind of girls I was living with?”

“I was about to say,” his even tones went on, “that you pulled the innocent gag fairly well, but a little too frequent. I can stand just about as much, Joy—after which, off come the brakes and away we skid!” He turned and looked at her swiftly. His eyes were bloodshot, and they glittered. She shuddered and shrank away from him to the farthest corner of the car. The last time she had seen eyes with that look in them—it had been at Prom—Jack Barnett, standing unsteadily against the wall. Miles whirled past—while she cowered against the door of the car and thought with such intensity that her hands and feet felt as if they were turned to ice. He was drunk. She should have known before they started. What could she say, to persuade him to turn back—and failing that, what was there she could do?

A veering turn into a crossroad brought a protest. “What are we leaving the Shore Road for? Is this the way back?”

“This is not the way back. I’m not going to take you back until I’m good and ready—and the devil only knows when that’ll be!”

Her agonised scream vibrated above the roar of the motor. “Packy! Take me back! You must! You——”

“Save—your—breath!” was jolted back to her, and then he laughed—a long laugh that began and ended in his throat.

No more time to think, now—she knew what she must do. Her hands crept out to the knob of the door. Mechanically she looked back and saw a car in the distance—a car that she was dimly conscious had been following them for some time. She could open the door in one second, jump out in another—and before Packy could get back to her, the other car would be upon them——

She turned the knob; Packy saw her at the same minute. With a growl he lurched towards her and seized her by one arm. She struggled violently, and he took his hand from the steering wheel and pulled her back into the seat again.

It all happened in one of those seconds of eternity. While they struggled, the car, still going at white-hot speed without a hand at the wheel, careened from the road and was stopped by a tree.

A jarring crash which made one aware of every little bone and ligament shivering one’s

body; the eerie sensation of flying through space; then—nothingness.

Pain—nothing but pain—and floating in a dizzy white world full of needles that pricked and hummed—a strange white world in which there was no time to open one's eyes and look, because of the pain. Agony so fearful that it seemed as if the very universe must be cracking—everything above and beyond must be coming to an end—and yet the white world hummed on, and the needles sang.

Always pain—agony so deep that when it became less, the memory of it threw her into agony again.

Joy opened her arms and looked around. The white world was gone—she could see familiar pieces of black walnut furniture. And with the white world and humming needles had gone her pain, leaving her so weak she felt as if she scarcely could open her eyes.

Jerry was sitting at the foot of the bed—a pale Jerry, with eyes large and black as inkwells, her freckles standing out in bold relief. Joy was childishly pleased to have sound travel forth from her mouth: “Jerry?”

Jerry jumped up and came to the side of the bed. “Joy! Hullo, old girl!”

Before her wide, relieved grin Joy essayed a colorless smile which merely dragged her face into little white wrinkles. “Some—smash, wasn't it?” she quavered, anxious to show that she was in possession of her senses. “How long have I been this way?”

“Too dam long,” said Jerry sternly. “Rotten company when you're unconscious, I'll say that for you, Joy. Well, got to call up the doctor—I said I'd let him know when you were ready to sit up and eat.”

“Eat!” Joy murmured in objection; but Jerry was gone. It was too much trouble to lie and think. She fell asleep.

When she awoke, Jerry was standing by her bedside rattling a spoon in a glass of milk. “Do you think it's any bouquet to a doctor to fall asleep, and stay that way all the time he's here?” she demanded merrily. “Anyway, he says to all outward appearances you aren't dying yet. He'll be around again to-morrow A.M.”

Joy paused in drinking. “What—happened, Jerry? You haven't told me yet.”

Jerry's teeth shut down on each other. “I'll tell you the whole dam tale to-morrow. To-day you'd go to sleep in the middle of it.” She pulled down the blinds and in the darkness of the room, Joy fell into a thick, dreamless space from which she brought herself up with a start. It was morning; chinks of glory were pouring in through the blinds; and all at once she felt hungry and almost vigorous. Jerry was asleep on the chair by the foot of the bed, but as Joy stirred, her eyes popped open and she bounced up.

“What ho!” she exclaimed, dashing for the door. “You have the look of a real breakfast in your eye!”

Joy did not talk much until the “real breakfast” was downed. Then she leaned back on her pillows expectantly. “Now, Jerry—please tell me—everything that happened. I gather from investigation that none of my bones are broken—but what did happen to me? How did I get back here? And what happened to Packy?”

Jerry pulled out her cigarette case. “Mind if I have at it? The doc would kill me for doing this here, but I'm so fuzzy since this happened——Packy, allow me to snort, got off nobly with a bump on the eye. The nasty little garter snake! You see, Joy, Jim Dalton and I were pursuing you in a taxi at ten dollars per sneeze, all the way.”

“Jim Dalton!”

“Right. He homed in on the craps, and by the way, after a round or two he began taking away everybody’s cash, so the taxi bill might not have made him as sad as it would have made me—and pretty soon Sal and Wigs and the gang faded off down town to get a club sandwich, but I stuck around and so did this Dalton bird. He had never played about with me at all, so I took a somersault when he began to mention you in an offhand way. Said he had seen you a couple of onces, and wanted to again sometime.”

“I told him I was too busy to see him,” Joy interpolated, trying to struggle to a sitting posture. Jerry raised a restraining hand.

“Take it from one who has flown about on the four winds, Joy—he’s all right. He played a hunch to come up that night, and he might have saved your life for all you know.”

Joy fell back on the pillows. “Oh, all right—but go on.”

Jerry smiled. “Don’t interrupt and I’ll spill it fast—Just at that moment dear little Packy blew in on one of the stiffest breaths I’ve come near since the first of July. Wanted to know where you were, why you weren’t there, etcetera, and I told him to go to and stay put. He paced out banging the door in good old ten-twenty-thirty style, and Dalton passed the remark that he’d seen the angel messing around you before and didn’t like the way he parted his hair. I took a glim out of the window with some small idea of drowning Packy’s pretty car with a bucket of varnish there happened to be handy, when you breezed up and stood talking to him with all the life in the world. I knew there was a nice speedy wind out which would muffle Packy’s breath, so I hove up the window and bade you come in out of the wet. But no—you would go a-riding, and I was all for letting you go, but Dalton got a taxi while I was still bandying words with you, and told me to put on my old grey bonnet and trot along with him. I trotted!” She took a long breath. “God, Joy, that was a ride! I had netted the info that you were going out on the Shore Road, but there was always the chance you’d change your minds, and we had one whirl getting you into view! Some joy-ride—cheery for me no end—with Dalton bickering along with himself to the effect that he wouldn’t let that fellow take you out alone with as enthusiastic a breath as he was exhibiting—my only recreation was making up five different stories which I told the taxi-boy, about the car we were streaking after—which made him put on all speed and sizzle along, anyhow.”

“I saw your car,” said Joy, “or else I wouldn’t have tried to jump.”

“Oh—so that’s what brought about the smash!”

Jerry whistled. “Joy, when I saw the car hit the tree—No matter; and we certainly paid Packy off. We picked you up—or rather Jim did—and put you in the taxi—and Packy was rolling about with only an eye gone wrong—so Jim put him to sleep beside his car, which was all in, too, from the looks of it; and came back home—leaving Packy to his own devices, as the saying is. Not a peep has been heard from him; he must have come to and slapped the car into shape, or there’d at least have been a squib in the papers.”

“Now you’ve gotten to me,” said Joy.

Jerry suddenly sobered, dropping the light tone she had been using to gild the narrative. “You’ve had a little—concussion of the brain. I don’t know whether the doctor wanted me to tell you or not—but he says you’ll be all right in a couple of weeks, so I don’t see why you shouldn’t have the straight facts.”

“Concussion.” Joy considered her state. “Oh, yes—that’s what football athletes are always getting, aren’t they?”

“That’s right—the idea’s the same,” said Jerry. “You tackled a tree, instead of a person.” There was a slight pause, and Jerry said briskly: “Mr. Grant Grey has called up once or twice. I

told him you were ill, but I guess he thinks it's only a stall."

"Oh—Grant——" She dismissed the subject as a triviality that could be attended to at any time. "My father, Jerry—you haven't let him know about me, have you?"

"No, I didn't. I would have, if the doctor had given me any reason to; but he said that you would be all right and if you by any chance should start sliding, it wouldn't be sudden—your father could be reached in time. I sort of thought you wouldn't want him to know."

"I wonder—what would have happened." Joy tried to imagine her father's arrival in the apartment; his meeting with Sarah and Jerry; his hearing the no doubt picturesque recital of her accident that Jerry would render. The arrival of the doctor put a stop to this conjecture, which was not a sufficiently pleasant line of thought to be reopened at any other time.

The days of convalescence that followed were long, with somber colouring. She missed her music; Grant did not call up again; the days had dreadful emptinesses that called out for Grant . . . or for her music. Sarah was almost unbearable to live with. Before, the incompatibility of the two had not been so noticeable, when Joy had been out or busy with her music most of the day; in the evenings, if they were together, there were always men around to distract their attention. But now Joy's enforced stay in the house, threw them together a little more often; just that little more that is too much. Sarah made no bones of the fact that she nourished deep rancour against Joy for her accident, which she considered "all Joy's fault, anyway." As a result of the accident, Packy presumably would not put in an appearance at the apartment again; thus ran Sarah's grievance, which she poured upon Joy instead of sympathy. It did not seem as if Sarah cherished a genuine affection for any human being, man or woman; and the more one knew of her, the more horrified one became at the hard, glassy surface which appeared to be impenetrable.

But there was Jerry who, an untiring nurse and a companion who never failed in interest, stayed constantly with Joy, turning down all invitations with an iron hand. The uneasiness that had always been there, moulded into form by Packy and Grant, was glazed over for a time. All Joy's knowledge of and regard for Jerry spoke more coherently than unsubstantiated inference.

The two weeks set by the doctor had not quite passed when, one afternoon, Joy tired of lying in bed. She felt perfectly well; there was no reason why she shouldn't get up and walk as far as the living-room. She did not admit to herself that the cellarette was her real objective; but it had been a long time since she had taken a prescription. Sarah was out on one of her eternal tea dates; Jerry had vanished somewhere. She slipped into her little blue crepe kimono and pattered down the hallway, exultant in the power to walk so much and so healthily.

She swung around the door of the living-room and in before she saw that someone was already there—Jerry, talking to Jim Dalton. They were both standing at the door, so that she almost rushed into them, then stood still in surprise.

Girls in fiction or plays who are surprised in negligée are always "distractingly lovely" in silks or satins, with hair becomingly flowing. But real girls in negligée, unless they know they are going to be inspected, are quite a different matter. Joy's hair was strained back in tight braids from a face which, without rouge, was as thinly white as skim-milk. The ribbons of her night gown had had their colour laundered out of them; her kimono was—well, it was a kimono, not a negligée, nor lingerie, nor a tea gown. All this, and more, her thoughts touched upon in the first still moment.

Jim was the first to find his voice. "I'm glad to see you're able to be around, Miss Nelson," he said calmly. "You won't have to go back; I was just leaving."

Jerry went down the hall to the door with him, while Joy went into the living-room and sank

down on the lounge. It was uncanny, the way that man had understood her, had spoken in a matter-of-fact voice and relaxed her, and left without making a point of leaving. She realized, as she lay among the pillows, that she could not have reached her room again with any degree of certainty; he had tactfully forestalled her; very thoughtful, for a man.

Jerry came back into the room, smoking in a desultory manner. "I didn't think I'd tell you, Joy, because I know you don't like him—but that boy has been here every blooming day since you've been sick, to find out how you were at first-hand—while your Grant has stalled at phone distance. I hate to say anything about a man I've never met, Joy, but Grant listens to me like a flat tire."

Joy giggled nervously.

"It isn't easy for Jim to come, either," Jerry added. "He takes the trip way out here after he gets through working every day."

"It's none of Jim Dalton's business," said Joy. "He doesn't have to come; I wish he wouldn't. I barely know him, and he keeps turning up and acting as if he were my father or something."

"Or something!" Jerry repeated derisively. "No—you've got a wrong slant on him. Of course, if you look at it that way, he *is* being a bit outside the works—but when you think it over, the knights of old they talk about who beat it to the rescue of dames in distress, didn't always stop to decide whether it was any of their business."

A bitter resentment swept over Joy—resentment that it had been Jim Dalton and not Grant who had followed them on that ride; that it had been Jim and not Grant who had come to see how she was. "Jerry!" she cried suddenly. "Did you know that Grant had left me?"

Jerry had been watching her smoke rings space themselves to the ceiling, but turned swiftly. At her look of blank interrogation, Joy repeated: "Grant has left me! I—I don't think he's ever coming back!" Then she stopped, with a tearing intake of breath.

There was an interval while Jerry's smoke rings turned to curlicues and gargoyles, and Jerry remained seemingly lost in admiration of her skill. Finally, Jerry spoke.

"Of course, Joy, I don't know the facts of the case—but he'll come back. I'd stake ten to one on it. He'll come back—I tell you he will!"

"I'm waiting——!" said Joy.

And she waited—through a week that turned hope to hopelessness. She dared not leave the apartment for fear the telephone would ring. She told herself that he was not coming; yet she sat in the living-room, a book on her lap, or sat at the piano touching keys into strange harmonies . . . waiting.

Gradually life began to resume its accustomed gait at the apartment. Jerry had curtailed all parties during Joy's convalescence, but now was off again. It was nearing fall; people were coming back into town; the telephone jangled constantly. Joy lacked the energy to join any of these parties, and the evenings were very lonely; as she had not gone back to Pa Graham's as yet, her days also were long and purposeless.

And so a week had passed on leaden wheels. And one evening about ten-thirty when she heard a babble of voices in the living-room, she made up her mind to dress and annex herself to the crowd.

The music of popping corks and carefree laughter assailed her ears as she came into the room. There were three men, not counting one that Sarah had taken to a comfortable, cosy corner and to whom she was archly whispering. Jerry was standing by the piano, looking over some popular songs with a short, chunky youth who could make the keys jingle in strange,

barbaric dissonances that made up an irresistible syncopation which seemed to intoxicate more than the contents of the cellarette. The ever-present Wigs and Davy hailed Joy, pressed a “tall one” upon her, and sat her on the sofa.

“I knew you couldn’t stand Boston’s Best for a steady diet,” said Wigs. “You struck the right time, too, Joy; Jerry’s gotten herself quite tightly edged to-night, a thing that never happens as you know, and since we’ve got the wine and women, she’s going to favour us with song.”

The chunky boy at the piano was shaking out some bars of eerie ragtime. Jerry turned, swaying, hands on hips. Her eyes were shining with almost polished rays; they wandered over the room in an impersonal, professional smile. It was doubtful if she saw Joy at all. Her lips parted in an avid, gamin grin, and hardly opening her teeth, she juttled forth the words of the song:

“I wanted some men and I sought them
I made myself up like a doll
The other girls, oh, how I fought them!
They handed it to me for gall—
I wanted some men and I’ve got them
Turned down five bids for dinner last night
But somehow they’re not what I thought them
And somehow I know it’s not right.”

The fiery, vivid personality that was Jerry’s leaped out through scarcely a motion as she sang, insolently, through her teeth, her red lips always curved into that goblin grin. She was swinging into the chorus now, a chorus of dizzying syncopation the notes of which she followed not at all, speaking the words with a little drag at inconsequential moments—

“Ten men down—and more to go—
Other girls get them—if you are slow—
This life is short
So don’t get caught
You’ve got to have strings to your bow!”

“No sense to words of any popular songs nowadays,” complained Davy. “But Jerry puts ’em over—she’s the Queen of the Cabaret Artists.”

Joy had never heard Jerry sing before, except from a distance at the Prom. It was a rich voice, thick and uneven and even harsh in places; but she had “put it over.” She did not need any voice at all, with that audacity and insolence. There was loud applause, mingled with the popping of more corks. The chunky youth deserted the piano, complaining that it was “devilish dry work.” Jerry came over to the lounge.

“Hello, Joy,” she said lightly. “Come to join the happy family? Everyone was bored as blazes to-night until we started opening them up, and now everyone thinks they’re bright as the morning sun, which is still a long ways off from to-night, I’ll tell anyone.” She teetered slightly standing before them. Jerry “tightly edged,” was fascinating as ever, but not a pleasant sight.

“I can make up words as good as that old song,” said Sarah from her corner. Her head had slid to her companion’s shoulder, but she bobbed it up as she sang:

“Mazie had a man an’ he left her flat
If she’d had more than one he’d not had nerve to do that.”

“Fine! Let’s all make up pop’lar songs,” cried Davy, thumping out a staccato time with his feet and humming some blue lines of uncertain origin.

“Pop-u-lar songs,” corrected Wigs, with academic zeal. “Shamed of you, Davy, ignoring your shyllables that way.”

“None of your business whether I cut silbles when I see ’em or not,” Davy retorted. “Always was ’ristocratic. Can’t help way was made——”

“Should help cruelty to inan-imate objexsh. Poor little shyllables can’t hit back.” Wigs became tearful over his chivalry in defending helpless objects. Davy remained gay, taking a glass Jerry had just filled, from her hands while chanting—

“O my name’s July an’ I gotta thirst
O babe, share de whiskey or you shore will burst.”

“Some poet!” said Jerry, and tipped the contents of the glass on to his collar, as he started to lift it to his lips. She poured herself another glass, while he rose and tore off the dripping mass that had been his collar, shrieking another stanza:

“De whiskey am frisky in its lawful place
Babe, leave some for me or I’ll slap your face.”

“Shay—whaddyouthinkthisish—blooming musical comedy?” And Wigs wept again.

Sarah’s little comrade in the corner was announcing that Sarah had “passed out”; the chunky pianist stopped drinking long enough to say that Sal was a rumhound and never knew when to stop; there seemed to be no end to Wigs’ flow of tears; Davy was chanting a new verse in which he could only get as far as “O Babe——” and then he would have to begin over. Jerry was laughing stridently at Davy between gulps of port wine. It was the worst to see Jerry so——But Sarah was the farthest along——she lay back on her cushions now without motion, her hair that was usually so exquisitely arranged, loose in loops about her face, her mouth sagging open ever so slightly.

Watching the sight before her, Joy felt a nausea that she had ever touched liquor herself. Wigs’ tears reminded her sickeningly of her own. She had been living in a daze; but the daze had worn off. To-night was the finishing touch. Packy may have been despicable, but his words about Jerry and Sarah at this moment seemed to be justified.

She rose and left, ignoring Davy’s pleas for her to stay, and the fact that her departure threw Wigs into a fresh fit of tears. Jerry was still remarking that the evening was young and tender—and Joy had no doubt but that they would all drink until they were unable to move.

In the morning she got up early and packed her things—a decision born of the night hours, which did not change its colour in the rays of the sun. She was going home. Her visit had stretched itself far beyond its first designated limits. Her father could not understand why she had not come long since. She would go back to the Mid-Victorian house and face the family portraits—feel the protection of the four walls of the ancestral mansion around her—enjoy the peace and security of the little town.

A thought held her up, as she was folding a sweater. What of her singing? To leave Boston would be to leave Pa Graham. She had been subconsciously assuming that her music would

always go on, but—how?

In a very few minutes she had dressed for the street and was hurrying out of the apartment. No one was stirring, but it was nine o'clock, and she knew Pa would be in his studio. If she could only get there before his first lesson——

There is something about the personal quality of singing, and the reverence the teacher inspires as the embodiment of that great art, that draws the confidence. If singing teachers could tell half the stories of the lives of their pupils!

Pa was alone playing in the great studio, and came forward with delighted welcome: "Back again, my prima donna! Are you ready and eager for work once more?" Before her white wistfulness he paused. She stood looking around the room, at the busts of Mendelssohn and Beethoven; at the shrine to "Patti—the thing that happened once" in the far corner; at the photograph of Sembrich of the golden voice supreme, with loving greetings to Pa written across the face; the piles of music on the pianos——A sob arose to her lips. "Oh, Pa!" she said. "If you could only understand! Everything—has left me!" Days of waiting, of patient tears, brought a swift little rush of words: "I haven't even a heart—any more."

Pa took her hand gently and led her to a chair. Then he stood before her, stroking his short little beard, his old eyes very soft under his bent brows.

"Child—your heart may break—it's the way of young hearts every once in a while—but there is one great soul that will remain true as long as you are true, and that is the soul of music. An older and wiser spirit than mine has said: 'All passes; Art alone endures.' With you, all else may pass, but the soul of music will unite itself with your own, always weaving its tendrils more closely into your being. Just now it may seem a cold comfort in your desolation—but it is a thing that ripens as the years go on—always faithful—*always providing you are faithful.*"

A quick little silence in the room. Joy lifted her head. "I want to, Pa—I want to turn to my music, so much—but how can I—do anything more with it—when I feel as if everything in my heart was burned and dead!"

He smiled. "Youth is tragic—every once in a while. Look you, Joy—you came this morning half determined to tell me you weren't coming to me again—but you are. What would you do, else? Your impulse to love, let us say, has been awakened, then—diverted. Note, I do not say snuffed out, for that is an impossible thing. The impulse is still there—and if you turn it to music, spending it royally in terms of energy and power in work at your art, instead of in terms of love, you will be content, and you will become one of the greatest artists the world has known. You will interpret life to hundreds of thousands, through the transmutation of your life into work. 'All passes; Art alone endures.'" He took a few quick turns about the room, then brought himself up with a jerk. "I do not want you to sing to-day; you have been with tears too recently; besides, I have a lesson. Go away, and think over what I have said. You will have some decisions to make. For if you come back to me, there will be no more half-toned effort such as the desultory summer work we have done."

"Desultory summer work," Joy gasped. "Why, I practised regularly——"

"Practice! An hour and a half a day. That is the most you can do with your voice. But there must be hours of silent study. No matter what one may say of Geraldine Farrar now, she was, is and will remain a very great artist. It does not drop on one like the gentle rain from Heaven, after a few years of hour-and-a-half practice. That girl worked ten hours a day in her years of study. Lilli Lehmann said she never had such a worker. You have the voice—yes. Now you require solfège, through harmony and counterpoint, French, Italian and German complete, other languages to pronounce—you are but at the threshold of your toil. Oh, when I see you before

me, with practically everything to learn, the days don't seem long enough—the years don't seem long enough!" He quieted down and looked at her. A great deal had descended upon her at once, but she felt no sense of oppression at the program outlined; rather, she felt as if energy were pouring in upon her, energy to accomplish anything he said. She rose, inhaling a long breath as she did to sing on, feeling her ribs swell out, with the sense of power that it never failed to give her.

"It's true, Pa—I did come in here half with the idea of leaving you. I didn't know what I would do. But you have decided me. There's no need of my thinking over what you said. I've decided now. You never told me all this before, about how I would have to work, because I wasn't ready for it—isn't that so? I am now—and thank you."

His eyes glinted beneath his brows. "I'll not let you decide here. Go away as I told you, and then come back. At Jerry's, your atmosphere will not be so—musical, and you can make an unbiased decision."

"No—I want to decide now—before I go back to Jerry's——"

"You speak as if Jerry might influence you the other way. Jerry loves to mind her business with strict impartiality, but if she ever overstepped her limits she would only urge you to strive as she might have. That girl has the makings of a disease of the first water."

She left the studio in the gilded bubble of youth's ambition. All the voices and urges within her seemed this morning to have crystallized themselves into one refrain: "*No work is too hard if it reaches towards perfection!*" How could she have thought she could leave Pa?

She had forgotten—Jerry, Jerry, the mystery—about whom Pa seemed to know more than she, Joy, who lived with her.

What could she do? What was she to think? Where could she turn, in this perplexity?

Jerry was sitting in her room—a pale, seedy-looking Jerry in the familiar purple kimono, staring dully at the half-packed trunk. She did not turn as Joy came in.

"So you've—decided to go," she said in a funny, hard little voice that wavered at the end.

All the resentment and doubt that had been torturing Joy, was dispelled by the sight of that desolate figure and those few wry little words. "Jerry!" she cried. "I—I thought about it this morning—but I—I couldn't!"

Jerry's lashes flickered, but she remained sitting in the same position, knees drawn against her chin, pink mules flapping in front of her. "It never wandered into my bean until just now, when I came in and saw——But I've been boiling the idea down—and I think you'd better."

"Jerry!"

"You aren't happy here; I—I guess you never have been. I've never done anything but harm to you from the first moment I knew you. God knows I didn't mean to, but it seems my good intentions always make the smoothest kind of boulevards for the joy-riders in hell."

Jerry broke the silence that followed her last speech. "Joy—I've never told you about myself. Get comfortable now, because I'm going to ladle out the whole story."

Joy was at the threshold of the Blue Room, of what she had always wanted to know. And now that she was so near, she drew back. "Oh, no, Jerry—please don't tell me anything you'd rather not talk about—and you've often said you'd rather not talk about that——"

"I also said I'd tell you sometime when I felt like it. Now gets the vote. I should have told you right at the start—but I didn't, because I didn't want to go into it. Now I've got to."

"Well, if you must tell me—I'm comfortable," said Joy in a small voice, sitting down on one of the black walnut chairs which had been remodeled with black-and-white-striped cushions.

” To begin at the pop of the pistol—I was born in New York—over on the East Side, where people live like flies. You’ve never been there, have you?” Joy shook her head. “Then you probably won’t believe some of the things I’m going to tell you. I was one of ten—and we all lived in two rooms.” Jerry’s voice seemed to have grown dull, and she stared away from Joy as she talked. “When you toss it over in your mind—it’s pretty brutalizing, living that way—it tends to turn humans into worse than animals—for humans can make themselves as much lower than animals as they can higher—that’s one of the things I’ve learned so far in life.”

“You don’t mean *ten people*—in two rooms?” Joy gasped.

Jerry shrugged her shoulders. “That’s exactly what I do mean. Not only that, but we took two boarders in our rooms because my father was always out of work.”

Joy’s eyes were huge disks of horror; already she had shrunk into her chair looking at Jerry as if she had suddenly dropped in from Mars. Jerry was continuing rapidly:

“I sold newspapers as soon as I was able to take in the pennies. I wore a grey sweater and a pair of bloomers, and talked to everybody who bought a paper of me, whether they slung a line back or not.” She gave a long, quivering sigh. “I don’t intend to go into details about my life from the ground floor up—But get this clear, Joy: *I never knew what it was to be innocent*, not since I can remember. And I’m not throwing out any cross lines when I say that it wasn’t my fault or my own choosing. I—never had any other slant on it offered to me. My life, as I have said, was like that of an alley cat, and it couldn’t be translated to you any other way.”

“I don’t understand,” said Joy faintly.

“You wouldn’t. You were having milk fed to you when I was picking up beer-leavings. That’s the best way I can put it to you.”

There was a pause while Jerry studied her pink mules and searched for words in which to clothe what she wanted to say. Finally, with a swift frown, she plunged into narrative again, obviously leaving a hiatus.

“When I was thirteen, I got a job as messenger girl for Charlette et Cie. Happened to have drifted up the Avenue to see if I could get some man to buy my whole load of papers—saw the sign, Girl Wanted, and tacked inside. There were a bunch of others waiting that dressed the part a little better—I had on the grey sweater and bloomers—but I told the dame that was doing the interviewing that I’d carry their old bundles for less than any other applicant. This underbidding tickled the old girl somehow, and before I knew it, I was one of Charlette’s regular messenger-girls at five dollars per.

“My getting rich quick was the cause of a split between me and the family. I shut my mitt on my income—and the result was the throwing of a few flat-irons and other little parties, which ended in the fact that one night I didn’t come back and I’ve never been back since. I hadn’t ever bet much on the family—and there was a new boarder I didn’t like.”

“What do you mean, Jerry,” Joy interposed; “you couldn’t live—not *live* on five dollars a week?”

“I could and did. I took a room at a dollar a week. It was a hall bedroom, the kind you don’t even read about. No light, and squirming all over. I used to—Never mind—I got along all right—and the family never came after me; I guess one more or less didn’t make such a hell of a difference.

“Excuse me, Joy! You look paralyzed or something. I was inhaling the dollar-a-week air again—Cheer up—I’m whirling off the slum stuff as swift as it can go—but you’ve really got

to hear some of this, so you can understand every little thing.”

“Go—on,” Joy articulated with difficulty.

“My next two years I spent carrying bundles for Charlette’s and incidentally hanging around the place before and after hours, talking to the models every chance I could get, absorbing the main truths about what clothes can do to you and what you can do to clothes. My errands took me into the workrooms and fitting-rooms, and I began to make my own clothes and what I admitted was improving on Charlette designs in doing so. Watching the models and hearing them talk had given me an idea of what colour and line could do.

“I think I was at my worst at fifteen. I tossed a mean make-up and looked probably older than I do now. I had no morals and a bunch of bad ideas. Some of the models were all right, but those weren’t the ones who shot their mouths off. About the only rule I went by was to look out for myself.

“Along about then, I struck for recognition—I was working twelve hours a day and only pulling down seven a week—and they graduated me into the work-rooms.

“That’s the way my rise in the world began—that and changing to a sub-let room in an apartment uptown. I was five years more at Charlette’s; and at the end of that time I was one of their designers—what I had been working for, all that time.” She closed her eyes as if they hurt. “I’d been working on the same old twelve-hour average, but it was a change and higher pay, and I lapped up the work, I was so crazy about it. There seemed a sort of poetry to it—even when I started as a cutter, baster, fitter and spent days over the sewing machine—a poetry that grew as I pushed myself into the designing end and put the right thing on the right person.”

“Like Mrs. Messy,” Joy said, with a little hysterical giggle. She had lost her look of breathless horror, and was listening with minute interest.

“Well—there were a lot of people like her around, of course—there always are, in a big designing shop—and I learned how to put things on them, too—as you’ve seen.” The two girls smiled at each other. The air had become less tense. It was almost in relief that Jerry continued:

“I always worked overtime, at first because I knew that was the way to get ahead, then later from habit as well as my burning to get to the top. I saved my money, too, and was the original glued-to-a-nickel fiend. Men dropped out of my life pretty much in those five years. I was too busy getting ahead.

“Before I go on and get to the heart-throb—I’ll give you a general snapshot of me at the age of twenty. I made myself up every A.M. as peppily as if I were going to tread the boards. I wore my hair in the last gasp from Paris. I cut my clothes as snappy as I could get away with, which was some, you can gather. And I looked like a misprint. As for the rest—I was hard as a city pavement, tough as gum, and looked on men as a necessary evil.”

“That wasn’t your fault!” Joy interpolated swiftly. Jerry shrugged her shoulders by way of answer, but gave a faint nod, before going on.

“Then one day a man walked into Charlette’s who—I’ve never lined this out to a soul, Joy; but I’ll try to hold my words in when I talk about him. You know, or of course you don’t, the type of man likely to float around Charlette’s. Husbands, or sapheads. Mostly both. But this day—a man came in with his sister, who was having us do her wedding dress.

“She was Mabel Lancaster. Of course you know who she is.”

“I’m afraid I don’t,” Joy admitted. “The name sounds vaguely familiar, but most nice names sound that way to me——”

“Well, New Yorkers would know; it’s an old family, not much ready cash; and she tied up to

Eustace Drew, also old family, and a lot of ready cash. The papers were full of blurbs about it at the time. I had thrown a lot of thought over her dress, and it was good, by the way—but Fanchon spread a noise about having done it herself. Fanchon was the old girl who had first interviewed me when I came in for messenger girl. Her real name was Mrs. O'Brien, but never mind.

"I was out front shadowing Fanchon O'Brien with a telephone message when he came, not trailing after his sister with a dragged-in-look or tripping along with all the zest in the world—just the in-between effect that I had often remarked no man ever got in Charlette's Louis Somebody salon. Joy, he—well, he's tall, and big, and he's got brown hair, sort of choppy, with a pinch of red in it. And his eyes are blue as yours, only they're breezy and full of zip—and then they can look at you with a little half-smile——"

She caught herself up. "Tell me when, I blow, Joy! I knew I would."

Joy laughed. "I love it when you 'blow,' Jerry! I've often wondered if you ever—could! Go on—quick!"

"Well—he didn't look at me at all. Fanchon took them into the theatre salon, and I sneaked after them, pretending I was busy at something or other. Mabel Lancaster was saying that she wanted to look at some evening gowns for her trousseau, and Fanchon nailed me to rustle the dear models along. I did so, and then stood at the end of the salon and kept my eyes pasted on the back of his head. I was hard in love with him then—with the back of his head and the way he turned and smiled and said things to his sister. The back of a man's head is an awful test—it can register, or not register, so many things. Try it and see some time!"

"Finally I came down the theatre to a seat almost behind them. Fanchon had gone back in the workroom to see about the wedding dress, and thanks to Charlette having the theatre salon in semitones, they didn't notice me, although they never wasted an eye on surrounding human scenery anyhow.

"Those models fascinate me, Phil,' she was saying. 'What an empty show their life must be! Or is it? What do you think?' 'I've known some of their kind,' he answered, 'and I can assure you that their chief concern is what they put on or leave off their backs. Poor little rats! Not much "honour and truth and a sure intent" among them!'

She laughed. 'You're always talking about "honour and truth and a sure intent,"' she said. 'You're so romantic, Phil—anyone would think you were getting married instead of me!'

"Then he wasn't married! That was my first thought, as I faded away back to Fanchon. But later on, the things he said began to sink in. 'Poor little rats!' He had said that in the same tone that he had looked through me. Every time I thought of it I wanted to go and burn myself up and then crawl out and fly away a new bird, like a Pegasus or a Phoenix, or whatever the old thing is. I knew I was a poor little rat—that he'd call me the same thing if he ever had a good look at me. And the worst thing was that I didn't have a clue on how not to be a poor little rat—not a clue, except for those three things he had named—'honour and truth and a sure intent.' The first two and me weren't speaking. That last—well, I thought I did have a sure intent. To get to the top on designing for Charlette—to get so that I would be the acknowledged head, second only to the old girl Charlette herself, who spent most of her time hanging in on the Paris exhibits—that was my aim; and then I was going to spread and have a good time. Not a bad aim, as aims go. The trouble with everyone nowadays is, everyone wants to get to the top and have a good time every step of the way too."

She paused to take breath.

"Do you mean," said Joy, "that you—you really fell in love with him—then?"

“Yes.”

They were silent for a moment, and then Joy whispered an old, old question—and one that of late had been pricking her with uncertainty.

“Jerry—how did you—know? How could you be so—sure?”

“How does one know?” Jerry repeated. “That’s something that crashes in to different make-ups in different ways, Joy. With me—it came like a pistol shot. Just as sudden, and as unwelcome.

“I thought about him on an average of every day, after that. You see, no one had ever spilled it to me before that there might be something lacking in my get-up. I always believed that you can get to anything you want if you want it hard enough to work for nothing but that. Look where I had landed by tearing my eyes out with work while other girls watched the clock and beat it early for movie dates—from the East Side newsie in grey sweater and bloomers to a Fifth Avenue designer in a Charlette model—at twenty. And so I began to believe that if I wanted Phil Lancaster hard enough, I could get him. There was this hitch to it, though; I knew how to work for what I wanted, before. Now I was in the dark. The only right thing I knew was that I was wrong—and that I didn’t want to see him again until I was right.

“Then the war came along. When I read his name in the Plattsburg lists, I decided that I’d better go over to France and see what I could do about it, too. I had a stock-taking of myself, and decided—Y. M. C. A. entertainment was my line. When I was a newsie, I used to sing in the bars for a nickel, and I was always quick at catching on to popular songs. I got one of the fitters at Charlette’s who could rustle the ebonies, and we went over a bunch of stuff. My voice was big and I had pep—but they told me I had no training—no repertoire—that I’d better study singing, and also get some practical professional experience.

“That’s how I connected up with Pa Graham. One of the designers had a friend who sang at Rector’s, and was studying for musical comedy. Singing teachers are the worst lottery there is, but the alley cat fell on her feet again. That girl took me to Pa—she was the only musical-comedy special he had. He didn’t have much time, but when I told him I wanted to get to France, and sang for him, he fixed it.”

“Wait a minute,” said Joy. “Where did you practice, and when? Just tell me that.”

“Oh, about that time I changed my living quarters to a two-room-and-bath arrangement up on West 111th. They were furnished, and a bum piano thrown in. I didn’t care how bum it was, as it took all I could do to pick out notes with one finger. This was a blurb or so more than I’d been paying, which with my lessons meant that I was putting by a half of one percent, of my regular speed, even with a raise I got along in there.

“Then Fanchon came to me confidentially one day and offered to sell some of her stock in the firm—war times were getting stiff. I can tell you I stood still and shivered in my silk socks. Charlette’s stock was closed-corporation stuff and it had been one of my largest ideas to get some of it salted down. Only the old guard had their mitts on it, and I didn’t know when I was going to be trusted with a block. I made her out a cheque in quick order. A stockholder! They couldn’t kick me out now, I doped it.”

She was silent for a moment of reflection, seeming to choose between the thoughts that were crowding about her, while Joy held her breath in hope that she would plunge ahead without choosing.

“I wanted to get some percentage on my lessons, and some of the professional experience they talked about, so pretty soon I looked around for a cabaret job and got one—through the girl at Rector’s, who knew the manager at Hanley’s. It wasn’t bad. I wouldn’t have done

anything else with my evenings but sleep—and six hours' sleep always did me, from habit I guess. I came on at seven-thirty and eleven-five, two songs each time.

“That was some life—practice early in the A.M., get to Charlette's at nine, work all day, Hanley's in the evening, Pa Graham Sundays. That man has got a soul in him for every art in music, and he showed me how to succeed in my line while he was trying to make me into a disease. He made me go and hear Yvette Guilbert, and told me that's what I should aim for—to be the American Yvette. But I had my own little idea of what I wanted to do, and to try diseusing in war times wasn't it.

“And all this time I steered clear of men. It wasn't so easy now that I was at Hanley's, but being at work most of the time helped me, that and the thought of Phil Lancaster—it was funny the way he and the things he said stuck in my mind. ‘Honour and truth and a sure intent’—I had all of that now, the way I looked at it. You remember war times, Joy—everybody wanting to do something for somebody—air just reeking with idealism—all I wanted was to get over there and be some good. And after the war, Phil Lancaster, if he was still alive. Things would be different after the war, I thought. And I figured it that the experience of being over there would purify me as you read of its purifying people's souls. For by that time I saw what the first years of my life had done to me. I don't blame myself yet for being born an alley cat and living with and in scum for the first fifteen years of my life. I wasn't taught any differently, and in spite of everything I taught myself and pulled myself out of the scum. No, I didn't blame myself—I only wanted to better myself—and I thought that this Y stuff, overseas, would do a lot towards wiping away the scum that seeps in under the skin, when you're buried in it, and sticks afterwards when you wash off the outside part.

“It was in October of 1917 that the top of everything was knocked off for me. I was at Hanley's singing some fool song about ‘My Little Service Flag Having Seven Stars,’ and it was about eleven-fifteen—when suddenly I saw him—Phil Lancaster. Sitting alone at a table by the wall. He was looking at me, *he was looking at me!* He was in the uniform of a Captain of Infantry, and if I hadn't been remembering him every day ever since he had come into Charlette's, I wouldn't have known him, he was so changed and tired. But he was looking at me! I faded up and closed out—all my wind gone. Shut down on encores. Couldn't pipe another note. He had looked at me—well, as if he was noticing me hot.

“While I was still standing in the reception hallway, one of the waiters blew in with a note for me. I never saved it—just like me to lose it—but he asked if I couldn't come out and have something to eat with him, describing his location. Now, we're not allowed to go out and sit at the tables at Hanley's. People could come back in the reception hall, and talk to us there, but that was all. My first idea was to reel a note back to him telling him that, and trust he would take the hint. But no! I didn't dare let that go. Supposing he didn't come across—after all those months—no, I couldn't trust to it that he would tumble, or even want to. I gave the waiter a note saying I would join him presently, and scrubbed off most of my make-up, just leaving what I thought was a good veneer for close-range work. I had worn a big hat that flopped all around my face, and with my coat on and the lid flopping and the make-up toned down, I didn't look much like myself. I took a sneak out the side and then breezed in front, told a waiter who didn't know me I was joining a friend, and fox-trotted up to his table with all the starch in the world.

“And all the way I had been saying to myself: Jerry, you've had to fight for everything you've got so far—and you've got to fight for this, but you've been given the chance to fight!

“I sat down opposite him and grinned. He came out of a trance and looked at me. ‘Oh, hello!’ he said. ‘Are you sure you're the same one who has seven stars on her service flag?’

‘Seven is my limit,’ I said. ‘Is that a fixed resolve? Because I was seriously considering asking you if you would break over and add an eighth.’

‘I took a minute off to look at him. Yes, he had the appearance of having downed a few drinks. There was a lot more, too—he certainly had been riding the sad sea waves! ‘Where do you get it, you officer guys?’ I asked him. He didn’t answer—he was lamping me. ‘On the stage up there, you seemed quite wicked. Now, you are a disappointment. I can never be taken up for conduct unbecoming an officer, with you at my table.’

‘I opened my mouth and nearly fell in it. Then I managed to get out that I’d better leave, so he could try someone else. He said ‘No—I want *you*. You look as though you had enough joy of living to cheer up even a dead one—and that’s what I am, or the next thing to it.’

‘I suggested that if he wanted me to trot out any joy of living stuff, we had better leave that place and come on up to my apartment. I had some there—a small but good assortment. I had outgrown my taste for beer, but still wolfed down the Demon Rum—and I couldn’t sit in Hanley’s much longer without being recognized. He paid the check and we were off without even waiting for the change. Now I knew he’d been drinking. It’s a long way from Hanley’s to West 111th, in case you don’t know—in a taxi—although only about twenty minutes in the Subway. We got in a meter-wagon and started off through the white lights. My heart was travelling quicker than the meter.

‘‘It’s sort of unusual for an officer to be alone in New York, isn’t it?’ I said, and he pulled a laugh that would have been funny if it hadn’t been so pitiful. ‘Alone? I’m the loneliest man in New York.’ Then he set himself off and told me what was rotting in the State of Denmark. His girl had knocked him one by quietly side-stepping around the corner and getting sewed up to a French artillery officer. This had just burst in upon him when he had heaved in from Upton that P.M.—after leaving her last week with all the encouragement in the world. It had made him simply silly—he’d been sampling everything he could get hold of, and was quite poppo by now, as I could see.

‘That girl was probably a good girl, but she hadn’t played fair, to do a thing like that. And when you don’t play fair, you let yourself in for a lot of responsibility. Here was her responsibility—shifted to me—and I was her opposite. I hadn’t been good, according to her standards, but I had always played fair.

‘I gathered, as we bumped along through Columbus Circle, that she had been about the only thing that had been keeping him treading water, just now. He’d been made a Captain at Plattsburg, and he hadn’t felt he was up to such a position; and at Upton he was feeling it more and more. He told me about two young officers who’d shot themselves because they were going crazy with their cares and responsibilities. It was a tough thing for some of those young kids, to feel that they had whole companies of men under them to answer for, when up to now they had never answered for anything but the dog. He said if he hadn’t been older than those kids he now would be tempted to do the same thing; that he never felt nearer to it.

‘It all seemed like a dream, Joy—bumping along in a taxi beside the man I’d been in love with for so long—and he spreading his tale of woe. It couldn’t have happened any other time but war times. If he thought about telling me this stuff at all, he thought I was the grade of intelligence that would peacefully let it slide by. I got that fact, and began to think in quick flashes. Ever since I had watched the back of his head, back in Charlette’s, I had fixed it in my mind so that he could have walked over me in golf shoes and I would have sat up and begged for more. I wanted to get hold of that girl and feel my fingernails meet in her throat. As for Phil—the more he talked about it, the gloomier an atmosphere he cast.

“We got to my apartment and as I opened up some joy getter, he passed the remark that I did myself pretty well for a cabaret singer. Then he slumped right down again, and got so low he couldn’t even drink. ‘It’s no use,’ he said; ‘in my frame of mind, Uncle Sam’s army is better off without me, and God knows there’s no one else in this universe who would care!’ When men say that, you always know they mean a girl. They never seem to think of their families in that connection.

“I went over to where he was looking at my wine, and said: ‘You’re drunk. To snuff yourself out would brand you a coward in the eyes of the world and God, too. Besides which, I won’t let you.’ He ripped off a nasty laugh at that. ‘This is really almost amusing—to be sitting listening to a cabaret girl tell me *she* won’t let me “snuff myself out!”’ He took my hand, and hung onto it. ‘Then you do want me for the eighth star!’ A man never plain holds your hand, it seems—it’s just a starter. ‘Listen here,’ I said. ‘I may be a cabaret girl, but I’m not several other little things you seem to think I am. I’ve got “honour and truth and a sure intent,” which is more than you’ll have if you follow up your intent with me!’

“He dropped my hand like a hot potato and squared off to take a look at me. ‘Did you say honour and truth and——?’ ‘I did,’ said I. ‘So come to and stay there.’ ‘I never made a mistake like this before,’ he said. ‘I think I had better go.’

“I can tell you it made me feel pretty sick. If I could have stopped caring for him the way I’d started—but I couldn’t—I’d sort of fixed everything on him and there it hung. And here he was going to the sausages, and wanted me to help him fry himself. I was knocked cold. I hadn’t really got what he had doped me out to be—until he said he’d better go.

“I lost my head then. ‘Sit down,’ I said. ‘Sit down and let me tell you something. You’ve never seen me before. Well, I have you—in at Charlette’s last February—I heard you talking to your sister about “honour and truth and a sure intent.” That was the first look-in I’d ever had on the subject. You were the first real man that I had ever come within shouting distance of, who sprung such stuff, and those words sunk in till they got sewed in me. All the more so because I was—and am—in love with a man who’d never look straight at me till I made myself over, and I figured it that somehow those words might be the combination that would fix me up for him. I always remembered you and what you said, and I’ve been trying to get all those three things. And then when you turned up to-night I was as happy as a fool, thinking I’d be with a real man and he’d give some more dope on how to be a real girl—then you talk about ending it all, like any thirty-center up against a dark pocket, and take me for Mazie-off-the-streets thrown in!’

“He didn’t say anything for a few minutes—turned away from me and did a walk over to the piano. There was a bunch of French stuff on it that Pa was trying to get soaked into me, and a book of Yvette Guilbert’s. Then he turned around and I saw he’d lost most of his edge. ‘I want to beg your pardon,’ he said. ‘I’ve never been so ashamed of myself in all my life. But I shan’t curse myself for writing that note to you—no matter what prompted me to do so. Of all girls in New York—to stumble on one who remembered something I said—something that she thought was doing her good!

“I saw he’d gone sober, and I put away the cup that cheers too loud. He came up to me and looked me over—not hot this time, but impersonal. ‘So you’re in love with someone—who—won’t look straight at you?’ He squinted his eyes up and took in the general effect, the way I do when I stand off and look at a model draped in a half-built creation. ‘War times are not so busy but what I’d like to play Pygmalion for you.’ ‘What kind of a game is that?’ I said.

“He laughed, and gave me a close-up of the Pygmalion-Galatea affair. I didn’t mind if I had

pulled a bone—there he was, as keen and peepy as if he hadn't been talking about putting a bullet through his brains a while ago and glimming me as cool and impersonal as if he hadn't hauled my hand around a minute back. The main thing was that I'd given him a jolt—and he'd lost his edge.

“When he left that night, he'd given me a list of books to wade through. The newspapers had always been my literature—them, and people. But he told me it would Galatea me some to follow the books for awhile. And he also said he'd come up to the apartment again in two weeks—he only got every other week-end off, usually—and see how I was working it.

“After he went maybe I didn't turn cart-wheels around the apartment till the people underneath rapped on their ceiling with a broomstick, as they had nothing to do around that time but sleep, and when people get that way their mind runs on one track and you have to humour 'em. So I turned in and thought till it was time to get up. You can always tell when it's time to get up—you're just ready for a real sleep by then. I felt I had done a good night's work. By a trick shake of the dice he had landed with me—and getting interested in my 'case,' as I had reeled it off to him, had pulled him out of a pocket.

“I quit Hanley's after that. I needed the evenings for getting those books down. No matter what way I figured, there wasn't any other time to do it. He hadn't supposed I did anything but sing, in which case I would have had lots of time for his books. Every day of that two weeks was just another day until he should come again, and when he did—He looked so much better already that you couldn't believe it was the same man. First thing he did was to apologize again for the way he'd been the other night. Said he'd never been so limp before and never would be again, thanks to me. Then we slung a line of chatter about the books I had surrounded, and he asked me was I getting along any better with that man. I said no, I didn't see much progress—which was the truth. He said, well, he'd give me some Mid-Victorian stuff to dive into for next time, and one book would do me. It was Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King'—and believe me, Joy, it let in a whole new flood of light. I'd never heard anything like it. When I got to the end of Guinevere I was sobbing as I hadn't since I was a kid and had had my bunch of papers pinched from me. Joy, that book simply burst on me like dynamite. I'd never heard of ideas like those before. If you read that when you're in love, it'll either make you fall out with a thump or fall in harder than ever. I fell in harder than ever. Could I wait until he came again? To talk over the 'Idylls of the King' with *him*?”

Jerry spread out her hands, then looked at them and laughed suddenly. “The action sags from now on, Joy. Because *he never turned up again*.”

“What?” cried Joy.

“He never showed up. I never have seen him since. I waited that evening—God, Joy, I hope you don't know what it is to wait like that for a man who doesn't come—when you've been waiting for days for that evening—and then he doesn't come—even when it gets too late, hoping—And then the waiting afterwards—to hear some explanation—some reason—watching the mail, jumping at the phone—oh, I can't go over it all again!”

“Perhaps he sailed for France,” Joy said.

“I thought of that, of course. But he had told me that another thing that made him so sick was being stuck permanently on this side as far as he could see. I thought too, he might have been transferred to another camp. But whatever happened, to go off without a word—without a word, for two years—When I thought it over long enough, though, I understood. I was nothing but an incident in his life—and with soldiers in war times, incidents flared up and then passed off in double quick order. Something had happened so that it wasn't convenient for him

to come around any more—probably he got a new interest—and why should he bother to let me know? First place, there probably wasn't any excuse—just a bare statement of fact—— Second place, I was nothing but a cabaret singer—why should he go out of his way to observe any of the fine hairs of convention for me? And so on!" Jerry's teeth clicked.

"Oh, Jerry, I know there's something more to this. I *know* there must be some awfully good excuse."

Jerry shrugged her shoulders almost out of the purple kimono. "I thought so at first. It took me quite a while to see that after all, it was a pretty simple case. When I finally came to my senses, the first thing I did was to knock the 'Idylls of the King' about the room a bit. Then the very next day in at Charlette's I keeled over while shooting my mouth off at a cutter, and though I didn't actually go out, a lot of little black specks swam around and everything looked worse than it might have if I'd fainted in a clean break. I didn't need any pill-fiend to tell me it was overwork—the effect of years—I knew it myself, had known it for aforesaid years. I had to quit Charlette's, but I kept the stock. The dividends from that make my only steady income, now, and as you've noticed, I can't keep to it.

"Somehow, that day when I came to and kicked the 'Idylls of the King' about, something had snapped. I guess you can call it my sure intent. I didn't want to go on at Charlette's. I didn't want to work anywhere. I'd worked all my life, I'd never had a speaking acquaintance with much of anything but work and filth, and I felt it was time to give a farewell bow to each. My sure intent beat it then and there—and the only thing it left me was just as sure an intent to get as good a time as possible out of the rest of my life before I got so old that I'd have to put the snaffle on everything.

"Still, it was war times, and if you can go back into the Dark Ages of a year ago, you can remember everybody wanted to do something for somebody else then. I signed up with the Y—but not to go across. My physical examination wouldn't admit of that; so I signed up for duty over here.

"I went and said good-bye to Pa, and he gave me a few tips I didn't need about not singing DeBussy to the doughboys. Then I went on my little See-America-First expedition. It was more fun than I'd ever had, and the Y people I was thrown with taught me a lot. Some of them were wonders, others were such frosts that you wondered how even the hall could stand it, let alone the audience in the hall. I put it over, as my songs were snappy and my work had cabaret pep; by the same token I let myself in for a lot of criticism, but since the criticism never came from the soldiers, I didn't care and I wouldn't change my methods.

"You've probably heard me cartooned as an international character; anyway, that's what I'm called. This touring of the camps was what started me. I had more freedom with the men than I would have if I'd been in France, and the college-boy type was what looked good to me. The reason I liked them both then and now—it's truer now than it ever was—is that they had just as sure an intent as I for having as good a time as possible while they lasted, and I liked their ways of going about it. They liked me, too, because I was easy to be with and they could feel just as free as if they were among themselves.

"I suppose that's the keynote of my relations with men; they can act just as if they were among themselves. I smoke with them, drink more than they do and hold it better; I tell 'em stories and sing 'em songs; they can be as free as possible, and yet with the added pep in the thought that after all, I *am* a girl.

"At the end of the summer of 1918, I broke into pieces for a fact, and the Y put me out for a rest. I think they breathed easier when I was out, anyway. Before I was in trim again, the

armistice was signed. I was some relieved. As I saw it, the decks were cleared for me. I'd done more work up to twenty than some people do in a lifetime; for a year I'd worked for my country; and now I was going to have an everlasting good time while my pep held out.

"What was the use of any other sure intent? I knew I could never care again for anybody. I hadn't seen him or heard of him. So what was the use of anything—except having a good time? Sometimes I've wondered if he could see me—now—would he like me any better—even if I am polished off some from the cabaret singer he knew. But what was the use of taking the 'Idylls of the King' to heart, when he wasn't there to see me? If he'd left me any other way—Men are like that; they break away clean; girls make a jagged break, or leak away. He'd gone; and when you stop to think of it, he was about the only nail I had to hold me down. So what was the use? And away I popped.

"When the colleges started their parties again, I made my *début* into society. I stood it all right, too. The way girls who had been brought up in front families acted, made it possible for me to get away with my varnished-over East-Side-plus Charlette style. I was only a little more so than they were, and that little more so made me a little more popular than they were.

"I decided to slip my things over to Boston and settle there. You can't blaze around at all hours the way you can in New York, but I can always think of things to do no matter what the material is, and I was sick of New York. It had got me once and I was afraid it would again. And every time I went by Charlette's I felt a pull—but I swore I wouldn't go back there. Boston was the nearest all colleges except Yale and Princeton, and the numbers of little comrades I had in the other colleges, and Harvard and Tech being right there, cinched the matter. I get to Yale and Princeton when I want to just the same, and go over to New York when I feel like it, which isn't often.

"I met Sal at a Cornell house party, and afterwards ran into her around a good deal. When I moved to Boston we agreed to hit it off in this apartment. She comes from a little New Hampshire town, was the village belle, wore spit curls, rhinestone combs and all that sort of thing till some underdone Dartmouth freshman took her to Winter Carnival and she saw she'd found her lifework. She contributed the black walnut pieces that stick out in this room in spite of my black-and-white efforts. I wanted to start right, so I got everything we needed. Some of the things were donated, but even so, what we bought took all my capital except my stocks, besides whatever few little onions she slipped into count. Perhaps you've gathered there's not too much love oozing between me and Sal. I wanted someone to live with; you can see most girls wouldn't do; Sal's the answer. As for the rest about Sal—she can tell you if she wants to; I've told you just as much as touches me and makes it my business."

Jerry stopped and drew a long breath, much as she had earlier in the story. "And so you've got my life history salted down, Joy. It's not as black as the ebonies nor as white as the ivories; I should say the composite picture would be a nice medium grey, like the sweater I used to sport."

Joy had scarcely seemed to be listening for some time now. "But, Jerry—you don't still care for that man?"

Jerry's mouth grew pale. "I do. I could never care for anyone else."

"But how can you, when he has gone off and left you?"

"Grant has gone off and left you. Do you still care for him?"

Joy considered, and into her cheeks crept a startled flush. "Why—why—I don't think I know."

"Well, then you never felt the way I do. When you've lived with a thing like that for years

—oh, it's so blame all wrong! If I had been a man I could have gone out and hunted for the person I cared for—*made* her give me at least a chance! But what can a girl do but wait and hope and wonder—and *wait!*" She caught herself up. "H'm—almost turned on the faucet then, all right. Well, Joy, I've spread the story for you. The present status Sal and I hold is shifty to locate—but we notice we never meet any fond relatives of our little friends. And so I see now that it was a raw deal on you in a way, coming to live with us. It puts you in our light. We're not ashamed of it, for that's the way we're going to live while we last—but this morning I've been thinking things over, and for the first time I've got your side of the matter and so I think it's the best thing, for you to go."

"I was at Pa's this morning——" Joy began.

"There, he's one can tell you I'm not much good. I went to him to get back into shape after my work in the Y, and when I had been there only a couple of times he told me it wasn't worth it for me to go on. He said I drank much too much, and smoked more than that, and he'd been watching me long enough to see I'd never shake off either. So that ended."

"I was at Pa's this morning," Joy continued as if there had been no interruption, "and what he said made me decide to stay here—that is, if you still want me."

There was a little, breathing pause. Then Jerry spoke in a detached tone. "Nothing I've said has made you change your mind?"

"Why, Jerry—what you've told—has made everything *right!* Oh, I was horrified at first—it all seemed so awful—but to have come out of it all as you did! Jerry—you're—you're *valiant.* I've always thought of that word in connection with you—*valiant.*" Joy's voice was clothed in radiant relief. She looked at Jerry with a tenderness she dared not express—one could not imagine being tender to Jerry.

"I'm not valiant." Jerry rose, and the pink mules sounded their way to the door. She stood with one finger on the knob, and with her hair roughed up about her face, her kimono sliding from the slim angles of her shoulders, she looked like a great butterfly, undecided whether to hover or dart away. "I tell you, Joy, I'm not good for you; I can see that now. I'm not fourteen-karat bad—but I'm an *Excitement-Eater.* That's a *new style girl,* and the style is getting popular. I live on excitement—I feed on it. I can't live without it. I scatter it around me—all Excitement-Eaters do. And for you, a little goes a long way—it's taken me longer than it should have to discover that. I'm not good for you. And that's that."

"Pa decided me this morning," Joy repeated; "and that's that. You can eat your old excitement all you want—I'm going to eat music—and languages—and music——Your story just clinches my resolve to stay. Oh, Jerry, you *are* valiant. I can see you standing up there with your chin out telling that man you weren't Mazie-off-the-street——"

"Valiant! Knock off that word, will you? It gives me the willies. Valiant! When there've been times I've wished I *had* been Mazie—then I'd have had *something*—and might have kept him a little longer!"

"You're only talking now!" cried Joy; but the door was swinging, and a vanishing flutter of purple silk was her only response.

VII

Joy's decision for steadfast endeavour, having once been made, did not waver. In the days that followed she began to feel a calm content; content that she had never known before. All the restlessness, the fits of uneasiness and depression that had been hers, had vanished in the light of a concrete objective; Pa's talk had miraculously swept away the cobwebs in her brain. There was always the dull ache of Grant's continued silence; but as the days wore on, it became more and more negative.

Pa sent her home for two weeks' rest before she started in on the program he had mapped out for her, and fourteen days spent in the little town made her the more eager to begin work. Her father, after his first welcome and expression of delight at her progress, was as preoccupied as ever, the surprise incident upon Joy's exposition of why she must return to Boston and start a more extensive (and expensive) course of study, jolting him only temporarily. After all, he knew that other girls went away to school, and he knew that his wife would have desired this for Joy.

Joy no longer felt guilty over his misunderstanding her place of residence. She had paid the penalty of deceit in hardening experience; more than the penalty in losing Grant. From now on, she was proceeding with her eyes opened. That she was to continue living with Jerry did not mean what her advent to the apartment had meant; it meant that the apartment was now the best background for her labours, with a piano hers to practice upon at all hours, and a ménage that was run to suit three girls instead of thirty, as was the case at the Annex.

The little town was preoccupied. The girls, after their first effusion of greeting, were as preoccupied as ever in trying to bring the rotation of the three or four boys in town their way. Joy was different, anyway, now that she was doing that singing stuff. She wouldn't sing popular songs, and that highbrow stuff was awfully boring. She wouldn't go to the movies, or bring her sewing over and gossip, so what *could* one do with her?

Tom was working for the summer at the Foxhollow Corners bank, of which his father was president and he in turn expected to be some day, as he informed Joy in the first three minutes of his first call. He had another year at college, and in his conversation strayed collegewards.

"Remember Jack Barnett, Joy? Well, he's married. Pulled it off the other day, I guess—just got the cards. They used to say he was engaged to some home-town specimen that he never dared to take to any of the house parties, and this looks as if there was some truth in it."

Joy made no comment. Tom babbled on of college affairs. He was the type of youth who took it for granted that the girl whom he was favouring with his company would be enthralled with every detail of happenings that touched upon him. With this genus, the girl's only requisite is silence that bespeaks the listening ear. Joy made no remarks until the end of his call, then she said casually: "Did you ever know Jim Dalton well in college?"

"Oh, not very. He ran with a different crowd." It was a familiar college tone; not insulting; merely relegating Jim to the oblivion where he belonged.

"I've seen him several times—he's working in Boston."

"Oh, he's all right—I guess his friends like him well enough."

More praising with faint damns! But Joy did not absorb the mandate of the busy college man, as she would have last spring. She laughed amiably as she sped Tom on his way. She was still laughing as she came into the hall and passed her father, who was coming in from his evening smoke.

"What are you laughing at, my dear?" Mr. Nelson inquired, pausing for a moment although

he had an excellent book of the vintage of '61 awaiting him in the library.

"Myself, mostly!" she replied, and went on into the music room, walking slowly over the tacked-down carpet to her beloved grand piano. How standards of college changed after college, and how futilely provincial were they who still saw life through those standards! Jim Dalton was far from the nonentity class in which she had placed him last spring. If only Grant had been like Jim——

Her fingers found the accompaniment of little bells, chiming from far away—and she was murmuring the words——

"My only love is always near
In country or in town——"

She broke off with a little sob, and her hands stayed without motion on the soundless keys. "The Unrealized Ideal!" And so it was.

"Lightly I speed while hope is high
And youth beguiles the race
I follow—follow still—but I
Shall never see his face."

"Grant!" she cried, then shivered as the sound travelled around the room, through the tidies and antimacassars, over to the what-not and glass candlesticks, and back again to her.

How could it all have been so dear—how could she have been so tremblingly ecstatic? How could it all be ended—leaving everything as flat and grey as the beach after the sun had been wet-blanketed by the sea mist, on that day of centuries?——But after the sun had gone—the moon had come up. She raised her head and started playing again; and this time it was an old Italian air over which she had been working.

The little town had no place for her; it was preoccupied. And so she came back at the end of two weeks, ready to plunge into work, actually longing for the feverish round of the apartment to swirl about her while she worked. *While she worked.*

Pa found her a French woman and Italian professor for instructors, and he himself taught her the elements of music. "I don't always like to bother with this myself," he said, "but I want you to get it right—see the poetry and fascination of it—not have it dinned into you in a cut-and-dried way that only makes you aware of the toilsome mathematics of the thing."

She threw herself into her study with an intense concentration that left her no energy for anything else—that left her almost no time to listen to the telephone and door bell, and watch the mail . . . for she still was in that vague expectancy. Surely he would not be forever gone, without a word save the fitful telephoning during her illness. She watched Jerry's gaiety and wondered if beneath, Jerry also was hiding expectancy—if she still hoped that any day she might hear some word. . . . She could see Jerry reverting to the newsie in grey sweater and bloomers, kicking "The Idylls of the King" about the room. Jerry was not to be blamed. "The Idylls" were long out of date; and where was there a Perfect Knight?

Late one afternoon, Jerry burst in upon her while she was indulging in a little light reading: "How to Listen to an Orchestra."

"Joy, if you study any more you'll get eye-trouble, and whoever heard of a singer getting away with wearing glasses? We've absolutely got to have another girl to-night—it'll do you good to get out! How can you stand this perpetual-motion-of-the-brain!"

Joy laughed. "Sorry, Jerry, but I couldn't. Don't tempt me."

"Well—you really ought to get out—it isn't because we've *got* to have another girl that I wanted you. As it happens, there's another available. Félicie Durant is back in town."

Joy had heard Jerry and Sarah speak of Félicie Durant once or twice, and the name had left an impression, being about the only girl's name they had ever taken the breath to mention.

"I'll tell you what," said Jerry; "you nail on your lid right now and we'll wiggle over to Félicie's. You've got to have some exercise, and there's much more chance of my getting Félicie to go to-night by a personal interview than if I popped the project over the phone. Come on!"

Jerry was wearing a rumpled lavender linen dress of simple lines. She watched with an amused eye, as Joy changed into dark things for street wear.

"You certainly are getting Bostonian," she jeered. "It's balmy out if it *is* fall, and I for one am not going to stifle if other people are sporting advance-model velvet lids!" And crushing a saucy yellow straw down over her eyes without bothering to pat her hair into position on either side, an indispensable rite with most girls in the major operation of putting on a hat, she dragged Joy forth before Joy could add a veil and white kid gloves to her costume.

"This is no afternoon-tea call," she said, hailing a Brighton-bound street car. "Félicie's not that kind of a girl—not that she's my kind, either, except the way that girl swallows excitement down whole would do credit to even my digestion."

"What is she like?" Joy asked, as they joined the circle of strap-hanging women that crowded the street car full of doggedly sitting men.

"She's a jellyfish," replied Jerry, treading on the toes of the man in front of her who spread his newspaper as a defensive sheath between him and the women before him. "She's got the spine and determination of a jellyfish. Lives out here with her old great-aunt or something— But wait till you see her."

They disembarked over in Brighton where rows of apartment houses duplicated themselves, and rang the bell at one of faded yellow brick. The door swung open, and Joy followed Jerry to the right on the first floor, where an open door awaited them.

"I'm in the kitchen," cried a voice whose echoes carried hauntingly silver. "Come on down!"

A first glimpse of Félicie Durant was unforgettable. Large brown velvet eyes trimmed with elaborate fringes of lashes that curled up at the end, giving her face a look of starry oblivion to mundane matters; a face whose daintily regular features were brought out by a skin as smooth as the surface of a pearl, with a cobwebby maze of ringlets dark as her eyes, drifting around and away from her temples. All this Joy saw in one delighted instant. Then the lips, scarlet and full almost to pouting, parted in a smile of welcome, and Félicie waved a soapy hand at the two girls.

"Don't come too near me—I'm washing the dog!"

Sure enough. There was the kitchen tub—and a little shivering white thing being drowned in suds. It was hard to connect Félicie with washing a dog, however little and white he might be.

"Good for you, old girl," said Jerry. "Those poodles look like dirty dish-rags if they're not put into Lux twice a day. Félicie, this is Joy Nelson, and you can see she did you the justice of dressing for a nice formal call."

"Wait till I rinse him out and then I'll shake hands," Félicie panted. Sharing her breathlessness, the two watched while she first rinsed, then wrung out the animated mop, and put it down on the floor with an order to "go to it." The mop whisked itself out of sight.

“He runs all around and rolls in all the rugs and gets dry all by himself,” she explained proudly.

“Is that hard on the rugs, or isn’t it? I just asked,” said Jerry.

The fringes fluttered; the dark eyes drooped. “Why, I—I never—thought of that!” Félicie admitted. “But”—she brightened—“this is a furnished apartment, mostly, and the rugs are the old landlord’s. So it’s quite all right after all!”

“Does ‘the old landlord’ know you keep a dog?”

“Well—but you would hardly call Fizz a dog, now, would you?” she triumphed. “Come on in my room while I put on some clothes. She pulled off and carefully hung up the kitchen apron which had been protecting her somewhat gossamer attire from the wear and tear attendant on canine ablutions, and ran before them to a speckless white boudoir that had the air of not having quite recovered from its last cleaning. In spite of Félicie’s activities, that was also the way the kitchen had looked. Jerry’s apartment always appeared to be waiting for its next cleaning.

“I have a new picture of Greg,” said Félicie, disappearing into a closet. “There on the dressing table.”

A large photograph of a man with sleek, dark hair parted in the middle and watered back; a face whose good looking conformity could have been singled out as “a college type”—framed in ivory which carried out the scheme of the dressing table’s dainty appurtenances.

“It’s good,” said Jerry. “Still in love with him?”

A muffled but none the less sure-fire assent came from the closet. She evidently was the kind of girl who dressed in the closet if there were other girls in the room.

“Then why the devil won’t you marry him?” Jerry exploded, slamming the picture down with a force that made the ivory manicure set start shimmying. She turned to Joy. “Félicie’s in love with Greg; he’s crazy as a fool about her; and she won’t even get engaged, much less marry him!”

“Now, Jerry, you know perfectly well you wouldn’t either,” said Félicie, and again her voice trailed silver, as she came out of the closet.

“Oh, you pretty—pretty—*Thing!*” thought Joy. A white gown of foaming lace swirled about her, from which the darkness of her eyes and hair and the redness of her lips gleamed. Her figure now was unexpectedly rounded and full, proportioned so beautifully that the breathtaking entirety of the vision inspired Joy to classic simile. As she buttoned herself into her dress, she looked as Venus rising from the foam would have done well to look.

“I’m twenty years old,” Félicie was continuing; “and for a girl at my age to marry would be *sacrifice, human sacrifice*. If girls marry nowadays at twenty, they’re either afraid they’ve got their only chance, or they haven’t the cash to hold out, or they’re just plain fools. And you know, Jerry, I’m not any one of those.”

“Go on,” said Jerry. “Joy’ll be interested to hear your theories.”

Félicie appealed to Joy. “Don’t you think so, too?”

Her loveliness stirred none of the animosity in Joy that pretty women too often arouse in one another. Joy smiled back at her. “Don’t you think each case is different?”

“Well, take mine. I care more for Greg than anyone. But think if I should marry him now! Why—I’m only twenty. I’ve got at least four good years before me of fun and excitement, the best years of my life and looks, and why should I devote them to being domestic? After I’m married, I can never have the kind of a good time I have now. I may be fonder of Greg than anyone—but I’m fond of other men, too! I like the excitement of each new man, more than—

more than——”

“More than marrying Greg,” Jerry supplied.

She nodded in relief. “Yes, that’s it, and the way I look at it is, it’s better to get it all out of my system before I marry than after, don’t you think so?”

“You never will that way.” Jerry spoke curtly. “Haven’t you read that appetite grows on what feeds it?” She lit a cigarette. Félicie’s eyes roved to her fine lace curtains in resignation before she went on.

“It isn’t as if I weren’t sure that Greg will stick for several years at least. Why, he never looks at another girl. And it isn’t as if I were the sort of girl who would expect to go right on adding up men after I marry. No, when I marry I in going to have a home and children, and I’m not going to marry until I’m ready for them.”

“It sounds reasonable,” said Joy, fascinated.

“And when I marry I want to live neatly,” said Félicie, with a comfortable glance around the glistening room. “And *neatly* to me means *enough money*. Greg isn’t making enough for that yet—and while I live here with auntie I have enough. I wish, Jerry, you wouldn’t always pick on me about him.”

“I hate to see a waste of good material,” Jerry murmured.

“That’s what it would be, if I married,” she retorted, her voice again carrying high lights. “A girl stands to lose *everything* by an early marriage—her looks, her youth, and her *fun*! Can you imagine me with the yowl of a baby for my only excitement? It’s not a bit like you to take this stand!”

Joy stole a look at Jerry, but her face was wreathed in smoke as she answered in lazy tones: “Well, come off the platform, old dear. I was only heaving a couple of sobs for Greg—that boy has a few brains that weren’t put in cold storage at Yale. Of course, *I’m* glad you’re still on my side of the wall. Came around to make you shove aside anything you’ve started going for to-night and tack yourself on to a dizzy party.”

“I have a date for to-night, but he’s not a new man,” she ruminated. “Is it a good party?”

“I said, dizzy! A bunch of Williams men—they’ve cornered the world’s best jazz-fiends to beat a nasty measure—down at Croft Inn. Private party—we’ll have the whole place to ourselves. There are one or two other girls coming, some subdebs from Boston who are going to climb the waterspout or something, but they told me to get another girl. Like the noise of it?”

“I should say so! I was only going in town to dance with him alone. Give me a crowd every time! What’ll you wear?”

“Evening dress stuff, they say, which means the girls will and the men won’t.” She threw her cigarette stub at the wastebasket, and after a few waverings which Félicie watched tensely, it went in. “Well—we’ve got to go along. We’ll be around for you to-night, some time. Be ready!”

“Good-bye, Miss Durant,” said Joy, taking a last comprehensive look at the massed loveliness before her. She half wished that she were going that night. To see it drawn up in battle array!

“We must have a movie date some time,” Félicie smiled, but her smile was changed to a shriek as she followed them down the hall. “You didn’t close the door, and he got out! Oh, *Fizz!*”

She captured him in the lower entry and held him carefully away from the lace of her dress, his red tongue dangling, his little eyes peering pinkly from beneath his drying bangs, as she again speeded them on their way.

“Well, what did you think of the human jellyfish?” Jerry asked, as they made for their regular “taxi,” a Subway prepayment car.

“Jerry—I think she’s the loveliest thing I’ve ever seen. But I don’t in the least get why she’s like a jellyfish.”

“Listen. If you’ve ever seen the animal, you know it’s flabby and yet you can’t pull it apart. That’s what she is.”

“I don’t know. Her arguments were pretty good; they’ve started me thinking.”

“Well, all I’ve got to say is this: I never saw anyone fill the flowing bowl—and drink it and have it left. And I don’t think she can pull it off any more than anyone else.”

Joy was a little more weary of work than she cared to admit, and found a welcome diversion in watching Jerry and Sarah prepare for the evening. Even the familiar spectacle of Sarah whitewashing her neck, back, shoulders and arms with liquid powder, was amusing. When they left, wrapping about themselves with conscious sumptuousness new evening cloaks that Jerry had recently evolved, she could not circumvent a sigh. After all—she was going from one extreme to the other.

She went to the piano and started playing the score of Faust, as Pa was now working her through the rôle of Marguerite. “Old fashioned, but it will teach you much,” he had said. It was all within her increased powers of vocalisation except the trill in the Jewel Song. When she sang and played exultantly through the score, she felt lifted to a zenith of mauve heights which trembled in ecstasy of tone—until her next lesson. She played now, supporting an even lusciousness of tone—

“Je voudrais bien savoir quel était ce jeune homme
Si c’est un grand seigneur, et comment il se nomme.”

The piano under her hands transmuted itself into a great orchestra; the walls of the room widened to the huge stage of the Metropolitan; and she, Marguerite, was standing with clasped hands savouring the wonder of love at first sight. She was glad that she was more slender than most of the vocalists who could essay the rôle; and no wig would be needed to cover her own golden hair.

The sharp ringing of the door bell cut in upon her dream, and stage and great orchestra vanished together with Marguerite-who-needed-no-wig. She went to the door with a feeling of irritation. Who——

A tall, brown figure, somewhat leaner and older looking. Eyes that were clear——

“Grant!” she cried.

With no more thought than a snowflake takes to melt, she was in his arms, and their lips met in a kiss that stopped and sighed, then began again.

“We’d better close the door,” said Grant. In the little pause while he preserved appearances by shutting them in the apartment, she put herself away from him, a little breathless, her hair slipping down about her shoulders.

“*What made me do that?*” she trembled; he was turning to her again, and she drew away farther and kept the distance between them while leaving the hall.

“Joy——” The living room gained, he had come up to her again and was stroking her hair. “I’ve thought everything all out—oh, I’ve thought of nothing else—and everything’s clear in my mind now. Darling—I want you to marry me just as soon as you can.”

She stared up at him without meaning, her brain a tumult of horror about which revolved the

question: “*What made me do that?*”

“I’ve thought it all out—and now I know—I was a fool to judge you by anything but my own love. I—want you, Joy.”

She jerked her head, and his caressing fingers tore her hair. “Go away, Grant, go and sit down far away from me—so we can talk this out—impartially!”

“Impartially! What’s there to talk out—impartially? Joy—I don’t know what I was thinking of, that night. To even question you—after what we had been, to each other—It’s all come clear to me, in these weeks of being without you.”

“Let me hope for your sake—that it won’t take as long for you to get other facts in life clear to you—as it did, this!”

“I called you up before—and they said you were ill. Of course I knew that just meant you wouldn’t see me. So I waited—and took a chance on coming unannounced.”

“I *was*—ill. I would have seen you—I waited for you, after I was better——”

“Joy! You were really ill? Why didn’t you send for me?”

“Why would I have had to? Others—came without being sent for.”

With a hissing intake of breath she drew away from him again, putting the table between them.

“Why, Joy, what’s the matter, dear? You’re acting as if I were a wild beast.”

She moved to the piano and sat on the bench before it. “No, Grant—I’m merely—protecting myself against myself. When I saw you so suddenly—after I thought I’d never see you again;—sit down there a minute—I’ve got to get all this straight.”

He obeyed with a frown. “I don’t understand.”

“Neither—did—I. But now I do! Now I do!” She threw back her head, and looked at him impersonally. “Grant, you’ve come back too late. I’ve learned to do without you.”

He made an impatient motion as if to brush her words away. “Do you expect me to believe that—after what happened a minute ago?”

“That—is what helped me to see! I don’t think—I ever was really in love with you. It was infatuation—blind infatuation—or else—how could I have done—what I did just now! I haven’t missed you—except when I was idle; and when girls are idle they always have to be in love, or missing someone, or moping because they haven’t got anybody to miss—that’s the way girls seem to be made!”

“You only missed me—when you were idle,” he repeated as if it were the statement of a theorem he could not prove.

“Yes, and then I missed only *you*! I didn’t miss your spirit, your soul to mingle with my own—and so you see, I didn’t have the real, true longing for you!”

“Then you *did* long for me!” He had left his seat and come to her; but she held up wavering hands.

“Passion—dressed up! I wonder how many people know it from love—before it is too late!”

“Joy, you’re morbid. It doesn’t do to analyze things so. You’ve been brooding here all evening over your old music; no wonder you see in such a light. When you marry me, everything will straighten out, and you won’t get yourself all wrought up over the piano all the time.”

“I see what you mean—and that’s another thing. If I married you now, I would have to give up my music.”

“Oh, not entirely, of course. You would always have it as a lovely gift, to take up now and then—but not as a god to slave before and give everything to—I’ve watched you, Joy, and

that's the way you are. I wouldn't respect a man much, who let his wife peg on at the thing in a professional way, when he could take care of her himself."

Joy laughed, almost stonily. "Apart from the fact that I don't love you—I'm not ready to marry *anyone* yet. Since I've last—seen you, I've made my decision. And I'm only standing on the threshold of my work! And I never—never could be happy to give it up now—even if I was in love—A girl waits for the man she loves to establish himself in his line of work, waits until he has gotten to the place where her partnership is possible. But judging by you, a man wouldn't wait for me—wouldn't wait until I got my head above water, and then let me carry on my work after marriage, as he carries on his."

"Women who advance such arguments are liable to forget that their business after marriage should be quite different from before," he said in a low tone.

She looked at him with unembarrassed eyes. "Supposing I recognised that. Supposing I said, I will be Domesticity itself after I am married. But I still require you to wait several years for me—as I must attain the perfection for which I am aiming, or my soul will always yearn after it, and I will never be content? What then?"

He did not speak. She turned and played a few chords on the piano. "I'm nineteen years old—nearly twenty. Say you wait three years and a half for me—until I'm twenty-three. Would you do that?"

"Joy, you're talking perfect rot. To wait over three years—to waste the best years of our life we might be having together——"

"Stop a minute. I will be only twenty-three then. You will be only twenty-five. That is an age at which most young people nowadays think themselves lucky to start—and so would you if you didn't have your own little inherited income through no effort of your own. Only three years and a half, Grant! Would you do it?"

"You know perfectly well you're asking too much for any man. Be reasonable, Joy. What has gotten into you to make you talk like this? It seems to me that after I have fought out my problem, and come to you like this, there might be a little something expected of you."

She smiled, faintly amused. "Since you had decided, you thought there was no more to it—but you see, Grant, all that time I was going through experiences and thoughts—that have made me see that as far as I'm concerned—*there's no more to it.*" She rose, her gesture spelling dismissal. "So you wouldn't wait—three years and a half, or whatever it might be. I think that shows, Grant, that your love was about the same as mine."

Mesmerized by the finality of her tone, he started to the door, but stopped halfway. "Am I to believe—that you are always going to take this stand—be this way?"

"Please do believe it. I am not drunk with music—I shall always take this stand with you—because, you see, I don't really love you, and I suppose that—makes all the difference!"

He gained the door, and stood looking back. She was regarding him with parted lips, cheeks darkly flushed, a little pulse beating in her temple, her hair blanketing her shoulders in folds of gold. "And please," she articulated in a thin thread of sound—"please forget me—very quickly!"

"Forget you——" The words escaped him in a sort of wonder. They stood motionless, eyes fixed upon one another, and into the faces of each there stole an impatient bewilderment. They had leaped to the peaks of poetry and youth's dreams for a few lambent hours, and now the peaks were far away again. Veiled in the clouds of awakened scepticism and analysis, the peaks were higher than before, and their aspect had forever changed.

A tremor passed in the air between them. Knifing across it came the stab of the doorbell—

anticlimax of everyday routine cutting the wheels of drama from under. Few can stand the swift descent. Joy hesitated, then came forward. Grant hastily captured his hat, which had rolled to the hall floor some time ago, and stood brushing off the dust of which there was a disgraceful amount.

As the door swung open both fell back in different reactions. Jim Dalton stood on the threshold.

“Good evening, Miss Nelson,” he smiled. “I——” His glance travelled past her to Grant.

“This seems to be Miss Nelson’s evening at home,” Grant said evenly. “Good-bye, Joy.”

She watched him signal for the elevator, still brushing the dust from his hat. Grant would probably be a masculine replica of his mother when he was her age——

Jim did not speak until the elevator had sunk from sight. “I was——passing by——and saw the sixth story light on——so I took the chance of interrupting a party.”

“There was no party, as you see,” Joy answered. Her resentment against this man had long since died——had died with her regard for Grant——and instead she felt something she told herself was not quite positive enough to be pleasure. “Do come in; I think it was very nice of you to take this chance. You see,” she continued as she led the way to the living room for the second time in that half hour, “you see. I have had no chance——to thank you for anything.”

“I hate to be thanked,” he said quickly. “There’s no more futile feeling than teetering on one’s toes through anything like that——it makes one feel like such a fool——and then simpering, ‘Oh, please don’t mention it!’ Oh, please, Miss Nelson, don’t make me say that!”

He was talking away from the subject, and she made no further attempt to express her gratitude; words on anything touching that night came with difficulty. He was not looking at her with such persistency that she remembered that her hair was still flowing down her back, scattering hairpins hither and yon. She anchored her arms to her sides against the involuntary hands-flying-to-hair-motion. That would spell a self-conscious guilt. No, she would leave it that way, and he would think she was wearing it unconfined because she had just washed it, or thought it was good for it, or *something*.

“I am going to say something very frank now,” he began, transferring his gaze to her. This time her hands almost did fly to her hair. *Was he going to speak of it?* He continued: “I want to tell you that I know you don’t like me, and never have, and this dropping-in to-night is going to be my positively last appearance. To tell the truth——I wasn’t just passing here at all; I came out on purpose. I had to see you again——to see if you were really all right now——I haven’t seen you since your convalescence, you know. But now that I have——and you’re looking better than I’ve ever seen you——I’m not going to bother you any more by popping around.”

Joy laughed, which rather spoilt the effect of his speech. “You talk as though you were in the habit of shadowing me!”

“Well——once or twice I did take that upon myself——and I know what you must have thought of my officiousness. I didn’t have the right, which I have now assumed really does belong to someone.”

“You mean——Grant? Oh, no.” She brushed the subject aside. “I never disliked you, Jim; I just hadn’t made room for you in my mind.”

She did not realize that the change in his face was partly due to the fact that she had called him by his first name; she was so accustomed to slipping into colloquial terms on short acquaintance, since she had been with Jerry.

“You mean——that you have ‘made room for me in your mind’——now?”

“Why——yes. I didn’t know it, but I have. The reason I didn’t know it——was probably

because I never think of you as a man. I think of you as a friend—who once was a friend indeed to me.”

He did not speak for a short space.

“There are very few girls whom I should care to have as friends. Most girls simply can’t achieve the atmosphere, the uncoloured give-and-take of friendship,—but I have always felt that you would be different.”

“Don’t put it all on the girl!” Joy laughed. “There are men with whom it is just as impossible to establish an—an uncoloured atmosphere.”

“Maybe they have been led to think that’s the only atmosphere that can exist between a man and a girl, by their experience with girls.”

“I wonder why it is,” she mused, “that sooner or later the blame always comes back to us.”

“Well, I’m glad to hear you defend your sex; girls so often think it’s a good line to be witty about girls. When ever I hear a girl say she doesn’t like other girls, I look for something wrong with her.”

“You’re *always* lecturing!” she cried. “Ever since I first met you, you’ve lectured about something!”

He laughed. “I certainly take a long way around saying that I would like you as a friend!”

“I said the same thing myself, a long while ago; so let’s stop arguing about friendship between man and woman, and be it!”

Their minds were not on their argument. Joy was thinking how rushed, or distracted, “or something,” she must have always been, not to notice before how good looking he was. But of course he wasn’t tall, and tall men were “her type.” “He’s a blond, and I’m a blonde,” she told herself. “We’re not the ‘opposites that attract,’ but we can be good friends, just the same.”

If he could have read her thoughts, he would have used them as further proof for his argument; but since one of Joy’s greatest assets was the power of preserving a sweet, listening attitude no matter what went on beneath, he was kept busy, thinking up general subjects to discuss with this anomaly among the girls, one who did not take the initiative in conversation.

When he rose to go, they felt as if they were very old friends already, having matched opinions, likes and dislikes for nearly an hour.

“Remember, this isn’t your last appearance,” said Joy.

“Remember!—You’re musical, aren’t you? You told me at that dance that you were studying music here in town. Well—what do you say we take in some concerts together? And the Symphony—that’ll be fun if only to watch the audience. Would you care?”

“I’m awfully afraid I shan’t know enough to appreciate the Symphony,” she hesitated. “But I know it would be a good thing for me, and I’ll go with you if you’ll promise not to know too much about it.”

“If you could see me! I go—and sit through it—and sometimes I feel like jumping out of my seat—but most of the time I’m vaguely bored. We’ll go together, and maybe combined we can get what we should out of it.”

After he had gone, she went back and sang through the score of Marguerite as if she had had no interruption a little over an hour and a half ago. A little over an hour and a half—had so short a time passed since she had seen Grant, had decided so much, had let so much go out of her life? She could not evoke even a shiver over the blotting out of that vista of her dreams, nothing but a little impatient frown. Things had no right to get so dead, after having been so alive.

Lovely girl, that Félicie Durant; even if Jerry did call her a jellyfish. Her arguments were clear

—to marry now when she had four good years before her which marriage could not replace
—Her voice hesitated on a measure. It sounded almost like her argument with Grant—three
years and a half from her life at this time, which marriage could not replace—

“Oh, but that’s different,” and her voice caught up with the piano accompaniment and spun
heart-satisfying melody—

“Je ris—de me voir
Si belle—en ce miroir——”

VIII

“Say, Joy, can’t you practice your trilling with the door shut?”

Sarah and Joy had met in the kitchenette, about four-thirty in the afternoon. Their encounters were always a matter of routine, and to-day they both happened to strike the same time to search for “afternoon tea.” Sarah had just come to light, and was yawning about in a wrinkled kimono, her hair done up in curlers, her face pettishly grey. There was something positively undressed about Sarah’s face at times like these. Joy had been uptown all day, first at Pa’s, then at her French and Italian lessons. Returning, she had been practicing a trill exercise, not aware that Sarah was arising a little later than usual.

“I’m sorry,” she said now, and chewed a cold English muffin—the kind one buys at the corner delicatessen. “I usually close the door when I practice, anyway. I didn’t think anyone was home.”

“It certainly is nerve-racking to live in the house with a singer,” Sarah complained. She had caught sight of her face in a mirror, which added to the drag of her voice. “Of course I know you have to practice and all that, Joy, but now that your voice has gotten so much bigger it carries everywhere—simply everywhere!”

“Glad to hear it, that’s what I’m after,” snapped Joy, and bit into another discouraged muffin. “It’s hard enough to work all the time without being picked on for it. To hear you talk, you’d think I sang all day.”

“Now you’re getting cross. I suppose singers have to be temperamental, though.” Receiving no response to this, Sarah twirled her infinitesimal braid and tried again: “It’s funny to see you try to be so earnest. No girl with the looks you know you have can stand the strain of the student’s life without weakening and breaking away once in a while. And you can’t tell me that you and that Jim Dalton go to concerts every time you leave here.”

“We never have gotten along well together, have we, Sarah? I think the best way for us to do is not to talk when we’re around each other, unless we can’t avoid it.”

Sarah stared at Joy, incredulous that the mist over the animosity of the two had at last blown away.

“I mean it,” said Joy, “I need every bit of my energy for my work. I can’t waste any of it on you. I’m sure you feel the same way about me. So, let’s not—waste any energy.”

Sarah, regarding her beneath incendiary brows, was just taking on energy. “It’s true we’ve never gotten on together. It started the first day you came and put Packy away in your reticule. You walked away with him, reticule and all. Packy was one of the best playmates I ever had—his hand and his pocket-book had well oiled connections. And now through you he’s queered himself, and will never blow around here again.”

“I always felt Packy was at the bottom of it. But I don’t care. I’ve done my next-best to get along with you, and you too have made somewhat of an effort, but we can’t get along—so let’s not waste any more energy.”

She walked out of the kitchenette, trembling. After a day of unmitigated, although varied, work, her nerves were rigid, and had given away at the first little jab.

So far, the fall had been one of steady labour, punctuated only by Sarah’s jeers and by the music to which she had listened with Jim. Galli-Curci had come, a marvel and a thrill.

And then, a little after that, they went to hear Frieda Hempel. If Galli-Curci’s voice was silver, Hempel’s was a rainbow shot with colours that danced or remained steadfast at will. Joy was powerless to compare the shimmering of her Proch’s Variations with the crystal joy of Galli-

Curci in the same song. And the roguish dance of her “Fêtes Galantes,” where by winking she upset the Bostonians to such an extent that they made her repeat it. The stark tragedy of “The Linden Tree,” and “Home, Sweet Home,” at the end. Galli-Curci had played it for herself, and sung it gingerly, with such changes that Jim remarked: “Do you like ‘Home Sweet Home au naturel or maître d’hôtel?’” “I don’t like it at all,” Joy had said; “I wish people wouldn’t keep singing it—it’ll fly to pieces any minute, it’s so used up.” But when Frieda Hempel sang it, it took the aspect of a new song—new in its charm, old in its universal appeal—Joy looked around her at the faces turned to the blue-velvet figure pouring forth the hackneyed words; there was not a face that did not have a tense, strained expression—hardly a person who was not winking back a tear or letting them come unashamed. “Home, Sweet Home,” at which the critics groaned. . . .

She and Jim did not look at each other until they were making their way out. Then Jim spoke. “Made you think—that the only important thing in life—was something we both are missing—didn’t it?”

“Oh, to move people like that!” said Joy.

The fall concerts set her to work more furiously than ever. She had not had the opportunity to compare her voice with others, to gain a proper perspective, before. Pa remarked that she was actually becoming musical in leaps and bounds; every week now showed a gain in voice, technique and musical understanding.

But little incidents like Sarah pricked; and when one was bending every part of one’s self to work, one had to be perfectly frank about elbowing little incidents aside. So she justified herself, the remainder of that day, for taking the stand on which she had walked out of the kitchenette. Sarah went out for the evening before Jerry had come back to the apartment, and did not come to tell Joy where she was going before she started, as had been the desultory custom. Joy was relieved. Then Sarah had accepted her suggestion. It would really be better for both of them.

The next morning she was out before there were any signs of life in the apartment, which was quite customary. She stayed long uptown, as she attended an afternoon concert and then ate dinner alone at a cafeteria on Huntington Avenue. It was late when she finally let herself into the apartment. Jerry darted at her in the hall—a wild looking Jerry, hair roughed up until her head was one bristle.

‘Joy—for God’s sake—I thought you’d never come back. *Do you know where Sal is?*’

“Why, no, of course not. She hasn’t been with me. What’s the mat——”

“When did you see her last?”

“Why—yesterday afternoon.”

“She didn’t say where she was going?”

“No. I didn’t see her when she went out. What——”

“You didn’t even see her?” Jerry collapsed on the hall table, leaning against it with every sagging muscle, her freckles starting out hurriedly on her white face. “Listen—When I got in this A.M. I looked in her room to see if she was in yet. She wasn’t. It was pretty late, but I didn’t think anything about it and went to bed and slept like a fool. Went there when I woke up at nine-thirty and—she wasn’t there. Bed, room, everything just the same way it was last night. Her American Beauty evening dress the only one of her clothes gone—I looked last night to see what she’d worn, and that was missing—and now—it still is. *Where is she?*”

“You are sure she hadn’t come in—and gone out again——”

“In her American Beauty evening dress? That would mean she came in at three A.M. the

soonest she could have come and I not heard her—and gotten up at nine at the latest she could have and I not heard her—and gone out in evening dress and not come back yet! It's nearly nine now."

Joy considered, putting down her music roll. "You don't know who she went out with last night?"

Jerry shook her head. "If I'd only been home when she started——"

The shriek of the telephone scared them both out of their positions. "You answer," said Joy, and together they shivered to the closet down the hall in whose privacy they had their telephone conversations. Jerry lifted up the receiver. "Hello, oh, hello, Davy. She isn't here just now. Oh, that's all right, we *were* going to that dance to-night. Do you know by any chance who Sal went out with last night? You do?" She wound the telephone cord around one finger and then watched it tighten as she pulled until the finger grew livid. "Oh, will they be around at the dance to-night? Oh, well—you needn't bother. Oh, all right, only I haven't put on my gingham yet, so don't make the poor kid race all the way. See you later."

She slammed down the receiver and turned to Joy. "That was Davy—he and Wigs were taking us to that Tech dance to-night, you know. He called up to say they were sending a Freshman who has a car, over to get us—they have to bone for some nine o'clock exam tomorrow till the last minute. Come on into my room till I get into something."

"But what—who——" stuttered Joy as she followed her into the wilderness of clothes that was Jerry's room, and watched her pull a glittering green sequin dress from the collection—"What did he tell you about——"

"He said he knew that Sal was going to the Toast and Jam last night—there was some big celebration there—with Crawf Harris and Dum-Dum Barnes, because they had asked him to come along too with a girl he had a date with, but he had theatre tickets and so they didn't——"

"And now what are you going to do?"

Jerry raked her hair smooth with two military brushes, her latest idea. "Do? Why, go to that dance and get those damn little rounders to tell me what went on, where they left Sal, and so on—and believe me, there'll have to be some fluent explaining!"

"I don't understand." Joy moved about around the debris of the room, too nervous to sit down. "But I—I can't stay here, Jerry, while you——" She vanished from the room. When she returned some minutes later, she wore hat and coat. Jerry, who was swiftly puckering up a split in a silk stocking made by putting her foot in it too abruptly, jerked an inquiring eyebrow. "What in——"

"Jerry—I know you can look after yourself and do everything and always have; but nevertheless there are times—if we are unlucky enough to have those times—when a man is absolutely necessary—a man we can trust. I think this is one of those times—and I've telephoned Jim Dalton to come out here as quickly as possible."

Jerry nodded. "I'm glad you did. It—it does look like one of those times—and Wigs and Davy wouldn't be even up to zero on a proposition like this."

The two girls sat waiting in a silence broken only once or twice.

"Of course—it may come to nothing." This from Jerry. "There must be all sorts of reasons——"

"Oh, there must be reasons. But——" Joy could not throw off the horror that was settling upon her. "But—where else could she be, and why? She has no other girl friends—oh, *Jerry!* Why, of course—there's Félicie Durant!"

"I called her up at noontime," Jerry droned. "She hadn't seen her for a week or so."

The bell rang finally.

"Bet it's the freshman; freshmen always are early"; from Jerry.

But it was Jim. Just the sight of him made Joy a little more calm. He was the sort of person to whom one turned naturally; he gave out that "quiet strength" which is too often imposed upon to carry the burdens of others. A few swift questions, more or less hysterical answers, and the story was before him. A moment, and Jerry found the generalship taken away from her as Jim gave orders of procedure. He had not completed mapping out their line of action when the freshman arrived, a freshman who looked rather stunned to find instead of the described pair of girls in evening dress, a girl in street clothes, with a man, and one lone girl with pale face, fiery eyes, and bobbed hair, who was wrapped in a velvet cloak from which protruded a peacock fan—a girl who treated him, doggone it! like a regular chauffeur. She might at least have come in front with him and left the two street-clads by themselves; but no, they all sat in back, whispering until he hauled his car into place at the end of a moderately long line in a narrow Boston street. Then, and then only, did the girl with the bobbed hair condescend to speak to him.

"Do you happen to be familiar with Dum-Dum Barnes and Crawf Harris?"

"Not too familiar," he replied cautiously. "They're Seniors." Then, as they made no move to disembark: "Aren't you coming in?"

"That's as might be," drawled that bobbed-haired girl. "You can go in and see if Crawf and Dum-Dum are there. If they are, you can tell 'em to come out here Q. E. D.—if not, come out and tell *us* Q. E. D. As for Wigs and Davy—if they've got there yet, why, you can tell 'em I'm located here."

He went off, muttering "Gotcha," more than ever convinced that she thought he was a chauffeur. When he returned five minutes later, the three were in the same rigid expectancy in which he had left them, with that continued stillness which denotes an uninterrupted absence of conversation. The freshman cleared his throat. Decidedly there was something very cagey about this whole affair.

"I—well, I can't locate Crawf and Dum-Dum," he said. "They're Seniors, you know; I don't know them very well; and everyone's dancing in the dark in there, so I can't make out. Wigs and Dave don't seem to have gotten there yet——"

"Then we'll come in—I can see in the dark better than any other way," and one by one the three climbed from the car. The freckled faced girl turned to him with a sudden, grandiloquent sweep. "Thank you very much for the use of your car, sir. I shall mention you favourably in my next letter to the *Transcript*."

The three were gone, and the freshman, after a bewildered grunt, drove off to the Copley, where a party of his own kind awaited him. Not for him as yet the Tech fraternity dances.

As they entered the hall, Joy caught her breath. Never before had she seen such a spectacle. Three wide rooms were given up to dancing—the orchestra playing in the hall—sole illumination, the dim one that filtered from the hall into two of the rooms, and as for the third, it remained in blackness relieved only by ghostly dresses clasped to white shirtfronts. The three stared from the doorway for a moment of silent fascination. It was like some hazy, voluptuous dream—feverish music, quickening the throbbing of desire—the little sigh of figures interlocked, moving in time to the throb, in the dripping black velvet of the dark. It was something one might have imagined in the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

"Barbaric," Joy murmured as she caught Jim's eye and knew she was flushing—flushing

under the music, which quickened the uneven pulse of memory.

“No—not barbaric,” said Jim. “Barbarians are—more direct.” He turned to Jerry. “Do you see them yet?” She shook her head, eyes straining after the dancers. “That freshman had no initiative. He ought to have——” He strode over to the orchestra, spoke to the boy at the piano. A few more bars, and the music stopped, the pianist tapping on the drum for quiet.

“I am asked to announce,” he said shrilly, “that Mr. Barnes and Mr. Harris are wanted in the hall.”

The music took up its beat, and the dancers in the dark, who had barely stopped, began again.

“I should have thought of paging them, only I’m so rattled,” said Jerry. “Thank God for Jim.”

He came back to them; through another opening into the hall charged two lads with question and not much else on their wide young faces. Jerry stepped forward and spread her fan in front of them, an excellent substitute for buttonholing, as they drew up with a start.

“Hullo, Jerry,” said one. The other said nothing; he was presumably Dum-Dum.

“This is them,” said Jerry, with a jerk of the fan. “You two, this is Miss Nelson and Mr. Dalton. And we want to know right now where Sal Saunders is.”

Dum-Dum opened his mouth and closed it.

“Did—didn’t she get back?” Crawf demanded, jaw hanging loosely. “You aren’t stringing us, Jerry? Trying to get a rise?”

“Nix!” Jerry snarled, her wide lips curling back from her teeth. “Where did you leave her?”

Crawf looked at Dum-Dum, whose speechless countenance gave forth no help. “Why—why—we—I—Haven’t you heard a word from her? Don’t you know where she is?”

“We do not,” said Jim. “And you two, since you are the last two known to be with her, are responsible.”

“Jesus!” said Dum-Dum, and collapsed upon the stairway.

“I’ll swear—I’ll swear—if she’s gotten into anything, it’s her own fault!” Crawf’s sagged jaw did not close with this chivalrous utterance.

“Buzz on with the tale, you little gnat!” Jerry cried, threatening him with her fan. He retreated, a few steps.

“I—I—well, we went down to the Toast and Jam.”

“We know that—go on.”

“And—and I suppose we did get pretty fuzzy. You know Sal—you know she never can hold it. We told her to cut down, but you know how much effect that has on her; pretty soon she was so blotto she was making eyes at a couple of old boys in the corner. Isn’t that so, Dum-Dum? Wasn’t she blotto?”

Dum-Dum nodded.

“The old boys got fresh and we were feeling good, so—well, I guess we got mixed up pretty well. Well, then we thought we’d come away, in fact the head waiter or some such stuff requested our departure, all of us, so we eased out. Got out to the car and the old boys’ was next. Of course Dum-Dum couldn’t start it.”

“The old boys’ car?”

“Nope; ours. Sal got sore right off—said we were doing it on purpose. The old boys stayed in their car and watched the fun. Dum-Dum got under the car, but that didn’t do any good. Finally I got under too. Dunno how long we were fooling around there—my pocket lamp burnt out—but we heard Sal talking. Thought she was talking to us, so we didn’t listen. Then all of a

sudden we heard some brakes grinding a tune, and Sal yelling she'd never get back to town with us so she was going with them. I rolled out from under and saw the tail-lights of the old boys' car spinning away." He stopped and looked at them appealingly. "What could we do? We couldn't speed up and follow after. All we could do was sit around and cuss Sal—which we did, complete. Then we worked on the car some more till somehow Dum-Dum slipped a cog and fixed it."

"Let me get this straight," said Jim. "You take a girl down to a road house, get her drunk, and then let her sail off with two strange men, having no other objection than cussing?"

"What else could we do? We couldn't get a taxi and follow them up—it was no free garage."

"But there were other cars, and owners who could be made to understand."

"Whadyoumean, understand?" Crawl had been regarding Jim with increasing objection. "Perhaps you're in the habit of stealing cars from understanding owners. I don't get that way."

"And seeing her go off, you thought no more of the matter—didn't even call up to-day to see if she had reached home safely."

"We're having exams——" began Dum-Dum defensively, still on the staircase.

"I'll admit—it did occur to me to call up, but we've been so busy——"

"Busy dancing," Jerry supplemented.

"And honestly, it never for a minute entered my head but what Sal would get back; she's a girl who takes darn good care of herself——"

"We are living in strange times indeed if a man thinks a girl can take care of herself under such circumstances," said Jim.

"What did the old boys look like?" Jerry snapped.

Again Crawl looked at Dum-Dum for aid, but Dum-Dum closed his eyes with a weary air.

"I—I swear I don't remember. They were about fifty—or maybe forty, or thirty-eight——"

"Or even seventy——" Jerry bit in.

"Hang it, no! They had teeth and hair and things. Grey hair or getting grey—that sort of stuff. One of 'em wore glasses and one of 'em smoked rotten cigars."

Jim squared off, looking at them in unhurried, but imperative fashion. "Have you two got your car here? Well, get your evening wraps and come along with us while we use it. We're going to the Toast and Jam—to see if the people there know anything more, or can remember better than you, about these two men. And on the way down you can try to call back a better description of them."

Jim was of compact build, although so thin that he had not an ounce of flesh that could be trained down. There was something about him that looked very forceful as he faced the two boys.

"I—we both have girls at this dance——" Crawl began, while Dum-Dum looked wildly around from four corners of his eyes.

"Well, get two stags to take 'em, if you feel any responsibility about 'em—tell 'em anything—but come as quickly as you can."

The two boys vanished through the opening.

"They're still dancing in the dark," said Joy monotonously.

Jim consulted his watch. "We've only been here a little over six minutes."

"I never saw anything like it—whole dances in the dark. Do they keep it that way all evening?"

"Oh, no." Jerry was weaving with her fan an accompaniment to the music, unconsciously

swaying back and forth in rhythm as she did so. “They turn ’em on after awhile. It gives you a new sensation, anyway—That’s good jazz, I’ll tell anyone.”

That was it. Dancers in the dark—in search of a new sensation. Jerry was beckoning to a man who had come out to speak to the orchestra. “Oh, Fred,” she said, easily: “do me a favor? When Wigs and Davy see fit to blow in, will you tell them that we got sick of waiting and have gone out with Crawf and Dum-Dum?”

“I’ll do that little thing for you; but they’ll be fit to be tied,” Fred responded with a grin. He stayed carrying on a light badinage with Jerry until the two boys reappeared, coats over their arms, their broad, mild countenances for once overrun with emotions, which were added to as Fred thrust them parting darts about how Wigs and Davy would pay them out for playing the fresh young Lochinvars.

The two boys sat in front, and the trio sat together in back as before. Jerry was still humming the tune that the orchestra had been playing—

“All the knowledge learned at College
Still that don’t explain——”

Jerry had found time to wish that she might have been among the dancers; Jerry, the excitement-eater. They had passed a movie palace letting out crowds from its first show. Excitement-eaters all . . . who for want of excitement of their own, had gone to swallow down excitement in reels—of indiscriminate kinds. Indiscriminate excitement by proxy—excitement that exhausted or stimulated, but created the appetite for excitement at first hand.

Jerry stopped humming. “If only this hadn’t happened at the time of the police-strike. But what can those Home Guard birds do?”

“It may not have to come to that,” said Jim.

They veered away from the city outskirts, and started pounding down the State Road towards the South Shore. It was cold, and the boys in front drove with sullen swiftness.

“I feel somehow—as if this were the end of the world,” said Joy miserably. Such awful things are happening that the world’s just got to topple over sometime—and to-night feels just like it.”

“I wonder what *is* going to happen to the world,” said Jim. “Every year since I can remember people have been saying we’ve been going from bad to worse, and I used to think they were old fogies; but I can see the descent myself, it’s getting so rapid—and I can’t be an old fogy—not at twenty-four.”

“Funny how we’ve all gone back on the way we used to feel during the war,” said Jerry. “It’s just as if the world had turned a double back somersault.”

“Everyone admits that the world is turning around too fast, and that everyone’s got their eyes turned in upon themselves too hard, but then they go right on,” said Joy somewhat pointedly. The memory of Jerry’s evident reluctance to leave the music was still repugnant.

The three lapsed into a silence supported by the sucking gasps of the tires as they slid along over the well oiled highway. After fifteen minutes had passed in quiet travel, their progress became slower, the boys in front casting uncertain eyes up each side road they passed.

“What’s wrong?” Jim called to them.

“Why—I’ve forgotten just where we turn,” Crawf responded. “Sal pointed out the way last night—we’d never been down before, you know——”

Dum-Dum put on the brakes and came to a stop. There was a lone man wandering along the road, coming into the spotlight with which the front lamps were cleaving ahead.

“Where do you turn off to get to the Toast and Jam?”

The wayfarer jerked his thumb. “Next to your right, an’ straight through the cross roads. But you won’t find no toast nor no jam there!”

The echoes of his cackling appreciation of his own wit followed them even through the cross roads.

The “Toast and Jam” proved to be a large, rambling white farmhouse, nestled on a hill, with a dense thicket of automobiles flanking the barn. Riotous music surged from the windows, and a man’s loud voice singing.

“You girls stay out here,” said Jim, “Mr. Barnes will stay with you.”

“Not a prayer!” Jerry cried, leaping out. “I want to ask a few little questions myself. If I don’t look in on this, what was the sense of my cutting the dance?”

“True,” said Jim, and met Joy’s eyes for a moment as he helped her descend. Jerry had joined the two boys, and Joy and Jim brought up the rear.

“It’s just that if you saw anyone you knew here, they’d wonder what you were doing in a place like this,” Jim said suddenly.

“They’d be here, too,” she retorted, “And although I may not have been to this particular place, the first of the summer I thought I took in every road house there was. Goodness knows that I long ago stopped worrying about appearances!”

This was the sort of speech that would have made Grant’s hair rise, she reflected, the minute she spoke; Grant would have thrown back some icy remark that would only have goaded her on. But Jim looked down at her without speaking, and something in his keen eyes made her feel very wriggly.

They entered the Toast and Jam. A low-ceilinged white hallway through which they looked in to a long, cozily gotten-up dining-room, with tables thrust along the sides. A colored orchestra at one end with a negro bawling out the words of the selection, and a piebald mass of dancers, exercise of contact whipping their blood higher and higher, the heat from the low-studded room growing with motion, so that they had to cling but stickily; but they clung. An assortment of all ages, having a preponderance of older men with more or less younger women whose general get-ups were equivocal.

“Do you remember your waiter? And find whoever it was who requested you to leave last night,” said Jim to Crawf, who slid into the dining room. Jerry streaked after him, her fan waving in determination, and Jim followed, with a request that Dum-Dum stay with Joy.

They waited in a silence that grew so appalling, with nothing to watch but the shivering of the dancers to the syncopated shriek of the orchestra, that Joy finally said in a tone as nearly ferocious as she could make it: “Do they call you Dum-Dum after the bullet or because you’re just plain *dumb*?” At his amazement, she hurled on; “It must be because you’re dumb—otherwise I don’t understand—how you could have been so careless—of a nice girl!”

He opened his mouth and closed it. His silence had suddenly changed colour. It was almost as if he had; and she read it as easily as if he had spoken. They were not so—careful—with Sarah as they might have been with “nice” girls. Jerry had diagnosed it—the key of their relationship with men was that the men acted as if they were among themselves. There had been just that careless oblivion, that utter lack of the protective instinct toward Sarah; and the idea of it was so horribly perverted that she gave a little shiver.

“Aha, shimmying?” said Dum-Dum, finding speech at last. “Music too much for you? Come

on, let's dance till the others get through."

She looked at him so strangely that his inviting pose disintegrated and he toppled back. "That's—the *first thing I've heard you say*. Must I take that—as the keynote to your character?"

He was regarding her with alarm and now spoke soothingly. "Oh all right; but it's darn good music!"

"*Good music!*" She checked herself. After all, silence was preferable to talking in different tongues.

Jerry came back to them on feet that no longer lilted to the music, her face sagging white against the painted masks of the girls on the floor. Crawl followed with a defiant expression, and Jim came last.

"They don't remember a thing," said Jerry; "they're perfect nitwits, the whole nest of 'em. Every waiter spilled a different description—the head waiter doesn't even remember whether they were old or young."

"It seems to be the custom here," said Jim, "to forget things like that!"

"But the cash you forked out would have tickled their memory if there had been anything to tickle," said Jerry.

"What can we do now?" Joy asked limply. Somehow she had felt that coming down here would solve everything—that it was going to end up smoothly, things would explain themselves and roll into place, just like the ending of a story.

The five stood in an indecisive little group, looking at each other. A waiter who had been darting his head around a corner to survey them at intervals now darted himself around and approached them with a velvet-covered but none the less insistent air. "If your party is not coming inside——?"

They left as indecisively, and drove home in amazement. It had not occurred to them that they would not be able to read the dark pages of this affair. The sensation of utter futility is new to youth, and momentarily stuns. Until they had followed up every avenue of investigation left them, they had evaded the wings of horror that had been hovering ahead. Now there was room for all that awfulness. They spoke in low tones, the situation becoming more hopeless as they discussed it. Jim said the publicity of the police was not to be desired; Crawl and Dum-Dum, abject almost to cringing by now, said that of course they would finance investigation through a private detective agency, which proposition was speedily approved by Jerry. Joy sat in the tentacles of a memory that added horror. *What were the last words she had ever said to Sarah?* A practical request to keep out of her life, and she, Joy, would do the same. Under the calcium ray of this dreadful evening's events, her words were conceited, selfish, ill-tempered—self-sufficient. If one only knew, when words were flying around, that those were the last words that person would ever hear from one's mouth—how many things would remain unsaid!

A repressed goodnight to the two guilty youths, and leaving Jim, who was to go straight to the detective office. She and Jerry went to Sarah's room of one accord, then wandered aimlessly through the empty-seeming apartment before going to bed. . . .

"She'll turn up," said Jerry; but her voice hung fire.

She did not turn up. Days thickened into weeks, with the detective bringing steady reports of investigation along a blank wall. Something that he had said on undertaking the case quivered in Joy's memory.

"A missing-girl proposition is almost hopeless, you know, when twelve thousand disappear every year."

“Twelve thousand a year—in this country!” she cried, and he nodded.

“So you see—it gets pretty difficult.”

It was a strange thing—this voidness that had been Sarah. When Sarah had been there, their lives were as separate as if they had been two strange boarders in the same boarding house. She had never found anything in common with Sarah; she had never tried to. She had disliked her, and not done her best to conceal this dislike. Now Sarah was gone, and her absence made no ripple in Joy’s life. How could she miss her absence, having never really felt her presence—having even suggested that they ignore each other’s presence? But her going left Joy with a queer feeling of self-hatred. Sarah had been a lonely figure, a drifter on the churning waters of excitement; a drifter with nothing upon which to cling, knowing no more than to keep her head above the rising tide. And Joy had faithfully imitated the performance related of certain people, who, some nineteen hundred years ago, had passed by on the other side.

Passing by on the other side was glossed over nowadays as: “It isn’t any of my business.” Everyone did it about everyone. In this new analysis she wondered—if she had not been passing Jerry by on the other side also. The answer rose automatically to her throat: “It isn’t any of my business.”

IX

It was after the Christmas holidays, which Joy had worked through with no let-up save Christmas day at home with her father, that Pa announced a change in schedule.

“You are working too steadily,” he said. “You never do anything else; you will turn into a machine; then you will no longer be a girl, and the warmth and glory of your appeal will be gone. Like that! Moreover, it takes a fine shade of quality from your voice; I want you to use it as an instrument, of course, but I think too much of how hard you have worked, and how dull your skin and eyes are getting, when I hear you.”

“Do you really think I’m losing my quality?” Joy demanded.

He laughed. “There—do you see what you just said? That shows you are turning into a little tuning fork, my dear. A *girl* would have cried: ‘Are my skin and eyes *really* dull?’ or at least looked in the mirror in front of you.” Before her attitude of unrelaxed question, he grew serious. “No, your quality is not as yet impaired in the slightest; and you are soaring along so swiftly that I cannot believe you have been with me for so few months. But a good teacher can see a fault pending before it takes possession; and as I have so often remarked, I am a good teacher. You need a change.”

“Are you going to send me home for a rest?” she asked in swift antagonism.

“No. You are going to New York. Take some friends along with you if you wish; stay at the Belmont, where all the *nice* Bostonians stay when they deign to turn their faces westward; go to the opera; go shopping; in short, have not a rest, but a vacation.”

“New York!” she breathed. “Oh, Pa—do you really mean it?”

He nodded. “And I want you to sing for my baby.” He mentioned a name that was a household word for glory of song, a name that shone high and clear in the eminence where only the truly great stars remain, while others tremble for a day and then are gone.

“Sing—for—her!” Joy gasped. “Oh, Pa, I couldn’t—not yet!”

“Little Joy—you will find as you go on, that the greatest ones will always be the easiest and kindest before whom to sing. They know the real elements, and can distinguish lack of training from lack of endowment; and they know of how much value is encouragement, along the weary ladder of the artist. I shall write her a letter, and she will send you word at the Belmont when to come.”

As she thought it over, she could not remember when she had been so excited. Jerry shared her anticipation, and announced that she was going also; it was a good opportunity to select models for her next sale.

“We can get Félicie, too,” she said; “It’s about time she went over to see Greg again.”

Neither voiced the mutual thought, that two of them going to New York alone seemed incomplete. Félicie made a third—possibly a more harmonious third than the other who had silently dropped from their lives.

Félicie acceded to their plans, and Joy wrote her father for money for the trip. His answering check and letter came when the three girls were all in Jerry’s room, Jerry “toning up” several of Félicie’s costumes. Joy read the letter with half her attention on Félicie’s bewitchingness in a pale green velvet that shone dully like moonlight on an even lawn, throwing out her colouring and features in rich relief. Suddenly a name on the page caught her attention. She looked again and then read the paragraph over slowly:

“I hope while you are in New York that you will see your cousin Mrs. Eustace Drew, who was Mabel Lancaster. The Lancasters of whom you have heard me speak; they were your

mother's cousins once removed, and we have not kept up the relationship as she would have wished. I have written Mabel that you are coming, and she will undoubtedly call on you at the Belmont."

She sat for a moment watching Jerry swirl the velvet on Félicie into marvelous lines. Mabel Lancaster—who had come into Charlette's for her trousseau, with her brother, Phil Lancaster—of whom Jerry still thought with unquenchable flame. Her first impulse was to show Jerry the letter, share her surprise at this identification of New York cousins she had heard her father mention so many times. Then she held herself back. What if cousin Mabel would forget to call upon her—what if she wasn't the same one, after all—Joy had forgotten the married name Jerry had given. So she tore the letter into tiny bits, and prepared for the trip with excitement that grew to boiling point as she savoured the amazing possibilities of the coincidence, if coincidence it was.

They took the midnight train, landing in New York in time for breakfast, which they ate at Childs' opposite the Belmont.

"Although even this place is getting too expensive," Jerry grumbled.

They giggled all through the meal from sheer light-headedness at being off together. The French waitress had brought them their griddle-cakes, smiled at them in delight, and said as they left: "You act like all young girls should—happy and gay." This set them off with renewed impetus, and after installing their luggage at the Belmont and as Jerry said "spreading more around in the way of tips than we ate for our breakfast," they spent the morning going through the Fifth Avenue shops, seeing all "the latest models" with an economical thoroughness that left enraged saleswomen behind them. In the afternoon Félicie curled up for a rest.

"I never sleep on sleepers, and if I don't look my best, Greg will notice it and say it's because I've been running myself ragged in Boston," she explained, burrowing her head down under the covers, from which came forth the muffled request: "Please don't open any windows; you know I can't sleep where there's too much air around; it distracts my attention."

Jerry had made arrangements for tea with two Princeton men, and Joy had willingly consented to go with her. She was just in the mood for squeezing the orange of her good time in New York dry.

They met the Princetonites in the lobby—two well-tailored youths, with that sleek, parted-in-the-middle college expression. The taller of the two, one Steve Mitchell, combed Joy up and down in one competent sweep of the eyes, and annexed her, while the other, poetically called Harry Hanigan, followed Jerry, who had done no more than greet them airily, shove Joy at them just as airily, then make her way to the nearest door, which fronted on the line of taxis.

"This place always acts as if it were the Methodist quarterly conference," Harry complained loudly. "Come on, Jerry; let's put in a little pep."

He stepped with Jerry inside the swinging door, and pushed it, starting off so fast they had to dart around with it in self-protection—or so it seemed. A gentleman around forty, of a comfortable figure, had happened to be entering the swinging doors on the other side, and he too was forced to dart around for self-protection. But whereas his expression was varied, Jerry and Harry seemed to be enjoying themselves. The pace of the revolving doors increased; it almost looked as if the gentleman of no longer comfortable proportions were running a marathon, while the two-in-one on the other side sped over more merrily.

"Why—they're doing it on *purpose!*" Joy exclaimed.

Her companions looked about them at the crowd of grinning bellboys collecting, together with the scattering of guests who were pretending not to watch while keeping tabs on every

round. "I should think Harry'd get sick of this; he's done it in almost every hotel in New York," he said restfully, and waited. The pace slackened; soon the two wedged themselves out of the pinwheel, and waited until, crimson-faced, the third party in the proceedings flew out and bore down upon them.

"Awfully sorry, sir," said Harry earnestly. "I got packed in with this lady by mistake, and we were so confused we started whirling around—you can see how that would be—and then I lost my head and lost count——"

The intent to kill was by no means abated in the eye of the flaming one. With a hasty, "By George, Mary, we must catch the train; we've lost a lot of time with this gentleman here!" Harry seized Jerry and drifted through the revolving doors once more. No one went after them. Joy and Steve found them by a taxi outside, Harry leaning up against it in a Napoleonic attitude.

"Was that neat, or was it not?" he hailed them triumphantly. Steve helped the girls into the taxi, pushed Harry inside, and said to the man: "Drive to the Astor roof."

"Where's that?" the driver asked, turning a helpless expression upon him.

"Why,—you drive to the Hotel Astor, and then just keep on driving up to the roof." Steve spoke sweetly, considerately, as one might to a child, then climbed in and banged the door.

"Just for that, he'll go the long way around," Harry complained, peering out at the meter as they started off.

"You have such cheap ideas, Harry!" said Dave. "Jerry knows us, of course; but I was going to make Miss Nelson think we were millionaires."

"Never mind—we'll make the waiters at the Astor think we're millionaires. Not in the obvious way! But by the good old method of gas. What do you say—are you game, Jerry?"

"The waiters don't listen the way they used to," Jerry objected.

"Oh, you haven't been around with us for some time! Look here; I—I'll be the Western magnate; I've got a whacking black cigar I've been keeping just for this. Jerry, you look as though you could have come from most anywhere; you'll be my wife, and I probably picked you up in some mining camp while I was getting rich, or something. See? Act with that as a background. We're the recent rich, that want anything that's high-priced or has a fancy name. Get it?"

"And I," Steve contributed, "will be a New York crest-rider—gay young rounder—look down on you of course, but keen to wangle the contract out of you through this social means."

"Contract! Oh, yes, there's got to be a contract!"

"Cer-tain-ly. A million dollar one. We've got to make this party as doggy as possible. And Miss Nelson here can be my fiancée—I've dragged her along to impress her with my importance—you'll be typical New York yearling, Miss Nelson, bored with anybody but your own set, bored with business, furious at me for bringing you, try to get all the men at the other tables to look at you, then turn 'em down with a haughty stare—you know."

Jerry stood up on the taxi, struggling with herself. "I am nothing if not artistic," she said; "and if I'm to be a mining-camp-varnished-with-dollars-product, I shall look the part."

"That's one of your best points, Jerry," approved Steve. "You do a thing up right."

She sat down again, barely in time before they drew up at the Astor and poured forth. Joy caught her breath in an abortive laugh, as they solemnly filed through the luxurious lobby, Jerry leading as usual. In a few swift touches, Jerry had changed herself from the breezy mondaine upon whom everything naturally looked right and leads to the harmony of that elusive completeness that is style, to the woman who, with obvious' means and as obvious a wish to look well, pathetically falls just short of the mark. Her skirt sagged, ever so little, but still

condemning enough; the buttons on the coat of her duveteen suit were fitted loosely in the wrong buttonholes; her hat was tilted back ingenuously, revealing a wide expanse of forehead, and she had pinned her hair in here and there so that the remains of its bobbed audacity had the appearance of little ends that had messily strayed from their moorings. Her gloves were partly unbuttoned, and one flapped as she walked. Even her walk had changed—it was a businesslike stride, with “getting-there” written all over her hastening back.

“Not a girl in a hundred would show she could look like that,” said Steve, in critical approval, as he kept pace with Joy in behind. “No wonder Jerry’s an institution that never fails.”

As they reached the roof Harry pulled out his cigar, a huge black affair that he stuck in his mouth at an angle of forty-five degrees. With cunning eye he marked out the head waiter and bore down upon him, thumbs in his waist-coat pocket, twirling his fingers. “We want the best table in the place,” he said, speaking through the cigar, at which the waiter tried not to look. “No expense shall be spared!”

He swaggered as the waiter hastily led them to a corner table. Joy was about to sink down, conscious that forks were being suspended in midair all about them, when Jerry put in a word.

“I don’t like this table, Bill,” she said querulously. “I want to be out in the middle where I can see everything that goes on, I do.”

“Waiter, did you hear my wife? What my wife says goes! Nothing’s too good for her!” Harry turned fiercely upon the waiter, jerking his cigar up and down in time to his words. The head waiter, all apologies, conducted them to a more centrally located table, and beckoned to a lesser menial, who helped install them. Jerry gave a bereft wail.

“Where’s the flowers! We haven’t got no flowers! Look, Bill, at that table *there* they got flowers!”

Her fingers pointed firmly to an adjoining table, all eyes of which were already fixed upon them with that passionate interest that only Americans display in the affairs of others.

“Now, Rosie, didn’t I tell you not to point at things with your fingers?” Harry admonished in a penetrating lower tone.

“Well, a fork wasn’t handy; the man ain’t set the table yet,” Jerry responded.

“Let us order,” interposed Steve in a suave, glossing-it-over tone, as the waiter thrust the menu before them.

“Just rustle us the best tea on the premises, young feller,” said Harry to the waiter, with a wave of the hand. “With all the fixin’s; see?”

Jerry interposed once more. “Say, Bill, I want a merring glass. Does that come with the tea?”

“A meringue glacé,” said Steve smoothly to the by now distracted waiter.

“What kind does madame prefer?”

“Kind?” Jerry looked bewildered. “Is there different kinds? Can’t I just have a plain merring glass?”

“A vanilla one, perhaps,” said Steve with a reassuring smile directed first at her and then at the waiter. Then, as the waiter fluttered away, leaving several around pouring water and adjusting the table, and others poised near by with their ears cocked, Steve leaned across the table, and addressed Harry in a loud, confidential tone:

“Rather a pleasant idea of yours, Mr.—er—Billings, to combine business with afternoon tea.”

“Well, I hope your girl and my wife get to be real good friends,” said Harry cordially. “I can remember when a million-dollar contract would ’a’ looked pretty big to me.”

"It is practically certain, then, that we have underbid the—the Standard Oil Company on this?" Steve demanded.

"Lemme tell you, young man, underbiddin' don't always mean you get a million-dollar contract. Not by a jugful!"

"Bill, remember there is ladies present!" from Jerry.

"Rosie, we're talkin' in business terms now, an' you can chew on that piece of bread the waiter handed you, till we get through. Now lemme tell you, young man, the fact is, the underbiddin' don't cut so much ice as my private an' personal opinions. I get hunches, that's what I do; an' hunches is what made Bill Billings what he is to-day, if I do say it."

Joy could only watch, all her energies concentrated on stifling the mirth that their antics were inspiring. The waiter brought their tea and Jerry's "merring," which Jerry devoured with the aid of a spoon, a knife and fork, using her roll also as a pusher now and then. Harry drank tea from his saucer and discoursed on the grudge he bore the Standard Oil; they were a bunch of cheap skates, and they would be a bunch of soreheads to-morrow when they learned that Mr. Mitchell had nailed this contract. "For it is yours, young man, for the asking; and yours is a firm I would trust a lot further than that." The people of the next table had given up all pretense of eating or talking to each other, and the table back of Joy was also avidly silent. She could not see them, but she could feel the tense attention, and sense the vibrations of vision that centered on their table.

Tea being over, Harry grew more expansive. "You going to step round to the minister's soon, you two?" he beamed benevolently. "Better not waste any time. I married Rosie when she was sixteen—Told her then to stick to me and she'd wear diamonds. I notice you stuck, old girl?"

"Now, Bill, you stop!" Jerry simpered. The head waiter was presenting the check. Several other waiters who had added to their sense of well-being were lined up in back of the head waiter. Steve started to take the bill, but Harry intervened.

"Pay my way's my motto," he said, whereat Steve lost his composure for the first time and gulped while Harry drew his rather thin wallet from his pocket and carefully counted out what looked like a small amount which he laid on the salver with the check. Steve recovered himself and filled in the awkward pause by saying:

"Yes, we intend to be married as soon as Miss Nelson can get her trousseau together. It's already taken a year—as fast as she gathers a few little things together, why, they go out of style, and then she has to start all over again. It's such a fearful ordeal for the poor darling!"

They rose to go, Joy conscious of an acute sag in the waiter's expression as he took the salver and walked away with failing footsteps. And then she turned and saw the table whose listening silence she had been appreciating throughout that time. She stared in stupefaction. The Lamkins; the Alfred Lamkins from Foxhollow Corners; pillars of the church, two solid, well-buttressed souls, with four white-eyelashed, shiny-nosed, unmarried daughters. All staring at Joy in that awful delight experienced by small-town souls when they find their neighbours doing something out of the ordinary.

"Why—there's Joy Nelson!" said Mrs. Lamkin, in obviously manufactured surprise.

"So it is!" chorused the four white-eyelashed things. "Hello, Joy!"

It was plain that they expected her to stop and speak to them, exchange the usual banal what-are-you-doing-in-the-big-city of the out-of-towner, and present her companions. It was just as plain that she intended doing nothing of the sort, and with a confused nod of acknowledgement, her head down, she almost ran past them to the elevator.

“Did you see that waiter wilt at my twenty-five cent tip, and all the others melt away?” Harry chortled as they went down.

“Who were those people, Joy?” Jerry demanded, pulling her hat down and her hair out.

“People from home.”

“Home-town stuff!” Steve cried. “You’re compromised forever now, Joy; you’ll have to marry me now!”

“That’s not as bad as this fall, in at the Knickerbocker,” said Harry reminiscently. “I had the waiter sure I was the Prince of Wales and Steve here an escaped nobleman from Russia, conferring together about starting royalty over here, when up blows Dick Lindley and another poor egg, calling us by name and requesting the loan of some cash to get back to Princeton!”

The blithe youths left them at the Belmont. “We’ve been lowbrow this afternoon; we’ll be highbrow to-night,” said Steve. “We’ve wangled Harry’s mother’s box at the opera.”

“Can Félicie Durant and Greg Stevens come along?” Jerry asked. “Félicie’s over with us, and I said we’d do something to-night with them.”

“Félicie Durant can come anywhere with me where I can look at her,” said Harry; “if she’ll keep her mouth shut. Still going around with Greg Stevens, is she?”

“Greg Stevens—” Steve repeated; “not Princeton?”

“Nope—Yale—managed most of the teams there, and all that sort of flutter. He’s all right, though. Don’t take more than an hour now, you two!”

They found Félicie still sleeping in a breathlessly stuffy room, as she had not even turned off the heat.

“Well, Joy, what do you think of our Princeton specialties?” Jerry asked, turning on the lights and pulling the covers from Félicie’s face.

“Lovely. I can’t tell which one is talking when I close my eyes. But of all places I’ve been to around Boston—why did I have to come to New York to run into some home-towners!”

“That is one thing about New York—you’re always running into people you know, in the wrong places. Wake up, Félicie! You’ve only got an hour to get dressed, and we’ve a box at the opera!”

Félicie, after a struggle with herself, arose with an injured expression. “I was awake all the time—you needn’t have spoken so loud. I haven’t slept hardly a wink. Just as I was falling asleep someone called Joy on the phone—Madame Somebody’s maid, or something, who said Joy was to come at four to-morrow, she would send her car.”

It was characteristic of Félicie that she had not even recognised the great name that brought Joy to a standstill and drew a whistle from Jerry.

“Perhaps we’ll hear her to-night,” said Jerry. “Don’t lose your nerve, Joy; you’ll sing circles around her some day. Go and run a tub and do some scales—they won’t be heard over the tub if you close the door.”

“I hope you’re not running a tub for *me*,” Félicie objected; “too many baths are bad for me, I’m funny that way.”

Strange anomaly—the Félicie who had everything about her as neat as a bee-hive, but slept in sealed rooms and disagreed with baths!

An hour later they admitted they were fit to sit in anyone’s box at the opera. Félicie was almost bewilderingly lovely in pale green velvet; Jerry was audacious and stunning in low-cut purple with cerise ostrich feathers; Joy wore a cloth-of-gold that Jerry had ripped from an old model of hers and put together in a few simple lines.

“With your hair,” said Jerry, looking her over in professional pride, “that get-up’s a knock

out.”

Joy found herself wishing that Jim was going to see her, instead of the Princeton youths.

“Wait till we hit the diamond horseshoe!” Jerry was saying. “Although we’re probably higher up than that.”

“I wish I had some diamonds to wear,” Félicie sighed. “I do love diamonds so.”

“If you’d give in to Greg, you might have one,” Jerry suggested.

“One about the size of a pin-point! I couldn’t stand that. Men don’t half appreciate what it means to a girl to have a ring that she won’t have to be ashamed of. When I get one, I want a good one, as long as it’s a thing I’ll have to wear all my life.”

“Oh, so you’ve thought up another argument now for not getting married for four years,” said Jerry.

“Now you’re picking on me again!”

The ring of the telephone announcing that their escorts awaited them downstairs interrupted here, and they sailed down after a mere ten minutes for last rites of re-powdering, going over one’s hair, and general touching up.

Gregory Stevens was as dark as Félicie, scarcely more than an eager boy, and very much in love, as Joy saw and could have seen if she had not been told. They ate at the Belmont, and throughout dinner Félicie and Greg carried on a low-toned conversation, refusing to be drawn into the general chatter. They reached the opera late, and Joy lost herself in a heaven of sound oblivious to the whispering all about her. The first grand opera she had ever heard; small wonder that she could not come out of her trance between the acts, to enjoy the sensation of being a beautiful girl sitting in a box at the Opera. A little before the end Harry pulled her back to the world of Excitement-Eaters by whispering: “Come on, we don’t want to be caught in this mob; we’re going somewhere to dance.”

Surprised dumb that they could leave the greatest of music quivering in mid-air, she followed them as they streaked out and lost the time they had gained in debate of where to go. Steve voted for the “Bré Cat;” Jerry downed that with a sniff, “Princeton’s playground!” “Weisenrebbler’s,” Harry’s suggestion, was voted down as “too rough;” Jerry declared she positively would not go to any of the hotels, she could get the same thing in Boston. Steve groaned, and said he supposed they’d have to fork out fifty dollars or so for a table at the Frolic; Félicie and Greg cried out in swift protest that they wanted to go somewhere quiet.

“I tell you what,” said Harry: “let’s slum uptown. There’s a place up around Columbia with good music—Fennelly’s, or something. Come on, we’re off!”

No one knowing enough about the place to object, they piled into a taxi and worked their way uptown, Félicie and Greg following alone in another. The first four were well established at the uptown dancing palace before Félicie and Greg joined them. Félicie’s colour was heightened almost to a dark purple flush; Greg was pale, his features standing out sharply. They sat down at the table without a word, and stared vaguely at the dancers.

“You two ought never to go to the opera,” said Harry sweetly. “It’s got you all—wrought—up.”

“Not the opera,” said Greg, each word sheared off almost before it came. “We’ve been discussing the modern girl.”

“I don’t want to talk about it any more,” Félicie’s pouting lips twitched out. “I’m so nervous now I could just scream!”

“We’ve ordered for you,” said Steve as the waiter brought up some soft drinks. “Do you think opera is as crazy as I do? Come on, Harry; let’s do our favourite scene from Madame

Butterfly. Ladies and gentlemen, this is an actual transition from part of this famous opera.” He rose, pouring some gingerale into a glass, singing solemnly: “Will you have some more whiskey?”

“Thank you!” sang Harry in response, taking the glass and draining it. They sat down looking for appreciation; but Joy and Jerry were regarding the two who still sat without a flicker of attention to anything.

“Well, what is there about the modern girl that brings on this run-over attitude?” Harry inquired, ignoring Steve’s warning eyebrows.

“The modern girl,” said Greg, “is selfish to cruelty. I think that—carries the situation in a nutshell.”

“Is the modern girl any more selfish than the modern man?” said Joy quickly, anxious to alleviate the mauve tints of Félicie’s face. “I haven’t noticed it, if it’s so.”

“Oh, now we’re in for deep discussion!” Harry proclaimed joyously. “I do love deep discussions in frivolous places!”

“From my point of view, the man as he is to-day is the result of the modern girl,” said Greg, turning to Joy.

“If she is selfish, so selfish that she wishes to have everything, while giving nothing in return, so selfish that she looks upon the world as her debtor—she must mold the man’s attitude toward her. And men can no longer regard her with the chivalry and reverence in which men held women when women made the sacrifices that made the name of woman something to be worshipped.”

“But we’re sick of being worshipped!” cried Félicie, whose silence had been fading to lavender. “The viewpoint you have is the viewpoint of the last century and so on—men dividing women into two classes—” She stopped, and Jerry took up the sentence:

“Félicie wants to say—two classes—good and bad; good to be worshipped and do all the work and have a generally poky time; bad to be despised, but taken around and having the whirl their good little sisters missed.”

“And why boast that the old-fashioned distinction has disappeared?” Greg thrust forth. “Nowadays the line has vanished. Good and bad comport themselves alike. The ‘good’ girl—so-called—refuses to undertake any of the responsibilities that for centuries have made her sheltered and protected. She paints her face more recklessly than her sister on the street. She aims to out-demi the demi-mondaine in her dress. She does not disdain to use any weapon, no matter how blood-stained, to bring men to her feet; and then she leaves them there. The old-fashioned girl gave a man the mitten. This new girl never kills them off; she must have strings to her bow; she keeps them dangling around her as long as is humanly possible. And then she turns around and says: ‘Men aren’t as chivalrous as they used to be!’” He looked around at them, with almost a sneer. “No wonder things are happening nowadays that a few years ago you couldn’t have believed possible!”

Joy, clutching at her throat, was conscious that her nails were biting into the skin. She was back at her first Prom—last spring. She saw herself standing in front of a mirror gazing in fascination at her white shoulders, her blazing cheeks, her painted lips. Again she heard Jim Dalton telling her what he thought of her appearance. Had she been in some way responsible for what had happened? “You’re ripping me all to pieces.” . . . The words leaped up at her from the stagnant channels of that memory. She drew in her breath so sharply that it caught in her lungs.

“That’s a very fluent argument, Greg,” Harry was saying: “I’m surprised and pleased to see

an Eli whose brains weren't lost under the training table. All the same, I think you're on the wrong tack. As Jerry says, the old-fashioned girl was poky. I couldn't stand her alone for five minutes; she'd drive me to drink."

"Maybe, but she wouldn't drink with you," grinned Steve.

"That's just it, Harry!" said Joy. "An old-fashioned girl bores men nowadays. So what stimulus have we for being old-fashioned?"

"It's one of those vicious circles," said Greg. "But the girls are responsible in the first place—they can't get away from it. They have fooled the men into thinking they're more attractive this way."

"Well, they are," Harry persisted. "I wouldn't go back to the Clinging-Vine Age for marbles. When I go to see a girl, I want to have a good time with her—and as far as I can see, if the gallants in other times ever did get to see a girl, all they did was sit and twiddle their thumbs."

"You didn't hear any complaints from anybody," said Greg undaunted. "Nobody realized they were having what we could now term a dull time. I tell you things are getting too complicated. There are too many new inventions for having good times. We just dash from one new sensation to the next. When a man goes to see a girl nowadays, what do they do? Do they sit in the parlor and talk, do they go out into the kitchen and make fudge? They do not. They duck the family, and step into his or her father's Rolls-Royce or Ford and ride seven or seventy miles to the nearest place that has the best dance music or they go to the movies, during which they laugh and talk and say: 'Why did we come? We could have done this at home and not be bored by a rotten show;' but they go next time just the same; or if they stay home for once, they gather a large bunch around them and turn on the home jazz variety. Is this true or isn't it?"

"Well, I fail to see how you can slide all that off on the girl," said Jerry. "What's the use of all this moralizing stuff? You know you like a good time as well as the rest of us. To crab at people who are enjoying themselves is a sign of the aged."

"Look at us to-night," said Greg. "Here we are paying I-don't-know-what per covert to sit in an uninteresting place and watch the world's most ordinary potpourri, the personnel of a public dance hall, canter around on a bum floor——"

"And listen to you crab. I admit it's awful," said Jerry, rising. "Come on, Harry. Greg probably won't dance after his oration, but I intend to see if it *is* a bum floor."

They slid away, and Greg looked at Félicie. The lines in his face quivered into softness until he looked like a hungry, wistful child. Félicie's colour had died to a brilliant flash in either cheek; her loveliness was almost aching in its intensity. "I'm sorry, Félicie," he said gently. "Shall we dance?"

Steve and Joy looked after them as they joined "the world's most ordinary-looking potpourri." "He seems like a fine fellow," said Steve; "but what's eating him, anyway? Won't she marry him? He ought to be glad."

"Well, he doesn't seem to be," said Joy rather shortly.

"All this haste to get married while you're young is idiotic," said Steve, with an air of settling the subject. "If he says the modern girl is selfish because she doesn't want to let herself in for the cares and risks of marriage until she has an everlasting good time out of her youth, he's talking rot. The modern girl's got a sane argument, and it's the same one I'd use for myself. Marriage clips your wings, whether you're a man or a girl, and there's no use getting into it before you've had enough of high-flying!"

Joy said nothing. It was the same argument she had used for herself. Marriage was not for

her, until the wings of her power had grown so that she could soar with that impediment. But Félicie's case was different. She was in love—supposedly. And Greg's face——

“Come on and twirl a measure,” said Steve, “if you're not above mingling with the Too-Much-Perfumed.”

“Too-Much-Perfumed?” she echoed as they went out on the floor.

“Yes—I always think of that in these places—don't you get the scent on different couples as they whiff by us? I always think of the common herd as perfuming themselves heavily. So, instead of calling 'em the Great Unwashed, I call 'em the Too-Much-Perfumed.”

It was about two when they returned to the Belmont. The girls undressed quickly, saying little. No one brought up the subject of Greg's harangue. Jerry said that she would sleep with Félicie, so that Joy could have the single room and sleep as late as possible into the day.

“I know you've got to have sleep back of your voice,” she said, “so go to it, old girl. I'll make Félicie open one window.”

If only Jerry were not such an Excitement-Eater——

By four the next afternoon, Joy had nearly scared herself into a chill. Félicie had gone down to Princeton for a party, but Jerry had remained with her. First, her costume offered trouble. After three changes, she was almost ready to start, when there was a heartsick moment of losing her short gloves. Then a worse moment when she found a rip in them that Jerry repaired with lightning skill. Hesitation over her music which Pa had told her to take indiscriminately, since the great one would select what she pleased to hear. It seemed such a lot to take in one music roll. Finally Jerry bundled her off, going down with her to the door of the waiting car, a dark green Cadillac, such as anyone,—well most anyone—might have. She was driven to the door of a Park Avenue apartment house, where the chauffeur instructed her to go to the top floor. A little maid admitted her to a room beautifully appointed in grey, relieved by sharp touches of black and the inevitable grand piano. Music was piled on the piano in indeterminate heaps; some of it was even trickling off to the floor. Another sheet fell as Joy came into the room, and she went over to pick it up, restoring the others to place as she did so.

“Ah, so we have a neat little housewife's soul, in a singer!”

A full, perfectly poised voice, each word as flawless as if it had been engraved on a cameo. Joy turned, crimson with embarrassment and excitement, and straightway forgot both. The queen of music had a most understanding smile. Moreover, she did not look like a diva. She was not even large, as singers went, and certainly not of terrifying aspect. She was dainty as a little wren, standing by the doorway in a grey teagown, her head tipped to one side, her eyes—the eyes that looked so awe-inspiring in her pictures—surrounded by a network of little smile-wrinkles.

“Well,” she said, and came to take Joy's hands; “have you nothing at all to say to me—or must all be sung, as in op-era? Never mind——” and she drew Joy to a sofa—“I once remember when I was younger than you, and they sent me to sing for Patti. Oh, how I died! It was after a performance, and Patti was in no charm to hear me. She was weary of child-wonders. How well I remember that long time ago! She was in her room at the hotel; there was a wood fire; she always had one go ahead of her, turn off the steam, and have a fire built ready for her coming. I sat in a tremble; and what I had brought to sing—at sixteen? The waltz song from Romeo and Juliet! But no matter. She came in all wrapped around with cloaks and hoods and shawls. How poisonous is the night air to a singer, and all other things that lend joy and romance! Her table was spread with her supper. I was to sing while she ate. She sat down, giving me a look with those black eyes, while her maid unwound her from the shawls. I was so unhappy! She pointed

to the piano. 'I do not know why they want me to hear them sing,' she said. 'I know nothing, just what I like or do not like, and how it sounds to me—I will listen not for the things the critics discuss. But sing! And I will tell you what I think.'"

She looked at Joy, her eyes twinkling up again. "I was in a horror! I shook, how I shook! And the noble Adelina saw that I could not do anything, although the young man was waiting for me at the piano. She arose from her clear soup, did Adelina, and went to look at what I had brought. 'Ah, it is the waltz!' she said. 'Have you heard Nellie Melba sing this, child?'

"Nellie Melba was then dazzling the world. I had heard and rejoiced, as had everyone. I could only nod. But Adelina went on. 'In my time,' she said, 'Nellie Melba's voice would have been termed a light-opera voice. You gasp? But listen how we were taught to run the descent of the chromatic in this waltz.'"

She closed her eyes, her features sinking into a repose of prayer. "Oh, those notes that came floating from that supreme woman! Golden, perfectly matched, each one a pearl on the perfect string! She stopped on the B flat, and laughed a little at my face. 'Now I will show you,' said she, 'how Nellie Melba pours it forth!' And that Adelina ran it up and down in just the way I had heard Melba sing it many times. I cannot tell you the difference. Still beautiful, but—it was as if she had taken the bottom away from everything, that second time!"

"What did she say when you sang?" Joy asked eagerly, as she came to a pause.

The little wren tossed her hands and shoulders, laughing lightly. "The story ends there! I have gotten you to speak! Come—let us see what you have brought. I hope a variety, for I like to choose!" She ran her fingers lightly through the music-roll, pulling out "The Messiah," to Joy's horror. She had not dreamed that the heroine of thirty operas, and mistress of the concert stage, would even glance at oratorio.

"Behold what is complete in one," she was saying. "We have everything here, from the dramatics to the dynamics. Come, let us be off!"

"I didn't suppose—this is the hardest thing I ever tried to do—" Joy faltered, following her to the piano.

"No matter! You have saved yourself already, in saying 'tried to do,' instead of—'done'!" She modulated into the pastoral symphony, still talking: "This is so cruel! Nearly eighty pages while the soprano sits like a rock! Many have no voice left when their time comes!"

She played for Joy to sing through the four first recitatives, then without comment plunged into the "Come Unto Him," followed by "Rejoice Greatly," and ending with "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth."

Then she turned on the bench. "We all have fads, which we call convictions," she said quietly; "and mine is that this music we have just done can show plainly as nothing else, what one has and what one has learned. Now let us have some fun and do some op-era. What can you do?"

"Pa hasn't given me anything but Faust——"

"He wouldn't; I am glad; for I know you have other airs, and I shall wish to see what you have done without Pa, with your own brain and soul-fire. Come, shall we do something so banal you shall have to lend it your own self, lest we remember the hurdy-gurdy?"

Joy hesitated, as she had been about to suggest her beloved Louise.

"But-terfly!" cried the little wren, and tore a wail of beauty from the keys.

So Joy sang Madame Butterfly . . . with a pulse beating in her voice that made the great one turn on the last note and kiss her exultantly.

"When I have a new sensation with that song, I am won!" she cried. "And you gave it—"

why, you little girl—with years before your maiden voice grows into your woman's voice—you had not only the longing of Butterfly but the longing of all! Do you see what I mean? It is so that the American shop girl could hear you sing it in Italian and weep!"

She became quiet, judicial. "Pa Graham is right. The greatest of teachers are not always right—when the pupil has beauty which dazzles and deafens the beholder—but Pa is right with you. You have everything, everything and to spare, in equipment. Now it is the question of the years of preparation. Many young girls start out as you, with high hopes and encouragement. Many do not finish—of their own fault and choosing. Are you of a steadfast mind?"

"I will let nothing come in my way," said Joy breathlessly, "not even love——"

"That is the thing that may end all. . . . And perhaps you may be glad that all is over, if you love greatly." She looked down at the gorgeous rings on her fingers, and there was a little silence before she continued. "But most loves are not the great loves of which we sing and act; they are not the blazing altar-fires of which we dream; love comes down to a hearth-fire, after marriage. And we who sing are not content with hearth-fires. Remember that always, little one; *we who sing are not content with hearth-fires.*"

The maid came into the far end of the room, spraying the air with water from an atomizer. "My substitute for Adelina's wood-fires," the wren said with a smile. "Steam dries you up in your throat—oh, it is terrible! Bring the tea, will you, Aimée?" A pause, while she played rippling cadenzas and frowned at the keys. Joy longed to ask her to sing, but would not, when suddenly without apparent preparation or setting, her voice floated out in a great, full note that swelled to the power of the room until the very windows sang, and then quivered itself into silence. Under the little white hands the keys wove a melody above which the voice rang out, first dazzling with its fireworks, then charming with its beauty. Joy, listening, thought it the most perfect voice in the world, as it came close to being. It ended on a long high note as small and clear as a thread of silver, that hung in the air and charmed the echoes.

"It is an old Italian air," she said, before Joy could speak. "I have not sung it for a long time; no one sings it any more; the new music is all different."

"Thank you," said Joy, reverently; "the memory of that will always spur me on. And thank you for not singing before I did!"

Her laugh, as lovely a thing as one of her runs, rippled out, and she turned to the wagon Aimée was wheeling into the room. "And now for tea. Here is a splendid illustration of the hardships of the singer. We must forswear life's sweet things for the voice and the figure. Often I think, when shall I taste that French pastry my friends always de-vour?" She rolled her eyes, almost upsetting the teacup she was passing Joy. "But no, I do not even know what it would seem like."

Tea with lemon and without sugar; buttered toast; flat little sponge cakes that tasted like sawdust.

"Once I let myself go and ate a caramel before a concert," the little wren related, between sips of tea. "Never shall I forget! I came out and sang My Lovely Celia. I had not sung much in English, and they were ready to notice anything. I sang on, 'as lilies sweet, as soft as air,' and when I came to soft—you know it is but a G, but a tiny, small, floated thing—my voice stuck, I strangled, and the whole hall choked for me! I could feel that caramel sticking to my cords!"

Tea was over, and Joy knew that she must go. She managed to express her appreciation coherently, in spite of the fact that her hostess kissed her again.

"When you return to New York, you must come here once more," she said, and put Joy's music back into the roll for her. "And when you are through with all your work, we will get you

that hearing.”

Joy rode back to the Belmont holding her music-roll gingerly. It was awesome, when you considered who had closed it. Would she ever want to open it again. . . . The queen of music had spoken as though her success were a matter of time. . . .

Jerry was sitting by the window, looking out into the darkness; a desolate Jerry with her hair pulled back into a brush, leaving her white face without shading.

“New York’s getting under my skin,” she said rapidly before Joy could speak; “there’s no use, Joy; it spells Phil Lancaster to me, and a lot of other things that do me no good to think about; I’ve got to get out of here.”

Joy put down her music roll before coming nearer, and as Jerry’s eyes fell on it, she jumped up, shaking her hair until it fell about her face once more. “I’m a selfish fool! Tell me all about it—quick!”

Joy had nearly finished her thrilling story when Jerry interrupted her. “Here’s a note they pushed under the door. I forgot to give it to you before.”

It was a little hotel envelope containing the information that Mrs. Eustace Drew had called and would call again at six-thirty. Joy looked at her watch wildly. It was that now.

“Does ‘will call at six-thirty’ mean in person, or by telephone?” she demanded. The telephone rang by way of answer, and a voice informed her that “Mrs. Drew was in the lobby.”

“She might at least have spoken to me herself,” she grumbled, flying to the mirror.

“Who?” said Jerry.

“My New York cousin. Things always come in bunches with me!”

Yes, Cousin Mabel certainly might have talked to her, if only to tell her what to expect, she thought as she went down to attack the lobby vaguely. But Cousin Mabel was standing by a pillar and came over to her immediately.

“Joy?” she asked with a smile its recipient recognised as genuine: “Well, I think we should have known each other anywhere—or is it mere fond vanity that tells me we look alike?”

Cousin Mabel was a pretty woman in her late twenties, a trifle faded already, but very dainty and luxurious-looking wrapped in her sables. She was of the same blond type as Joy, but her hair was already losing its brightness and her eyes were grey rather than the radiant blue that marked Joy’s greatest appeal. She was unvarnishedly pale, which made Joy conscious of the dab of rouge on her cheeks. As she stood exchanging amenities, Joy found herself contrasting Cousin Mabel’s style with Jerry’s. Jerry was always put together perfectly, with just the right amount of carelessness; but her style was the type that burst upon one. Mabel undoubtedly had style; but it was so quiet that one had to look many times to appreciate the small, perfect little details that made the unobtrusive whole.

“I have been trying to get you for so long, my dear,” she was saying. “But last night you were evidently making the most of being in New York; also this afternoon. Is it too late for you to run up to dine informally with us to-night? My big brother will be there, and my husband and one or two others.”

Joy stood with gracelessly opened mouth. Mabel’s big brother——

“I didn’t know I had more cousins that I hadn’t heard about,” she said heavily, thinking of no better way to bring back the subject.

“Oh, yes, there’s Phil! Older than I, and getting to be a more hard-and-fast bachelor every year. It’s even difficult to get him to dine with us, so you really must come to-night!” As Joy still hesitated, plunging for another setting to bring about what she wished, Mabel went on: “I know it’s awfully last minute-y, but it isn’t a dinner party, or anything but just an informal

gathering—and as long as we are cousins——”

“Oh, I should love to,” said Joy, “but it would mean leaving the girl with whom I came over, all alone——”

“Bring her too, then! That settles it!” Mabel laughed. “I’ll send the car back for you at seven-fifteen. You’re a nice child, Joy!” She paused in her exit, and lifted a black-gloved finger. “So you and she are staying alone at an hotel in the wicked city. Dear me—these New England cousins!”

Joy went slowly back to the room where Jerry stared out of the window at a New York that had grown barren to her. She had made an opportunity—given Jerry her fighting chance. And now she was overwhelmed by misgivings. It did not seem possible that a love could have endured so long upon so little. And how could Jerry hold her own in the house of Mabel Lancaster Drew? She—Mabel—had all but raised her eyebrows—at their being alone in New York together. What would she think, when she saw Jerry—— But Joy put away that thought.

What should she tell Jerry? It was hard not to tell her the incredible truth; it was the fair, square way that Jerry would have taken. But it might be better for Jerry to be unprepared. She debated; and since she could not decide, did not tell her. Jerry showed no enthusiasm at the thought of dining with Joy’s cousins.

“You say you don’t know them at all, yet you’re passing up a wonderful chance for us to go along to some awful little joint while Félicie isn’t here to clamp down on dirty food!”

“We might as well get a meal paid for,” said Joy, watching Jerry’s preparations with ill-concealed suspense. Jerry, always sensitive to waves of feeling, dropped the bright green dinner gown she had taken up and laughed. “Why did you make ’em throw me in with the invitation, Joy, if you’re going to feel cross-eyed about my get-up?”

“Haven’t you brought anything—darker?” Joy asked feebly.

“Not in the dinner line. Never mind. Here’s a black velvet of Félicie’s.”

“It will hang on you in folds.”

“Oh, no, it won’t.” Jerry had wriggled in and out of the velvet, pinned a few bunches in the luscious material, then sat down with her sewing-kit in her favourite cross-legged position. Inside of six minutes, she put away her thimble, stuck her needle on the outside of the kit and threw it on the bed, and put on the velvet, which fell about her in full, majestic lines, but looked as if it had been built for her. Joy thought with a spurt of hope that she had never seen Jerry look so well. The black toned her down; the velvet softened her. She felt ashamed of her momentary qualms, and tried to make up for it by talking effusively on the way over, and jesting about the way cars were being sent for them. However, her efforts only evoked a puzzled look from Jerry, who did not know Joy in a talkative vein.

The car drew up in front of a large red sandstone house just off Fifth Avenue in the fifties, which brought a whistle from Jerry. “Say, Joy—what are you getting us into? The nearest I’ve been to this sort of stuff is the movies!”

It did not add to their composure to have a butler admit them, to be elevatored to one floor to take off their wraps and elevatored to another floor to meet Mabel. They were ushered into a drawing-room, which seemed to Joy’s eyes full of people whose faces were obscured in the candlelight which was the only illumination affected. Mabel came forward to greet them, a little overplump without the coat and glossing-over sables, but very attractive in warm rose, her only jewelry a single pink pearl hanging at the end of a platinum and diamond chain. Joy noticed these details automatically, her attention focussed on Jerry, who, since she had entered the room, had taken on a manner entirely foreign to her make-up as Joy knew it. She was the easy,

gracious grande dame from the lilt of her walk and assured poise to the cultured cadences of the voice that Joy had often likened to rough plush. She had slipped into it as readily as one slips into another garment.

Joy could not know, as the East-Side gamin answered Mabel's friendly greeting with a few well-chosen words of appreciation at her inclusion in the dinner, that poor little Jerry had assumed the atmosphere of the successful designer at Charlette's, when she was conferring with a desirable patron. She only marvelled, then looked beyond. A man nearing forty, and plumpness; a girl with a complexion of peachdown, pleasantly irregular features, brown hair folded back straight without a crinkle or wave from a high white forehead; and behind these two—a taller man, whose face was above the range of the candlelight.

"Miss Dalrymple, Miss Nelson—and my husband, Mr. Drew—" The two who barred the way fell apart, and Joy was facing the man who had given Jerry the power to dream. "Phil, this is your new cousin."

Wearily blue eyes that settled on her without interest; a dark, beautiful face with hard lines carving manliness into it and softer marks etching bitternesses around the eyes and mouth; a man who, even Joy could sense, had been too inquisitive of life and found nothing worthy of his young curiosity. She fell aside and looked back at Jerry, still the grande dame, exchanging greetings with the first two. Jerry was never pretty; she could not sink to that level; and tonight she was at the height of her fascination. No one could wear bobbed hair quite like Jerry; it fluffed around her face, adding to the shimmering lights of expression; those lights that always seemed dancing to the surface, yet which by not being transmuted into speech and action, lent her subtlety, which is the essence of charm.

She came through to them, stately, gracious, with always that moonshine of charm flickering in her face. "My brother, Mr. Lancaster," said Mabel at her elbow. Jerry looked up—and vivid colour, moonbeams, grande dame and all, were struck from her face as if an artist had wiped everything from his painting but the formless features. A long moment she hung thus, one thin hand which she had put out before lifting her head, fluttering without volition. Then with a gasp almost heard in the suspended quiet, she took shape again. Star-shine lurked itself into her face, and she threw back her head, bringing on the grand dame again in double-barreled force. Valiant! Joy thought; valiant! And stole a look at him. There she had the great surprise of the evening. He was taking Jerry's hand, a bit lingeringly; smiling at her with interest—but without recognition!

"You look very much like someone I met a long time ago," he said.

"A very long time ago?" murmured Jerry in the richest of her plush tones.

"Oh, very. At least two years—which means it was war times, and those times seem hundreds of years behind us now."

"There you go, Old Crow's-feet!" Mabel was hanging on his arm and smiling up at him. She brought the others into it with an explanatory quirk: "These returned war heroes think everyone forgets pretty quickly, but we don't, do we?"

"Returned war hero!" Joy cried, her mind a suspended blank to be written over with wonder. Jerry said nothing with fierce intensity of question.

"Why, yes," said Mabel. "Stop nudging me, Phil, I will if I want to!—He was over for a long time, and brought back millions of those little citation ribbons which he gave me with instructions to bury—stop, Phil!"

Another man-servant—did they have *two* butlers?—announced dinner at this moment, and Mabel gave Joy to her brother, leading the way with Jerry and leaving her husband to the girl

with the white forehead, who so far had said nothing of any irrelevance, and so had made little impression on the party.

As they settled themselves behind the fruit cocktails, Joy watched Phil Lancaster, who kept his eyes fixed on Jerry across the table.

“Is—is the resemblance so very striking?” she probed gently.

“Not so very, after the first look.” He took his eyes away from Jerry with a jolt and landed them on Joy for one perfunctory second. “Your friend is quite a different type.” His eyes found Jerry again; and Jerry’s short, thick lashes quivered as she raised her chin higher and looked determinedly at Mabel, who was stretching out a large fund of small talk.

“That girl with the brown hair and white forehead—is she another cousin?” asked Joy, still quietly insistent that he should talk to her.

He drew his eyes back to Joy. “No; she’s a Bryn Mawr girl, one of Mabel’s protégés. Mabel’s awfully keen on younger girls.”

“You don’t like ‘younger girls,’ do you?” His tone had been descriptive.

“Why—has Mabel been getting biographic?”

“No; she didn’t say anything about you to me; I just guessed. And as long as I have guessed, I think you ought to tell me why.”

There was a pause as a third man in livery came between them with the soup, an opportunity he enriched by looking at Jerry; then he said: “To tell you why—would not make dinner conversation. But a young girl flaunting her conscious beauty and youth does not interest me, any more than I would give other than a passing look to a large coloured advertisement on a billboard.”

“And how about older women?” she asked, letting his statement pass without battle.

“Oh—they have either lost interest in life and are only pretending, or their minds are one-track affairs.”

“My——” said Joy thoughtfully. “It must be awful to be a bachelor.”

They both laughed then, and Jerry looked across the table with an answering gleam. His eyes caught hers for an intimate moment; then she turned back to Mabel and he to Joy.

“I admit it sounded humourous,” he said. “But I told you, the rest would not be dinner conversation.”

“When did you go across?” she asked abruptly. Her words carried across the table, and Jerry’s polite attention to Mabel took on another tin.

“In the fall of ’17.”

So she had been right in her random suggestion! Mabel, hearing a fragment of their conversation through Jerry’s silence, proudly contributed the fact that Phil had just been promoted to the rank of major when the armistice was signed. The girl with the white forehead and Mabel’s husband were deep in a steady stream of discussion which flowed on during the pauses of the rest of the dinner party.

So he did not remember Jerry. And yet he must, or why did he look at her so? Many times she reviled fashion of ceremony, as courses were brought on and taken off and dinner slowly rolled by with always the balancing of his and Jerry’s gaze across the table, while he talked vaguely and diffusely to Joy. It was when they were having coffee—Mabel had declared the men were too few to be left alone—that he seemed to give his attention to Joy for the first time. She had not been lessening her contemplative gaze, and he suddenly broke into it. “I’m sorry—I’ve rattled on so. I don’t know what’s in the air to-night—I’m not generally talkative. Are you of those awful ones who ‘draw people out,’ young cousin?”

He was almost boyish now. She had been noting one or two grey hairs sparkling in his ruddy crop.

"I don't think—I've drawn you out at all," she said, and her glance travelled to Jerry. He did not look this time, but his eyes were well distanced by now.

"I am glad you brought her with you," he said simply.

The remark was so direct, after his circuitous discourse throughout the meal, that she was left in surprise without a response. Mabel, sensitive to Jerry's aloofness, Phil's apparent boredom and Joy's non-registering silence, rose and wafted them into the drawing room. "Eustace, you can play the Victrola or do something entertaining while I show Joy the babies," she demanded. "She doesn't know she has some more cousins to meet!"

They left the four, for another elevator trip. "You have—*children*?" said Joy in awe.

Mabel nodded. "Three," she said, with the first pride she had shown.

Three children—in as many years of marriage. Small wonder Mabel looked a little faded, in spite of every aura wealth could cast. The nursery was a long, wide room, into which they tiptoed, Mabel turning on the light of a small rose-shaded lamp. Three little white beds, with tiny, slumbering faces pressed hard against the pillows—faces beautiful with the unearthly beauty of babyhood on which all of life's beauty is yet to be written. A moment while Joy gazed, and Mabel, going from one room to another, murmured ecstatic nothings. Then Mabel turned off the light, and they went to the door shivering in the cold from the open windows that they had not felt while looking at the children.

On the other side of the door Joy stammered her enchantment of eternity's marvel. Mabel smiled, her hand on the knob, lingering as if she could not bear to leave that hold upon the nursery.

"You will never know—until you have them," she said. "The greatest happiness in all the world, Joy. If only people realized! I myself didn't know. I thought I had come to the crown of my life when I married. To have the love of the one you love—that is surely the greatest honour and happiness that life can bring. But this—this brings so infinitely much more—that you think you could only have barely existed, before!" She relinquished the knob, turning it gently so that the catch would hold. "All the happiness in the world, Joy, transmutes itself into this great one. After all, everything speaks in terms of love." She laughed, half apologetically. "It's true—we married people pity everyone who doesn't go and do likewise!"

Joy was thinking of the phrases she had heard bandied with such assurance—yes, that she herself had bandied in her own mind; "the risks and sacrifices of marriage," "marriage clipping the wings." In the nursery—and now, with Mabel's suddenly iridescent love spreading beauty in her face—a career with all its gilt glory seemed very far away and unreal. But they came back to a room which was echoing to great music filtered through a sounding-box; and nursery and Mabel's face sank away. Different hearts, different loves—and what could one love one-half so satisfying as music?

Eustace Drew and the college girl were selecting other records from the cabinet—Jerry and Phil Lancaster were on the other side of the room, beyond the candles, talking. Jerry was sitting on the window-seat; he was standing looking down upon her, his back to the room. Joy frantically wished that she were a pane in that window, then sat down beside the college girl, who turned a smiling face to her with some comment on the music. Joy answered it without impetus, and in the ensuing conversation was surprised to find that Miss Dalrymple was actually interesting on the subject. Besides being well-read, as Joy innocently supposed all college girls to be, she was evidently well-heard. She decided that Miss Dalrymple added up to

a very attractive girl. She wasn't the type that a man would ask to a Prom to cut a wide swath and impress the other fellows with looks and jazz, but she was very attractive just the same. She had beauty of an unobtrusive sort; her clothes were quietly right; and she had a responsive glow that was most winning. Joy continued the conversation in an investigating frame of mind. This girl must be several years older than she was. She seemed older, in some few ways, but on the whole, so much younger. . . .

After a long conversation Joy again looked at the two at the end of the room. It was so maddening to sit through an evening in ignorance of all that was passing. Mabel followed her look.

"Your friend seems to have bewitched my brother, Joy," she said lightly. "She must be a sorceress, and cast a spell—he hasn't even been polite to a girl for so long."

Joy stole a glance at her watch. Quarter of ten—it was surely already too late to stay after a dinner in a butlered house such as this,—even if Jerry did show no signs of desiring to leave the window seat. She was stopped in her preliminary motions of departure by the insistence of the Drews. Why, they were scarcely acquainted with their new cousin yet! They did not even know what she was doing—what school she was attending, or if she was just being a butterfly this year. Somehow, she drew back from telling them about her studying and its aspirations. It sounded so out of place in that atmosphere—so hectic after what she had seen upstairs. So she evaded the subject with a careless, "Oh, I'm not doing much of anything just now," and this time succeeded in saying her farewells uninterrupted. Somehow Jerry saw her rise, and strolled over to them. Phil following with objecting footsteps. Jerry was palpably nervous. What she had done in allowing herself to be monopolized in a corner at such a small dinner-party where she had been a stranger, had been in bad taste; but it was the sort of thing that was being done continually by yearlings belonging to what is known as "the best families," and she had not sinned against precedent.

Mabel bade Joy an affectionate good-bye, adjuring her not to forget that the next time she visited New York she must stay with her cousins, and the Bryn Mawr girl shook hands warmly, hoping-to-see-her-again in a really genuine tone. Joy found her voice returning a like remark in as genuine a tone.

Eustace Drew joined Phil as they went to the door, and the two men rode to the Belmont with Joy and Jerry in an easy volleying of general conversation carried on mainly by Mr. Drew. Jerry, back in the gloom of the car, was inscrutable; Phil more so. They left them at the elevator, where the two girls turned to each other as the door closed and they shot upwards.

"Anchor me down, Joy," Jerry whispered; "anchor me down, or I'll float away!"

"Jerry! What was he saying?"

An interim while they got off at their floor, passed a maid in the corridor, and gained their room. Jerry threw off her coat and went to the mirror. "Can you believe it, Joy?" she asked, in luxurious wonder, falling into all angles of pose; "he doesn't know me! I've changed so much he doesn't know me!"

"What did he *say*?" Joy demanded. "I saw he didn't know you!"

"Well, I've changed since then. Funny I hadn't thought of it that way. My hair's bobbed now, of course—and I used to dress a lot more so, and this black velvet changes me more yet—and my make-up was different——"

"Will you tell me what he said—or won't you?"

She whirled around from the mirror, and with a jump, seated herself on the bureau top. "After you went out, I slumped down on the window seat. My legs had caved in—I couldn't

stand any longer. And he came over to me and looked down at me—which he kept on doing, by the way. Joy, he *likes* to look at me. Did you notice it? Didn't you? And then he said—he said—'Do you believe in love at first sight?' I was knocked loggy for a minute. Did I? Hadn't I! Then I passed back to him: 'Not necessarily.' 'It is the only love which is formed without analysis,' he said, 'and analysis is death to love.' 'Maybe, with some people,' I said. 'You can't generalize about those things—though I suppose love is one of the things that is most generalized about.'

"'Do you want me to come down to particulars?'" he said. 'Or is it safer to go on—generalizing?'" Jerry clenched her hands, smiling softly the while. "I laughed at that. I had to laugh or yell—it was all so like I'd been dreaming for so long—I can't believe yet it's all really happened—and I said: 'Please don't put it up to me.' 'Let us both waive the responsibility, then,' he said. 'If what I say sounds like sheer madness, forget it. You look as if you could forget, and had forgotten, much. But—I have fallen in love twice in my life. The second time was this evening, when I saw you come walking down the room to meet me, a spirit embodied from a dream.' Joy, he said that! Was there ever anything like it under Heaven?"

"No!" cried Joy, hysterical with conflicting emotions. "Go on!"

Jerry jumped down from the bureau to look into the mirror again. "Jerry, your luck," she cried to her triumphant reflection. "Your luck!" She turned to Joy. "I was so scared I got to shaking. 'A dream,' I said. 'Yes, that's what it was, a dream all right.' I thought it was, too. 'You do not understand,' he said. 'How could I expect it—there will never be another Brushwood Boy.' That was one of the things he had given me to read, Joy. I guess I registered a recognition on that, for he went on:

"'Oh, you've read it? You remember the Brushwood boy saw a little girl in the theatre, and afterwards he built an image of her in his dreams. His image grew in his dreams to womanhood, and bye and bye he met her in the flesh—a spirit embodied from the dream. Two years ago, in those fleeting, hectic days of war, at a time when no dreams were being left to me, I met a little girl who somehow brought me back to interest in life and—dreams. Our relationship was of the most casual; I only saw her a few times before I was suddenly put in command of a company that was sailing. She was not the sort to mean anything in my life, and I almost forgot her as herself. But her image stayed with me, always growing in little ways. She herself was so unfinished an image—she was of a type that could not change its atmosphere and environment—yet there was that in her which made me build, until the image grew to womanhood in my dreams. Am I boring you with details of a girl you never knew? But you see—the image grew to womanhood—and then I met you in the flesh, the embodiment of that dream.' I hadn't stopped shaking. 'I don't understand, except that I remind you of someone you once knew,' I said. 'Nor do I understand,' he said. 'It's of the realm of—dreams. It's not to be believed. What is this that makes me sure you are the complement to my existence, the one woman with everything I want, the sum total of a man's fatuous dream that is generally too impossible to find realization?' 'You'd better not spread words around so,' I said. 'It isn't wise to talk freely about anything you only know by sight. If I were anyone else, I'd think you were crazy.' He snapped me up on that. 'If you were anyone else! I must descend to the supreme idiocy and say—But you are you—and I knew you were when you came walking down the room to-night.' 'You must be a Southern man,' I said. 'I've always heard that they swung this line.' He never blinked at that. 'Do you feel nothing?' he said. 'If you tell me you felt nothing when your eyes met mine—if you did not feel that we had been a long time finding each other—if you tell me that—why then,—I will start in and make you realize what I know to be true.'"

She stopped, and ran to the window with a trembling laugh. "Look at old New York—that I couldn't look at this afternoon! Joy—to think of his saying that! Asking me if I didn't feel that we had been a long time finding each other! Joy—I was so scared I'd slip a cog and come through with some pithy talk! I spoke slow and thought twice between each word. 'I—I really—these flashes that seem to go between two people—I never analyze them—which you seem to be doing, after all.'

"By this time you'd come back, but he didn't even turn though I kept my off-eye alive on you. 'That is—admission,' he said, talking very low now. 'We have started at the end, and defeated all the weary preliminaries.' 'Doesn't it all amount to the same, though?' I said; 'for we'll have to work back.' 'No, it's not the same,' he said, 'for at the end I do not greatly care to turn back for my sake. I shall for yours, if you will; but I somehow feel, that to work back is something for which you, too, do not greatly care.'"

"What did he mean?" Joy interrupted. "How could you follow all this, Jerry?"

"Follow what he says? I'd get his drift if he made love to me in Latin! He was taking me at my face value, Joy—which wasn't right, God knows—and dropping the remark in passing that he wouldn't expect me to do the same thing with him, although he sort of thought that I would anyhow!"

"It's so—so strange."

"Strange! It's—as he says—a dream! How did he happen to be your cousin, anyway? Didn't you ever know he was?"

Joy explained, and the two fell into a silent labyrinth of wonder. Jerry walked restlessly about the room. "And he's still unmarried, though every woman that passed his way must have made a grab for him!"

"He looks to me like a man who has always had his way—with women," said Joy, trembling to break in upon Jerry's exultation, but fearful memory driving the words out of her. "What if he was—just bandying words, Jerry? And thought you were too? Or didn't care—what you thought? The last kind I know—You admitted too much, right off like that, it seems to me."

Jerry laughed, running her fingers through her hair with a satisfied sigh. "Don't you think I've been through enough sieges of men and their lines, in my life, not to be able to tell a real thing from a line? The real thing just thumps out. You never can mistake it. A line can be finely spun, but it can't thump. The real thing and a line can have the same words—that's where we women get fooled—it's manner and looks you've got to watch."

"He's awfully cynical about women," said Joy. "And his face, Jerry—it's so full of—so—experienced."

"Can you imagine me getting along well with anyone who was—not?" Jerry questioned; and then smiled again. Joy started. Her smile held in it an echo of Mabel's peculiar radiance. "Cynical! His face looks like a kid's who has asked for a stick of candy and been stuffed with the whole candy store."

She began to slide out of her clothes. "And he doesn't know—that I'm Galatea! Can you tie that?"

"You—don't have to tell him," and Joy watched her from the corner of one eye as she brushed her hair. "He doesn't care about working back—he's said so—you never have to tell him a—thing."

Jerry shrugged her shoulders into the purple kimono. "He's going to lunch with me tomorrow. He'll see me in broad daylight without candles and the black velvet dress. It'll be my turn to talk—in which case I can't keep up my stride, and will have to slide into the American

language. And I'm going to tell him—of course I'm going to tell him. Don't you see my really being both things—starting the dream, and finishing it—makes it—better than ever? If he doesn't see it that way—— But he will! I can't wait to tell him.”

Joy crawled into bed with misgivings which grew faint in the face of Jerry's firm faith. “It was just as we doped it, wasn't it, Joy? You said he went across—and I said that I was too small and casual a matter for him to waste pains on—when it got inconvenient for him to do so. They sent him over sooner than he expected—so he simply knocked out of my life. But now! Those years were worth it—I'd go through 'em over again if I were sure this was coming at the end.”

“And he thinks he's started at the end,” said Joy, “and ‘defeated all the weary preliminaries.’”

Jerry had snapped out the light, opened the windows and jumped into bed, but her head reared up again at this. “You think he's had an easy time of it—compared to me—that I made it too easy for him, right off—don't you? I—I didn't want to make it any harder for *myself*! And look at his face, Joy—does he look as if *he* had had an especially satisfying time along the way—before he found me?”

“Forgive me, Jerry,” said Joy after a silence. “He was right, these things should not be analyzed.”

But Jerry did not even hear her. “We have been a long time finding each other. But the finding trims everything on heaven and earth tied together, to a finish!”

And Joy was conscious of an overpowering loneliness. It was a barren feeling; she had never really loved. She had not known Mabel's radiance or Jerry's ecstatic fireworks, in the disturbing thrills that had been hers in the past which now seemed so far removed it was as if it belonged to another life. And now, with Jerry silent but not asleep by her side, she felt suddenly, horribly alone. Jerry was her best friend, and save for Jim, her only friend. Yet how that friendship sank into insignificance now. Jerry's world was full; all her world and life were but one man; and Joy was outside. She lost herself in sleep, where she dreamed that the only person remaining in her world who spelled anything in life to her, had left her. She woke up sobbing bitterly, with “Jim!” on her lips. All was toneless dark, that breathless hour of earliest morning when vitality is at its lowest ebb yet sometimes the heart may beat at its highest. Things are seen at that hour with uninfluenced clarity of vision. And Joy gasped in the shock of the knowledge that was rising within her. Jim Dalton was the only person left—who spelled anything in life to her. Jerry was sleeping quietly; her tears fell unconsolated. “Jim!” she sobbed again; and with his name trembling through the black fringe of dawn, she fell asleep.

The next day was Saturday, and Félicie returned around noon just as Jerry left Joy in a whirlwind of breathless anticipation. Félicie was pale and sulky from dancing all night and having to come back to New York the next morning.

"I missed a dance this afternoon and a wonderful one this evening," she crabbed, taking off her outer raiment and donning a kimono, before lying on the bed to recuperate. At Joy's question of why she hadn't stayed the house-party through, she batted an injured brown velvet orb. "How could I, with Greg here and acting so awfully just because I wanted to go to Princeton for one day. He needn't think I'd give up every evening to him—especially after the way he talked Thursday. I tell you, Joy, it's awful to be in love. I never did such an inconvenient thing as I did when I fell in love with Greg."

Joy stifled her laughter. "Did you have a good time?"

"Marvelous—simply marvelous. Princeton is the house-party girl's Mecca. It's mean of Greg to act so—it isn't as if I could be asked to Princeton for many more years."

Joy ran a scale, poising it neatly through the air and listening to the smoothness of tone. In the morning sun, music was more alive and satisfactory, even with no piano near. It was part of her—and little fluctuations of feeling were to be ignored, when she knew that all her being was absorbed in one great purpose. It had been silly of her to grow sentimental just because she had been doused in the atmosphere of sentiment. Inconsistently, she felt angry at Félicie.

"I can't imagine being in love with a man and going off skating with a dozen others."

"Oh, Joy, if you're going to take Jerry's side I shall just pass out!" wailed the lovely thing on the bed. "Being in love doesn't stop you from wanting something new once in awhile."

"Nothing seems to prevent anyone nowadays from going after a new sensation! Excitement-chasing! That's what everyone's doing!"

"It's all very well for those who aren't in love to theorize about what those who are in love should do. For all Jerry's talk, I can't see her giving up *her* 'excitement-chasing' for any man. Can you?"

The thought was a new one. What would happen if Jerry was given the opportunity to know this man so that the novelty would wear off? How would the Excitement-Eater stand a sustained love? She was silent in conjecture, and Félicie, too lazy to voice the triumph she felt, closed her eyes and worked her face down into the pillow.

Joy and Jerry had tickets for an Æolian Hall concert that afternoon, and now Joy went alone. The throngs always pressing ahead on the streets, exhilarated her, and she watched the faces of the people that urged themselves along; faces with success or failure written more or less plainly upon them. Most women, she supposed, succeeded or failed by proxy, as their husbands rose or fell in the foaming rapids of struggle. But there would be no such vicarious state for her! She was plunging directly into the rapids for herself, and some day she would walk in her own success.

She returned to the hotel in a fine enthusiasm, humming under her breath; the concert had been perfect. Her spirits were dashed, however, by the empty room. Félicie had gone out with Greg; Jerry had not returned. She would probably be alone until they assembled to take the midnight; they had decided when they came over, to go back Saturday night. To eat dinner all alone in New York! She was doing her hair without enthusiasm when the telephone bell rang. It was Jerry's voice, eager and exultant: "That you, Joy? I'm downstairs—— Thought I was going to desert you for dinner, did you? Just wanted to see if you were back yet. Be right up."

She finished setting in her hairpins with a lightening of spirits, as the door rattled open and Jerry came dancing in.

“Was the concert good?” she cried. Spots of colour flaunted joy from either cheek; her lips were tremulous, crinkled into softness; her eyes were a battlefield of colour.

“Very good,” said Joy, and waited.

Jerry pulled off her hat and suit, and in her customary whirlwind was making preparations for an evening toilette. “Put on your best calico, Joy; we’re dining in state. Phil’s gone to get into his cocktail-and-demitasse, too.”

“Phil!”

“Yes, of course, Phil. Do you want to hear what happened, or don’t you? Are you keeping still because I’m shooting off my mouth, or——”

“I want to hear,” Joy said; “and when people want to hear, they generally keep still.”

And then it came, with the generosity that was Jerry’s.

“Well, it seems I always tell you everything from the pop of the pistol on through. When we went down in the lobby, he asked me where I wanted to go; and I said, ‘Hanley’s.’ He looked at me queerly on that. ‘What made you pick that out?’ he wanted to know.”

She was caressing her hair with the military brushes, not raking it as was her custom.

“‘Let’s walk over,’ I said. ‘I want to stop at a place on the Avenue.’ As we went down Forty-Second Street, I rained a loose line of chatter along. I told you to-day would be my turn to talk. We got to Charlette’s before I had stuck in any background. When I saw the good old grey-silk-curtained windows, I began to get a bit shaky. But I turned to him and said: ‘We got to the end—rather sudden, last night. Men don’t like to work back, but you know—and intimated as much—that women are different that way.’ He opened the door for me, looking sort of at sea, and we came in. ‘All I ask of you,’ I said, ‘is to stand here and watch me.’ ‘The last part is something I can never omit,’ he said.

“You know Charlette’s—never many customers floating around, but oh, how they do bleed ’em when they come! I breezed forward, and the first person I ran into was Fanchon O’Brien. She tucked me into her flesh Georgette waist with a few motherly kisses, and the next minute somebody had passed the glad word and cutters, basters, fitters and designers came out and fell around me. I won’t go into details of Old Home Week at Charlette’s. When I broke away, Phil followed me to the door and on the other side I didn’t give him a chance to speak.

“‘Did you see all the poor little rats hailing me as a kindred soul?’ I said. ‘I worked in that place from twelve years old up, from messenger-girl to designer. I was a poor little rat when I started—but when I finished, I was pretty proud of myself.’ I looked up at him, and he was looking at me, sort of scowling, as if to make everything add up right,—but not one bit *changed*. ‘I should think you would be proud,’ he said. ‘I am proud of you—I shall be prouder when I can realise it more fully.’ He didn’t say anything till we got over to Hanley’s. Then he took in the name again as we went in. ‘Hanley’s!’ he said. ‘Funny——’ He didn’t say anything more and I let him look at me till we got put in our places by a waiter. Then I said: ‘You’ve forgotten what was to me one of the most important points in the Brushwood Boy. The little kid he met in the theatre who supplied the foundation of his dreams—was the same person as the woman he found. The girl had grown up; but she was the same one; she had been the kid.’

“Joy, he said nothing for two or three minutes steady, till the waiter came and he told him to bring anything, but get out. Then he said—‘I—see now! The valiance and potential beauty I saw in the spirit of the little girl who brought me back to myself—the shining hardness of the cabaret singer, whom I pitied as drawn in and around by her past and inevitable future

environment—I discarded that hardness, and all that went with it, and built on the valiance and beauty. And you were discarding and building in reality—as I, with all the idiotic finality of a man, never thought you could!

“Joy—I didn’t think I’d built. Before—he thought I was worse than I was. Last night, seeing me ooze around his sister’s drawing room, he thought I was better than I am. I began to tell him this, and he stopped me.

“When I first knew you—I knew you were better than I,” he said. “As I see you now, you have all but put yourself beyond me. I have led a life of which I am ashamed; the dusty corners of which no one shall ever know, or try to sweep out. You have led a life of which you can say you are not ashamed; a life of striving against odds, from which you came out on top; a life of which to be proud.

“Joy—I was ashamed at that. For since the war—you know how I’ve been—Building, he thought! When I’d just been growing into the ways of his world. Excitement-Eating! That was the main thing I’d been growing on. I began to tell him—and he wouldn’t let me. ‘What has happened is not mine now. It is for what is to be that I plead. With your future mine, and mine yours, you can help me to forget the years we might not have esteemed so lightly.’”

Jerry had finished, at the same time that she had snapped the last catch together in her green evening gown—the same green sequin affair that she had worn that terrible night they had looked for Sarah. . . .

“Well—and then what happened the rest of the afternoon?” Joy drew out from lungs that had been deserted of breath.

“I’ve told you more than I shall ever tell anybody. The rest is mine—that and—*this!*”

Jerry flaunted her left hand before her. On the third finger was a tiny platinum circlet, so small that it had melted into the white of her hand at a distance, as gold could not have done. “I’ve tried to thrust it down your throat a thousand ways, but you would keep looking at my face and a thousand other unimportant things!”

Joy sank back upon the bed, her whole being a rag of dumfounderment. “Jerry!”

“Mrs. Philip Lancaster—and hurry up and put on some rouge! I don’t want to keep my husband waiting!”

“But—but why—how—where——”

“We tossed the subject back and forth at luncheon. We figured we’d been without each other long enough. After lunch we walked up to the nearest jewelry store and got this ring. I wouldn’t let him get a big one, or anything but this one. He’s poor, you know, Joy—the Lancasters are all poor. That is, he calls it poor, but now that he’s got me he’s going to work—you know he’s supposed to be a lawyer—and that combined with his income and my little Charlette block ought to keep us passing the buck along. We got married with a special license, at the Little Church Around the Corner——” Jerry spoke with the calmness of excitement at white heat—“and before going off on our honeymoon—we thought we’d take you to our wedding dinner. You see, if it hadn’t been for you I’d have still been excitement-eating—and he’d still be cynicing it around.”

The telephone rang, and Jerry darted to it. “Yes! Yes, this is Mrs. Lancaster! Yes, we’re coming, Phil!” The name was all endearments shaped in one. Jerry turned to hurry Joy with her last touches, and Joy, in a state of coma almost bordering on collapse, followed Jerry’s eager footsteps to the elevator and down into the lobby. Jerry’s husband was waiting for them, fierily handsome in evening dress, and at least ten years younger than he had seemed last night. Last night!—It seemed so far away. Joy could not even stammer much, but Jerry and Phil did not

notice lack of anything, and swept her into the dining room.

“Let me see,” said Phil; “it’s the first time I’ve seen my wife in evening dress.”

“Second!” said Jerry swiftly. “I wore one at Hanley’s, two years ago!”

“Oh, but that was a *costume!*”

Their words were stupid, inconsequential, in the face of Joy sitting there. Their eyes were speaking to each other, saying so much that Joy dared not look. And just last night——

“I wonder what Mabel will say,” she ventured. They paid to her remark the tribute of polite inattention.

“I owe Jerry to you,” said Jerry’s husband; “but I don’t intend to pay you.”

Of course—Jerry was leaving her now! Leaving her and the apartment—alone! She considered this bleak fact, all through the course. At last, breaking in upon the conversation of eyes, she said: “What will you do with the apartment, Jerry?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said Jerry. “The lease will be up in July. Why don’t you stay in it till then? Phil and I are going to live in his apartment here, until we get a house in the suburbs, so I shan’t be moving out my stuff for some time.”

To stay in the apartment—with the ghost of Sarah in curl-papers and wrapper whining through the kitchenette—and the purple kimono and pink mules gone from everywhere. . . . She did not bring the thought to the surface of the table. “You two in the suburbs!” she exclaimed instead, in faint derision.

Jerry hardly smiled. People in love always lost their sense of humour, but you wouldn’t think Jerry——

“Apartment life would merely be existing for us,” said Phil. “We are going to live.”

Their eyes trembled together in close embrace. . . . Joy hurried through her dessert; the others had made no pretense of eating. Their appetite was as if they had just come in from luncheon. All three were regarding the meal as a more or less disagreeable formality to be gotten through with as quickly as possible. But when they had finished, they grew embarrassed at their haste, and everyone tried to be jovial, lingering over the coffee.

“Last night at this time,” said Phil, “I was telling our cousin just why I didn’t like younger or older women.”

“And looking at Jerry,” added Joy.

“And looking at Jerry,” he said gravely, repeating the performance.

“If you don’t like younger or older women, where do I come in?” Jerry demanded.

“You don’t,” he told her; “you are neither young nor old; you are immortal.”

At length they rose, and Joy went with Jerry while Jerry threw everything into her suitcase and crushed it shut.

“It won’t be anything but so-long,” said Jerry; “I’ll be coming over to Boston soon to get the rest of my wardrobe.”

“I’ll send it to you.”

“No—I’ll want to come. . . . Joy—you’ve been the only real girl friend I ever had—and now you’ve given me everything that there is to hang onto in this world.”

She said good-bye to them by the elevator downstairs, and watched them vanish through the same revolving doors that Jerry had helped speed around so merrily—was it only two days ago? They walked together as if they were still in an expectant dream . . . in a sort of awed breathlessness.

Joy suddenly knew that, of all lots in life, the lot of the looker-on, the passive spectator, was the hardest. To see worlds of glory pass, which she had to tell herself were not for her. She

packed her bag, checked out and climbed on the midnight as soon as it was open. Félicie came at the last minute, with Greg carrying her suitcase into the train and then stopping for a prolonged farewell while the train was moving. The three girls had engaged a section, one to sleep in the upper and two on the lower, and she was astonished to find Joy alone in the lower with the upper pushed back out of the way.

“Hello,” said Joy sourly. Félicie’s but-lately-kissed beauty was annoying. . . . “Where’s Jerry?” Félicie demanded, crawling inside and emptying her suitcase over Joy in the process.

“Married!” Joy snapped, and turned over to look out of the window at the lights of New York they were leaving behind.

“*Married!*” Félicie sank down in the midst of the out-heaval of hairpins and lingerie, cold cream jars and silk stockings. Then weakly she articulated Jerry’s epitaph: “I always said that girl would do *anything!*”

Winter hung heavily on that year; February dragged itself to a close, choked with December snowfall, and Spring looked bleak and far away. Travelling even from New York to Boston was horrible, and Jerry did not come for a long time.

Joy was alone in the apartment.

As she had foreseen, Sarah's querulous voice wavered in the halls. And in the kitchenette her kimono and curl papers tinted the atmosphere. And everywhere the tap of the pink mules or the sound of the rough plush of Jerry's voice seemed to be trembling in echo's echo. . . . She asked Félicie to spend the night with her as often as she cared to; but Félicie didn't care to very often. It was not that she was not fond of Joy, as she explained; but it was so much trouble to move herself and all her things. Félicie liked everything drawn up around her in waxworks precision of detail, just as she had arranged it at her home.

And so Joy lived in an enforced solitude while considering what she was going to do. The heavy snowfalls were deadening to enterprise; the easiest thing to do was to stay in the apartment, which was hers for the present, instead of looking around for something else. Sitting alone at the piano in the room which had so often sung with mirth, she found it hard to realize that she was the only one left in Sarah's and Jerry's flat. One little, two little, three little Indians! One had gone; and then there were two. And now one more had gone; and there was only one. . . .

She had not seen Jim Dalton for a long time. When he had called her up, she had put him off with the excuse of work. She could not see him, because she felt that she wanted to see him too much. But she told herself with an easy surety that she was not in love with him; once back with Pa Graham she had fallen into the magic of music once more, magic that left no room for sentimentality, and that, she told herself, was all that her lapse had been; sheer sentimentality. But since the idea had occurred to her that she might suspect herself of being in love with him, she was uneasy about seeing him. And surely preventative methods were best!

Yet she longed to see him, to tell him every little detail of the epoch-making trip to New York. Looking back she clung to her part in it, and wanted Jim—wanted him to exult with her over the great one's approval. Who was it who said he travelled faster who travels alone? There had to be someone to spur on the traveller—sometimes! And Jerry had gone, and there was no one. Félicie was frankly bored with music. And Jim of her own exclusion stayed away, although his telephone calls did not diminish in number. . . .

One afternoon in March as she was walking down Boylston Street, she saw Grant. He passed driving a car, the Grey's runabout, and by his side was a girl whose peachbloom face, even at a distance, was vaguely familiar. As she stared, the girl waved, smiling, and said something to Grant, whose eyes were on the traffic. He swerved and brought the car into the curb, and Joy came to them as Miss Dalrymple, the Bryn Mawr girl, leaned out expectantly.

"Miss Nelson!" she hailed her. "I didn't know you were in Boston!" Joy interrupted as she started to present Grant. "We've already met. I didn't know *you* were in Boston, Miss Dalrymple."

The college girl explained that she was visiting a friend in her vacation, that it was her first visit in Boston, and that she liked it *very much*. Her eyes dwelt on Grant in naïve compliment at this last, and Grant smiled appreciatively in return.

Joy nearly smiled, herself. Six months ago, and one would have thought she had ruined a life. Now Grant was looking better, and happier, than she had ever seen him; and he was

regarding her with offhand friendliness. The girl at his side was really an exquisite thing, with clear, eager eyes like his own. Joy knew that her own radiant eyes had been dulled, first by the experience of disillusionment, and then by monotonous routine. She knew that she was thin and pale from a life of irregular restaurant eating; she knew that the exquisite young thing at Grant's side gained colour by comparison; and she was glad. This could be a last picture that would wipe out all regret, in dreams of what might have been.

Miss Dalrymple was all exclamations over Jerry's marriage. "To think that it happened the very next day, and there we sat never suspecting what was going on! It's the most romantic thing I ever knew!"

Mabel had written Joy twice; at first when she had been so upset over the unconventionality that marked this Lancaster marriage, then later when she had seen them together and lost her shock, in joy at finding her brother in the heights she was beginning to fear would never be his.

"Mabel always said he was awfully romantic," the college girl was saying; "that explained his cynicism, for they say cynics are always really romantic—that's the way they hide it. But did you ever hear of anything so sudden?"

Joy's eyes caught Grant's on that. "Not—that turned out so well," she said demurely.

Miss Dalrymple turned to Grant. "You know, Miss Nelson's cousin had her brother all picked out for me—when Miss Nelson walked in with the most fascinating girl you ever saw, who walked right off with him."

"Then I owe Miss Nelson—a very great debt!" said Grant, with a smile that broke in the middle as he looked at Joy and saw her amusement shrieking from beneath the sheltered surface of polite friendliness. The air was tingling with omissions, as Joy said her good-byes and left them. Their status was plain—an affair well along in interest and momentum.

The girl with the skin of peachdown and the wide, untroubled eyes was the logical mate for Grant Grey. Each could give the other as nearly all that the other desired as was possible in an earthly union. It would be one of those unions that seemed eminently *right*—and it would even seem so to Mrs. Grey! Joy laughed aloud at that last thought. The heart-caught-on-the-rebound sneer, on which so many girls inwardly feed while apparently they are smilingly urbane to their former suitors' flames, never even occurred to her. It was a perfect union, while the union of her nature and Grant's would always have been imperfect at best.

Inexplicably it made her feel the more lonely.

It was soon after that that a bulky letter arrived from her father, the contents of which threw her into the laughter of misgiving. It seemed that the Lamkins had returned from an extensive trip South and West, and had spread throughout the length and breadth of Foxhollow Corners the glorified account of Joy Nelson's gallivanting around New York with perfectly impossible people, to one of which she seemed to be engaged "in a light way." The rumour had swollen until it was reported that Joy had been secretly married over in New York and had taken up her abode there permanently. Of course her father had heard the last rumour first, and with businesslike precision had sifted it through to the Lamkins and heard their representations of the "facts."

"I am disturbed," he wrote, "and ask you for verification before I take any steps in this matter. The town seems to be rolling tales of your New York escapades as a sweet morsel under its tongue. You told me nothing of any side of your New York visit that could be interpreted this way. It is not possible for the child of your mother to have done anything really wrong, but in New York you may have forgotten the obligations that the name of Nelson puts upon you.

After all, home people are the ones that will mean your life, when you finish your studying and come back to normal existence once more; and it does not do to antagonize them as you so evidently have the Lamkins. It is a difficult thing for a father to be sole guardian of a daughter; there are so many questions a father alone cannot decide. I wish you would come home, and take up your music here, perhaps in the church choir.”

He ended the letter with the thought that he might come to Boston soon, as he had never yet seen her environment there.

Joy read the letter with mixed emotions which had culminated in the rather shaky laughter. How could she explain to her father that what the Lamkins had heard had been a mere prank played for the benefit of the waiters and surrounding interested ones even as the Lamkins? It was the sort of thing that he could never understand. And he spoke as though all her fiercely eager study were to end in nothing—“a normal life once more.” The church choir! She jumped up and poured forth a long cadenza, which enveloped the room in an exultation of sound. At the close she balanced two notes evenly, one against the other, tracing them up and down—when all at once her throat began to flutter, effort ceased, and she stood in rapt wonder, listening. Her first real trill was born.

The church choir!

It was that afternoon, while she was hesitating over a reply to her father, that Jim called her on the phone.

“Do you realize how long it’s been since I’ve seen you, Joy?” he asked.

She did. “I’ve been so busy——” she faltered. “And now that Jerry is gone, I can’t very well entertain in the apartment alone——”

“Then we can meet somewhere and go to dinner. Meet me at the Touraine, at half-past six. I must see you, Joy.”

She went back to her letter in a more peaceful frame of mind. By now her sentimental lapse was well over, and she would be glad to see Jim again. After all, he was the only real friend she had. She finally pushed the letter paper away from her. Jim would advise her as to how she would reply. Somehow he always knew what to do.

When she drifted into the Touraine exactly five minutes late—Jerry and Sarah had taught her that system—men hate to wait and yet one must never be on time—Jim came forward to meet her, and she found herself clinging to his hand for a longer space of time than is allotted to the usual formal clasp. All her past loneliness rose about her and seemed to choke her utterance, with something else that left her without speech.

“Let’s not eat here,” said Jim; “there’s something so public about this place. Everyone just seems to come here to look everyone else over.”

Out in the evening air, speech returned to her, and they bridged the time they had not seen each other by a few sentences while walking through those strange cross-alleys that only Boston can boast until they came to a cobble-stoned street that comprises part of the city’s modest Chinatown, and “counted out” on the different restaurants facing them. A façade of ornate gilt with curtained windows won the count, and they were soon in a little stall away from the bright lights of the central room.

The order given, Joy told the complete story of the New York trip, with the loneliness Jerry’s leaving her had brought. “What shall I do?” she concluded. “If father comes down here, he’ll find me living alone in the apartment—which he certainly would not like.”

“Joy, you know that you can’t stay in that place alone,” said Jim. “That’s one reason why I insisted on seeing you to-night—I wanted to find out your plans.”

“Jerry wants me to stay in it till July—and it’s so much easier for me in every way—especially practicing—than if I boarded anywhere—”

Jim shook his head. “This Félicie Durant you speak of, who lives in Brighton with her great-aunt—perhaps she could persuade her aunt to rent Jerry’s apartment, and then keep you as a boarder. If you suggest that scheme to her, she might think of offering to take you in with them even if they didn’t care to move.”

“That is—a good suggestion,” she said uncertainly. She was in that state of mind where she hated to take any steps, make any plans.

“If that fails, you’ll have to apply to the Students’ Union for lists of recommendable places,” he added with quiet finality.

“Oh, is that what one does?” She felt foolishly incompetent. “How did you know?”

“I’ve been making inquiries myself. I knew you were alone there, and that you couldn’t stay that way.”

Joy felt an embracing peace, the peace of decision in which Jim always enveloped her. “Jim,” she said suddenly, “what have I ever done—or been, except a foolish girl—that you should be so good to me? At the very first, you did—more than I can ever repay—and then you went on—always helping me, in ways that really were help—and understanding so well—sometimes better than I understand myself!”

Jim looked at her across the table, and the keen friendliness dropped from his eyes, all at once; leaving them naked. Involuntarily Joy turned away her face. When his voice came, it was quiet, with a new current bearing it along.

“It is because I have understood so well—that I’ve never told you what I must tell you now. The brakes won’t hold—I think I have loved you, Joy, from the time your lip quivered when you told me to take you back to Tom.”

A pause while the Chinese waiter took away their dishes. Of all moments to bring in his tardy self!

Joy started to speak, to falter her way with lips suddenly tender, but he was looking away from her now and beyond.

“I think you ought to know, Joy—that I love you more than anyone else in this world. You—you mean life to me.”

There was no wild heart-beat trembling in her being as she heard his words, nothing but peace and a great content. “Oh, Jim!” she said in a little voice, then waited for his eyes to meet hers. . . . It had not come within the halo of dreams nor in the area of the disturbing thrills of youth—it came in a golden calm. Jim was the Perfect Knight, of whom she had dreamed in the days when she supposed one had but to wait and the knight would come a-riding; the Perfect Knight, with spotless shield and shining armour. The shield was his spotless life, making him more than worthy of her; the armour was the white strength of his soul and his body with which he had defended her at all times, since the very first.

Then weirdly, unaccountably, across the even rhapsody of her meditation came a voice from the chapels of memory; a voice full, perfectly poised, with each word as flawless as if it had been engraved on a cameo.

“Love comes down to a hearth-fire, after marriage; and we who sing are not content with hearth-fires. Remember that always, little one; *we who sing are not content with hearth-fires.*”

Only that second of recollection before Jim’s eyes met hers, and Joy chose her fate. She urged her eyes away from him, with a sick little shiver; and keeping them fixed on some distant point, she said in a voice so slight it almost slipped away before it struck the hearing: “Jim—

please—don't!"

"I—won't," he said, in a voice that did not alter. "I—I knew it was—hopeless, Joy, before I spoke; and I shall not bother you about it again; but I wanted you to know, while I was able to see you—you have not let me see you for so long."

"Jim—I'm so sorry——" she cried, against the destruction that was descending upon her soul so lately filled with peace.

"Sorry! Sorry is—an awful little word. I didn't want to make you—sorry. I just wanted you to know—I would have been a conceited ass indeed if I had thought you could—care for me."

"It's not that."

The words were clipped out in an even, glassy tone, as hard as a window-pane and as easy to break or see through. But the shutters were down behind, for the one who most wanted to see. . . .

Jim did not bring the subject up again until they were at the door of the apartment.

"Please don't let anything I've said worry you, Joy. And—we still are friends—aren't we?"

"Oh, yes, Jim!" she cried, and then fell silent, ashamed.

"This world would indeed be an empty place for me—if anything should happen to that friendship."

He took her hand, and she knew in a bitter little rush how much she wanted to have his arms around her—to feel again encompassing her the peace that she had destroyed. Pale as the novice who goes to her vows, she took her hand away and left him.

She sat at the piano, striving to drown the turbulence within her by a glory of sound. With shaking, silver lips, she tried to form the words of the Jewel Song—she should be able really to sing it now—for to-day had come her first trill! "All passes; Art alone endures." She was so wise not to have allowed the sentiment of the moment to overpower her. It was just such moments that were responsible for the "mute, inglorious Patis" of the world.

The trill came, neat and exquisite. Then haltingly—

"Je ris—de me voir—
Si belle—"

Her voice limped into silence. . . .

She left the piano. This loneliness was getting on her nerves. She would see Félicie tomorrow. Yes, to-morrow was coming—and she could not wait to have Pa hear that trill!

On hearing Joy's proposition, Félicie consulted her great-aunt, but neither of them wished to leave their eminently satisfactory lodgings in Brighton.

"It's awful for you to be alone, though, Joy," she said. "Auntie suggested that you come and stay with us—she's deaf, you know, so she won't mind your practicing, if you don't mind living in the little room off the kitchen—I'd take you in with me, but there's really no room, the way everything's fixed."

Having decided to accept this enthusiastic invitation before it had been issued, Joy surprised Félicie by being pleased with the offer of the little room near the kitchen. "Of course, I'd pay board," she said, "and take my meals out."

"Well, all right," said Félicie, "only auntie will be annoyed if you don't eat with her. She's lonely, now that I go out so much of the time."

They left the situation to be fought out with "auntie," and Joy wrote Jerry of her decision to leave the apartment as soon as she could get her things together.

Jerry replied by bursting in upon Joy one morning in the first chill days of April, while Joy was poaching a dejected egg in the kitchenette. A new radiant Jerry, all softness and winsome, assured charm that is the gain of those who are exorbitantly loved in return for their own great love. She danced over the apartment in pretended high spirits at being back, and then packed her clothes in a rush of concentration that betrayed her haste.

“This is the first time I’ve been away from him—and I didn’t know I was going to feel like this!” she confessed.

“There’s just one thing, though. You have no use for the wine-closet, I take it?”

Joy had not taken a drink since the night she watched the effect of it from the sofa, with Wigs and Davy babbling in her ear.

“Then,” said Jerry briskly, “we might just as well do a little government-agent work.” At Joy’s look of astonishment: “Oh, I never drink now. There’s—too much else to think about. Phil and I smoke together—but that’s as far as we go. Seems funny when I think in idle moments how I’ve taken it down all my life and now have just dropped it off without—much—effort. But somehow, you don’t feel like the good old stuff when you’re in love. There’s something about it——”

They took the liquor case by case to the bathroom where they became carried away by an orgy of opening bottles and watching their contents gurgle into the tub.

“We could bathe in champagne now, if we felt like it,” said Jerry reflectively. “I’ve often thought I would, but I guess I was pretty well doused on the inside when I had the little idea.”

Joy watched it gurgle down the pipe and thought of the inferno that innocent-looking liquid could cause. . . . What it had caused in her own experience. . . . In the lights and shades of the mixture tumbling to the sewers where it belonged, she saw Jack Barnett’s face for a fleeting horror, that shifted to Packy’s, quite as terrible. And she saw Sarah. . . . And then they all blended together in a whirling mass, and flickered away. The bathtub was empty. . . .

“I’ve got to admit,” Jerry was saying, in rather an artificial voice, “that in spite of everything it makes me feel sort of ill to see all that joy-getter spilling itself away in such a casual fashion.”

Joy looked at her, and saw that her mouth was slightly twisted, her eyes bearing a strained expression. It had evidently been more of an effort for her than Joy had realized.

That Jerry could have stopped drinking altogether! Even to her inexperienced knowledge it seemed an impossibility. Jerry was staring into the bathtub again, with the hungry look of the street-gamin. . . . Joy turned away, and with her old-time quick sensitiveness, Jerry laughed and joined her.

“I don’t deny it isn’t hard at times and harder at others, old girl,” she said; “but there are things in everyone’s life that are hard not to do, and all the same one simply can’t do ’em!”

The day was unlike their old times together. On the surface, both girls were affectionate, and delighted to be with one another again; but below the surface everywhere intruded the man who had come between their friendship, changing everything irrevocably. Jerry was changed. For the better, one could not doubt; but nevertheless she was not the Jerry that Joy had known and loved. She was softer, with that new glow within her lighting everything she did or said. Her speech already showed meditation, her manner was more reposeful. Content and love were fast enfolding her into serenity—and, Joy thought, who wanted a serene Jerry?

Their conversation was strained, although voluble. Jerry’s bristled with mention of Phil, directly or indirectly. This stimulated Joy’s desire to talk of Jim; and the realization that she could not, that she had not Jerry’s excuse or right, brought effort into her responses.

They telephoned Félicie, and Jerry took them both to the Copley for dinner, over which they

lingered. Félicie was wearing her usual look of unbroken loveliness, and arrayed for a Sixty Club dance in Brookline. Her attitude towards Jerry was frankly pitying, which abated none the less when she saw that Jerry's attitude duplicated hers.

"It's all right to act as if you'd pulled the moon down to earth, for a while," she said tolerantly. "I know how these things come out. Pretty soon this one-man stuff will get monotonous. Monotony! Sooner or later you see it in all married life! And you'll get monotonous to him, too! Husbands always get so *husband-like* when their wives begin getting always the same!"

Jerry laughed. "Better take the plunge like a shot the way I did, Félicie. Then you'll have no time to think up objections. Monotony! The way I used to live—the way you're living now—is the real monotony. Continually seeing one side only of large numbers of young men—one party after another—oh well, there's no use wasting my flow of English on the subject."

There was no use. A youth with an attitude of cultivated boredom and repressed correctness, came in for her, and she left them "wishing she could stay, but you see how it is."

"She never looks eager," said Joy; "you wouldn't think she valued a good time so highly."

"No, not eager; just smug," said Jerry tersely, and they talked of other things.

Jerry the excitement-eater was dead, that was plain. Joy had always wished to see that side of her dispensed with. Then why did this change, this miraculous, softening change, stir irritation within her, throw a breach between them?

She could not fathom the reason until she took Jerry to the eleven o'clock and told her good-bye. There, with a farewell look at Jerry's brilliant face, enhanced by the beloved freckles, it came to her in a rush. She was jealous—jealous both ways! Before, she had been jealous of Phil Lancaster only for taking Jerry from her; now, she was jealous of Jerry herself, for the world in which she lived, the world upon which Joy had turned her back. . . .

She did not sleep well that night. Disturbing thoughts pressed urgently about her, and would not postpone their hearing.

It was a powerful force that had led Jerry to stop drinking, to drop her Excitement-Eating ways without regret. To pit oneself against such a force—to eliminate it from one's life—was an undertaking at the mysterious door of which Joy paused and shivered. . . .

” Oh, dear! What if it should rain? Can you imagine anything worse than organdy in the rain? And yet if it doesn’t rain, can you imagine anything worse than to have on dark silk, at Harvard Class Day, with everyone else in organdy?”

Thus Félicie, flattening her imperial nose against the window pane, a scowl menacing her untrodden brow, as the few clouds in the skies were menacing the calm of the June day.

Joy had been with Félicie and her aunt throughout the spring, a troubled spring of work and restlessness. The old wild longings that had once shaken her did not return. There was instead a dull, sick emptiness, which engulfed her work rather than allowing itself to be engulfed.

Few events had marked Joy’s calendar. Her father had made his long-anticipated visit, and found himself pleased with her environment as well as charmed by Pa Graham. Under Pa’s guidance Joy had worked herself into a position from which she could map out her progress for the next few years. “Nothing but death can stop me,” she told herself; and the words grew into a sort of refrain that twinkled into her mind at regular intervals, generally putting to rout some unwarranted flight of fancy.

Félicie had taken the spring at a pace that left faint smudges beneath her eyes, and an ever-so-little receding of the tide of colour on the cheeks that she boasted had never known a rouge-puff. It seemed as though she had been wound up and could not stop. Evenings when there was no excuse for going out, no especial festivity to attend, she would go to the movies, eat down a few thrills, leave early and dance late. Sometimes in the mornings, when her yawns were irrepressible, Joy would ask her why she never let down.

“My dear, you can’t stop going—you lose your grip!” she said, wide-eyed that the answer was not obvious.

“Losing your grip” was the one thing the Excitement-Eaters seemed to dread.

Now, Félicie was chafing between a watermelon-coloured organdy and a dark blue taffeta, both laid challengingly upon the bed.

“Why did I say I’d go, anyway?” she complained. “Of course, I want to go. It’s interesting, even if there are millions of relations and absolutely no cut-ins—but it isn’t worth it to have all this trouble about deciding!”

“If everyone usually wears organdy, why not chance it? They’ll all be in the same boat if it rains.”

This from Joy, as she combed her hair preparatory to donning organdy herself. Hal Jennings, the Harvardite who was taking Félicie to Class Day, had given her two tickets for the Stadium exercises and his club spread, and Joy had accepted Félicie’s invitation to share the tickets. She had never seen Harvard Class Day, and her anticipation was not dimmed by Félicie’s grumping. Félicie was always like that if she had to decide anything.

“Oh, I suppose so,” said Félicie, and retired to the closet to change; “but you *know* how it *looks* in the rain!”

When they were duly arrayed in filmy pink and blue, they presented themselves to Madame Durant for approval. She always liked to see Félicie before she went out anywhere, to criticize or approve her costume—usually to command changes, which was a sore trial to Félicie, as refutation into an ear-trumpet is as futile as it is disagreeable.

Madame Durant approved their “simple dresses” at first, then when they were ordered to “turn around,” remarked accusingly that she could see right through them, and they must each put on another good, thick petticoat.

Joy and Félicie exchanged glances of despair. If there is anything a girl hates, it is a good, thick petticoat. But the ear-trumpet ruled, and they retired to bolster themselves out. Since Joy had been associated with Madame Durant, she had made allowances for many of Félicie's characteristics. When they were starting out of the door, the penetrating voice that deaf people often acquire recalled them. Those little light coats weren't enough. They must take long, dark coats and umbrellas. Félicie started to crumple, then remembered her starched dress and compressed her emotion into a waver.

"It's bad enough to go not knowing how the weather's going to act, but to go dressed *piebald!*"

But they muffled themselves up properly, and with a final interlude of feeding the dog so that Madame Durant would not have it to do later, they were off. Félicie had refused to enter a street car in light things. "They'll think we're shop-girls just back from the Park, you *know* they will!" And so they had indulged in the formal luxury of a taxi.

"I suppose auntie was wise about those coats," Félicie said; "but I do hate to encourage her in anything."

"It seems so strange to have an older woman supervise one's clothes," said Joy. "I suppose that's because my mother died when I was so little, and father never wanted anyone to take her place—he wouldn't even have a housekeeper."

"Most girls would have been pretty queer, living that way. You were lucky to have come through it all right."

"*But did I?*" Joy wondered, as Félicie turned to peer out of the window at the smug blue sky. She had dismissed the subject.

"I've never been able to figure out why Harvard always gives such pepleless parties compared to other colleges. I'd never mention it to a Harvard man, because you know it's just as bad as discussing religion, you never get *anywhere*—but why do you suppose it is?"

"Never having been to a Harvard affair——"

"I shall die to-night, simply pass out, that's all. I'm sunk when I think of it. I just will make Hal take me somewhere else, that's all. In the first place everyone brings a girl and you know that's wrong. It leaves absolutely no stags. That ruins everything right there."

"Poor Harvard! Getting knocked for single-mindedness," Joy murmured.

"That's just what it is! At the Harvard-Yale game last fall, some Yale men, friends of Greg's, came over and cut in on me at the tea dance afterwards—they really made the dance almost good—and the Harvard men were simply furious! They've just got their minds set on straight dances!"

"Oh, well, you can't generalize. All Harvard men can't be so resourceful that they enjoy having a whole dance with a girl."

Before Félicie had this sifted down, the taxi-man drew up and informed them that they would have to walk from there.

The little clouds that had threatened like a baby's playful fist in the sapphire laughter of the sky, were now striking blows of grey menace into the blue.

"Didn't I *know* it would rain!" Félicie wailed. "Just *look* at that sky. *Why* do they have the Stadium exercises out-doors?"

Scattered lines of people hurrying to the Stadium; hundreds and hundreds of girls in all colours of organdy, with organdy hats—and spotless white slippers. Complacent mothers; excited fathers, trying not to look too proud; nondescript and sometimes awful people who would be lumped under the gross head, Relations; all urging their way to the Stadium. It

seemed as if the world was at Harvard Class Day—the world, and its Relations. As they were led to their cold stone seats by a brick-cheeked youth who hid his admiration beneath a mask of “Harvard indifference,” a treble voice lifted itself out of the crowd.

“Why, Joy Nelson! Yes, it is! Hullo, Joy! It’s me—see?”

It was Betty Grey, in black and white organdy combined in sophisticated lines that made her look all of eighteen—Betty Grey, who threw herself over to where Joy and Félicie were installing themselves, and hung a charming wedge between two surging lines of people anxious to get to their places.

“I haven’t seen you for such *ages*, I thought you were dead or something! You know, how you always think people are dead or something, when you don’t see them!”

A struggle ensued behind, which failed to dislodge her while she met Félicie. “People seem to be pushing me, but they don’t mean it—I always say, judge a crowd kindly—this is my first Class Day, and I’m terribly excited! Have you been singing just lots this year?”

“Just lots,” Joy repeated gravely. “What have you been doing? And how is—everybody?”

“Oh, Grant’s all right. I haven’t done anything but flunk English History—there’s a girl visiting us who knows you and your cousin—oh dear, it feels as if everyone in the world was pushing me! I’ll see you later, what spread are you going to?”

And Betty Grey was swirled along out of sight.

“They’re starting,” said Félicie. “Look, all the classes march in.”

It was at that moment when Félicie forgot to look at the sky, that the rain came down—and in no pathetic Boston drizzle; it gave itself out in the quantities it had been holding back all day, generously making up for lost time.

All over the Stadium people stood up and umbrellas snapped open, spreading their inky mushroom caps over slim stems of organdy. “It’ll only last a minute,” said someone, and the word was passed along until the mushrooms bobbed to the repetition: “Only a minute—only a minute!”

“It’s going to be more than a minute,” said Joy, whose feet were getting wet. “I’m going out until it stops.”

“Through all that crowd! I’d rather sit here, as long as we have umbrellas.”

“Well, a cold doesn’t mean to you what it would to me. I’ll come back when it holds up”; and Joy plunged forward into the flock that was making its way to the nearest exit. Beneath the stone shelter of the Stadium she found herself but little better off. The ground trampled by hundreds of wet feet was soggy; dripping people shook themselves all around her. She turned to seek a dryer place, and knocked into a young man who was hastening by. They both drew back with apologies which faded into silence on their lips. It was Packy.

“Joy!”

“Why, hello, Packy.” She tried to speak naturally; he made no attempt, and stood staring down at her until they became aware of the enraptured gaze of two pink-organdied flappers, who were obviously regretting the fact that they had so much hair matted over their ears.

“Joy—I’ve wanted to see you for a long time—where can we go, so I can talk to you?”

They fell back to the lee of one of the entrances, where there was comparative calm.

“I never had the nerve—to call up again, after that night—but I wanted to see you—I’ve wanted to see you for a long time—to tell you what I thought of myself for acting the way I did.”

Packy had grown in the months that had passed since she had seen him. The gangly stripling with the restless, roving eye and the feet that were always beating out a syllable of

jazz, was gone, leaving only reminiscences of himself. He had gathered composure, and his eyes had lost their look of seeking excitement.

“What have you been doing this year, Packy?” she asked involuntarily.

“Oh, that’s neither here nor there. As a matter of fact, I’ve been working.”

Working! Packy, the gilded one, with an income to keep him and his among the polo-labourers and golf-toilers!

“But—well, I’ve written I don’t know how many letters to you, Joy—and torn them up. Letters are rotten when you really want to say anything.”

They are distracted by a little girl, her organdy clinging to her in sodden folds, her improbable complexion fast fading to incoherency, as she came limping out of the rain to her mother who, firmly dry, had been standing against a pillar.

“Oh, mother, the rain has shrunk my shoes all up—I can’t hardly walk——”

“No-*ra!* You were out there, all this time? You’ve always *heard* about people who didn’t know enough to come in when it rained!”

“That good lady,” said Packy, “has described me complete. Last fall, I didn’t know enough to come in when it rained. I did know a few things, though, Joy. Can you believe that I could never have been such a cad—if I hadn’t been drunk?”

“I—can,” said Joy.

“I’ve thought it all over—I don’t know how many times—and I’ve thought it out. To go in back of the fact that I misjudged you—I misjudged Jerry and Sarah. Because we could act as freely at the apartment as though we were at our club—because they were on their own—and because you were with them, and on your own,—I thought—well, I didn’t quite think so at that—until I was drunk—and then I didn’t think at all.”

Insensibly they had retreated still farther from the crowd, and now stood in a muddy corner quite alone.

“I was in love with you, Joy, as much as I could ever be. I—I still am, I guess. It—seems to feel that way. I was always trying to puzzle out your status—just where you stood in the Jerry-Sarah household. But I didn’t understand, and so I lost you.”

“You—you needn’t blame yourself so, for not understanding,” said Joy; “almost anyone might have—I can see that now.”

“No—not any one who recognizes that we’re doing transitional stuff these days. I was coasting around on last century’s roller skates. They just hit the surface. Now they’re using ice skates, that go in a little. Oh, I’ve thought this all out—and got *my* ice skates!”

“What?” she faltered.

“Why, you know. We all know. Last century—no matter what men were—they *were all that women had*—so they took them and made the best of it. Now—no matter what the women of to-day are making of themselves—and a lot of women don’t exactly know *what* they’re making of themselves—they’re all men have—and *we*’re certainly not going to make the worst of it.”

Joy thought. This was a mean between the extremes of the discussion held at Fennelly’s between Greg and the two Princeton men. “Then you think it’s working around——”

“Yes—not in this generation, but eventually—things have got to work round to a better basis. Bye and bye the world’ll get straightened out—and it won’t go back to last century’s roller skates to do it, either. It takes time, and costs a lot on the way—it cost me you—anyway, it cost me an even chance for you.” He looked down at her serious face and quoted lightly—

“Might she have loved me? Just as well
She might have hated me, who can tell.
Where had I been now had the worst befall?”

“Meanwhile—here we are sopping up the rain at Class Day—she and I!”

“Here I am keeping you from reuniting with your class, you mean,” Joy supplemented. “I must say good-bye and let you go back. I can’t tell you how glad I am to have seen you now, Packy—to be able to remember you like this——”

“Then—then I can’t see you again,” he stated, in a quiet voice.

“It—wouldn’t do much good—would it?”

He bowed. At a distance, it looked like a casual leavetaking between two as casual acquaintances. “I—suppose not. Good-bye, Joy!” He took her hand for the briefest fraction of a clasp, and left her.

People were jerking their way back through the entrances, and she joined the fray. Out in the Stadium classes in gay costumes were walking into the field; the rain was extending a few moments of leniency.

A fine drizzle started up with the air of permanency as the Ivy orator finished his quips and Harvard-and-Its-Relations flocked from the Stadium to the Yard. Joy wondered as she looked at the faces of the girls passing by and then at their soiled-white-kid-feet, how many had found heart to enjoy the exercises in concern for their apparel which had to last through the dance that evening. Félicie had managed to keep fairly dry, with the aid of her coat and umbrella, and was in average spirits.

They met Hal Jennings at his hall, where he was vibrating between ten Relations, and joined the family board outdoors around a long table sandwiched in with many others beneath an awning. The crowd pressing about them was overpoweringly correct, and no one seemed to lose their gaiety although the rain came through the awnings and the walking underfoot was almost marshy by this time. Joy ate strawberries, her teeth chattering with cold, and tried not to show that she was minding a steady trickle down her back from a hole in the awning. She met several nice looking boys who came up to greet Félicie, each of whom told Joy that “it would have been an awfully pretty spread out here if it hadn’t rained” and soon dashed back to their Relations.

“I wish you were going to stay to the dancing, and meet them when they’re feeling right,” Félicie whispered. “Most of the Relations will have gone by then.”

When Joy was able to beat a retreat politely, Félicie and Hal came to the gate with her, and stood waving after her as she drove away in a cab. Never had Félicie’s loveliness been so breath-taking. Little dark rings of hair clung around her face, the damp air curling them into tendrils no Permanent Wave could duplicate; her lips were parted in the smile with which she could dazzle without bringing a wrinkle or cross line into the pink and white perfection of her skin. It seemed almost incredible that such wonder of nature could have so squandered itself on one girl. . . .

Wearied by the events of the day, Joy went early to bed after giving Madame Durant a sketch of the main events of the rain. Sleep came reluctantly; she was thinking over Packy’s words. “No matter what the women of to-day are making of themselves—they’re all we’ve got.” “Bye and bye the world’ll get straightened out—it takes time—and costs a lot on the way.” How Packy had changed from the casual, flippant, “jazz-hound” of only last fall. To think about things so—She had made an error common among girls—Because men of his type had never

talked seriously to her, she had supposed that they never thought seriously.

It was true; these days were, must be, but transitional. Excitement-Eaters, dancers in the dark—all were part of the wheel of progress that seems to go back at times before it turns forward again. But “it takes time, and costs a lot on the way.”

It costs a lot, it costs a lot. Had she been asleep? She was still repeating those words in the quiescent darkness of the room. What had awakened her? The call of the telephone bell, a long shriek in the black space of the night, answered her question. Still half dazed, she stumbled to the door and into the hall. The telephone was on a little table outside the kitchen. She made her way sat down. “Hello.”

“Hello. Is this Brighton 7560?”

It was a man’s voice speaking, speaking hurriedly, as if something fearful was knocking behind every word, anxious to come out.

“Yes,” Joy steadied her voice. “Joy Nelson speaking.”

“Oh, Miss Nelson, is that you—Miss Nelson—I—we’ve had—this is Hal Jennings speaking, Miss Nelson—I’m at the River Hill hospital—we’ve had a—bad accident.”

The darkness swayed around Joy as blackness sways when one’s eyes are closed and one presses one’s eyeballs. “Félicie—what of Félicie!” she cried into the mouthpiece.

“She—she’s horribly hurt, Miss Nelson. We—we just brought her here. I thought you’d be able to know—to notify——”

“Not—not *seriously* hurt?” Joy gasped, pressing the receiver close to her ear against the frenzy to throw it and its horror far from her.

“They don’t know yet—but they say they don’t think so. I—I’d come right up here, if I were you, Miss Nelson.”

“I’ll be up as soon as I can get there!” she cried, and started to ring off; but his voice arrested her.

“I ordered a taxi sent down for you—it’ll be there any time now.”

She put down the receiver and dashed back to her room, where she hurled herself into her clothes, her brain a confusion of terrors which gave way to compelled calm as she finished dressing and put on her hat. She mustn’t lose her head. She mustn’t lose her head—no matter what had happened. She mustn’t wake Madame Durant—when she saw the doctors, she would know what to tell her, how best to soften the shock. She must notify Greg, and she did not know his address. Learning it took going through several of Félicie’s letters. Getting a sleepy Western Union took more breathless moments. She finally sent the message: “Félicie injured in accident, is at River Hill Hospital. Come at once. Joy Nelson.” She glanced at her watch. It was three o’clock. Three o’clock in the morning, and a taxi was waiting outside!

The taxi-driver was an old Irishman with sideburns and a mouth which had not gone shut since he had encountered the accident. She sat in front with him and heard his story on the way. He had been going down the long stretch of road in Wayland when he had encountered the wreck—car in the ditch, young man with bloody face and one arm hanging loose, trying to pull the young lady from beneath scatterings of glass that had been the wind shield. The young man was so distraught-like he wouldn’t even have heard a car go by, but he had pulled up and offered help. Together they had taken away the glass embracing Félicie and carried her to the taxi.

“*Glass!*” cried Joy. “Did it—is her face——”

“I dunno, Miss. Couldn’t see much of it for blood.” And he resumed his narration. The nearest hospital he knew was the River Hill, and they had driven there. It was private, and it

was not their custom to take accident cases, but in the face of this piteous spectacle they could not refuse admittance.

River Hill was on the outskirts of Brighton, and they had scaled the hill almost before he finished the story. She paid him, with no time to reflect that he had been paid in advance, no room for anything but the horror of supposition, as she was admitted.

Hal Jennings was in the ante room off from the hall—his arm in a sling and a bandage over one side of his face.

“Félicie!” Joy cried, without preface. “Was she cut? Did anything happen to *her face*?”

“That’s what’s so terrible,” he said, looking away from her after his first rush of relieved recognition. “My God, Miss Nelson,—it’s—it looked as if it were cut to pieces.”

Félicie’s face! That glory and wonder of perfection—cut to pieces! *What would be left?* Her senses reeled.

“Where are the doctors? Where are they? I must see them. What do they say?”

“They’re with her now. They’re coming down here—as soon as they finish.”

She looked at him, acknowledging his injuries for the first time. “You weren’t hurt badly?”

“No.” He brushed his affairs aside. “What did you do—about notifying people?”

“I didn’t wake Madame Durant. I wired her—her fiancé.”

“Her—fiancé!” He took a step back. “I didn’t know she was engaged.”

“She—*isn’t*,” mumbled Joy. “But it’s the man she loves and who loves her and they intend to get married some day—what *do* they call it nowadays?”

It was a ghostly place, a hospital at that hour of the morning. A nurse dozed at the switchboard in the hall. The lights were subdued. Silence was terrible.

“How—how did you happen to be out in Wayland, anyway?” she asked. “You haven’t told me—anything.”

“Why—we left the dance about ten-thirty—Félicie was bored, and I’d had enough of it—I if we only had stayed!—and we motored out to the Red and Black, where we ate and danced a while. We started back about twelve-thirty. You know it’s a long way—we hadn’t been there much more than an hour. Coming back we were both full of pep and decided to race everything we saw. We didn’t see anything for a long time, and we were afraid we weren’t going to get our chance, when turning into that stretch of road up in Wayland we saw the tail light of a car at the other end. I put on every bit of speed there was and we came along—I don’t know how fast—as fast as the car can go—could go. It was a clear stretch you see;—and then all at once the wheel went silly—just like that! the steering gear broke—and before I knew even what had happened, the car went into the ditch head foremost. I don’t know how long it was after that I came to and shuffled around. It was sure fortunate that that cab should have happened along.”

He was talking in little, weary jerks. For the first time Joy thought of his side of the matter—His car smashed, and himself put out of active business on his Class Day night—what interpretation would his parents put on these unglossable facts?

“I’m sorry for you, Mr. Jennings,” she said. “Your people—it’s a shame.”

He acknowledged this with a nod that showed the subject had occurred to him before. “Nothing really matters if Félicie comes out all right. All the same—my people will never understand or believe how this came about—or get over it.”

“Older people are that way,” said Joy.

“It won’t get into the papers, anyway—not from this hospital, thank God! And I’ve bribed the cabman.”

A step in the halls, and a young man in white linen came to the door.

“Dr. Dexter!” said Hal. Joy was on one side of him, as he came to the other. “Félicie—is she—how is she?”

“Félicie’s all right,” he said, and smiled meaninglessly at them. “Not a bone broken, although she is bruised and shaken and pretty badly cut. We’ve been taking some stitches—beautiful work——”

“But her face—her face,” cried Joy, “was her face cut? Tell us——”

“Her face—yes. It was cut rather badly. But it’s been sewed up now, and with some novacain she will have an easy night.”

“But will she—will the cuts heal? Cuts do heal, don’t they?” Joy implored.

“Oh, certainly, cuts heal. Of course, there’ll be a nasty scar pretty much over the whole of her face——”

She blinked her eyes at the white-coated doctor who could say such unthinkable things with brisk, unchanged readiness. “Félicie’s face scarred. She was—she was the loveliest thing you ever saw. The loveliest thing you ever saw.”

“I would suggest,” said the doctor, “that you both go home and get a little sleep. Everything will be better in the morning. Perhaps you can even see her then.”

“*See her!*” Hal Jennings echoed.

Joy looked at his face. Pity, of course—but strongest, the recoil of horror.

Later, she could not force her troubled brain to sleep. Félicie of the unforgettable loveliness—with her face puckered into scars—How would a love that had been sorely tried already receive this hideousness? And how—how to tell Madame Durant. . . .

When the yellow rays of a spotless morning scoured clean by yesterday’s rainfall embraced her room, she rose and whipped up her flagging nerves with a cold sponge. Before the world-conquering exhilaration of the plunge could wear off, she poured a concise account of the accident into the ear-trumpet, minimizing it to such an extent that Madame Durant demanded why they hadn’t brought Félicie straight home.

“Her cuts are too many,” Joy explained, “but the important thing is there are no bones broken, no serious injuries.”

The two reached the hospital at nine o’clock and waited an hour before Madame Durant was allowed to go in and sit by Félicie’s bed for five minutes. The old lady came down rather shaken. “She’s all bandaged up,” she said, “and of course she can’t talk loud enough for me to hear.” “But she’s doing splendidly,” amended the nurse who had accompanied her.

“May—may I go on now?” asked Joy.

The nurse hesitated. “I really wouldn’t—so soon after this call——”

“Then I’ll wait, if you’ll let me know when I can come.” So Joy waited alone in the ante room, and answered Hal Jennings’ anxious inquiries over the phone. . . .

Finally the nurse who smiled like an automaton came to the door and beckoned. Joy looked at her watch. It was half past twelve; she had been in the anteroom over three hours.

A long white bed with a long, white figure, the white coverlet lapping itself around the gracious lines. Félicie’s hair in a loose, thick braid, her tendrils sketching dark fancies over the pillow. A mass of bandages, from which Félicie’s perfect lips escaped, unharmed. Félicie’s brown velvet eyes peering oddly from recesses in the bandaging. “Joy” —said the lips and her voice carried high lights scarcely dimmed by pain—“you are a darling. Miss Clark, I *must* have a glass of water!”

As the nurse vanished—“That was just to get her out. She’s always here. She drives me wild!” A little pause; and the figure stirred. “Joy—you’ll tell me, won’t you? My face—what’s

going to come of it? It's so cut—and no one will tell me—how it's going to look.”

“How can anyone know so soon?” said Joy with taut lips. The brown eyes looked at her for a steadfast minute, over their horizon of bandaging.

“Never mind, Joy—I know. My face—oh, I can't say it! But I know. I can feel there isn't even much of it left.”

“Cuts always feel worse than they are——”

“I could tell. By the way they looked when I said anything. My eyes—were left whole.” Her voice was conversational. “Why wasn't I—cut *all* to pieces while I was about it? I might just as well be dead.”

“Félicie, you mustn't say such things!” Joy said weakly.

“I might—just as well be dead. You can't deny it. What is left me? No man could stand a face all gashed and sewed——”

“You don't *know* it's going to be all——”

“Oh, yes—I do. . . . Don't let Hal Jennings come in here—will you? I know it wasn't his fault—we would never have left the dance if I hadn't wanted some excitement—but he stands for—everything for which I've always passed up Greg and the only things that matter. The—only things—that matter! They all come under—love, Joy. And I passed Greg up—and now it's too late.”

An interlude while the nurse appeared and pleasantly hinted for Joy's departure, which brought about a paroxysm beneath the bandages,——

“I want her to stay! She's got to stay! It isn't as if I were really sick! I wish I was, but you know I'm not! She's got to stay! You can go to your lunch now, or something! You know the doctor said I could see people and be alone and things!”

And when the nurse departed, whether on a search for the doctor or her lunch Joy did not know; “I hate her! Oh, my God, I wish I were dead!”

It was at that awful moment while Joy racked her bursting brain for what to say that a knock came at the door.

“Don't let them in. It's another nurse, or something. I'm not well enough to have a bath yet, and they keep talking about it.”

The knock was repeated, and the door flung open. Greg was in the doorway; the boy in his face gone to manhood, his skin the color of untamished silver.

“They told me—*Félicie!*” and he crossed to the bed, his eyes travelling over Joy as if she were the little rug that was on the floor. “Félicie, my darling—thank God you're here!”

“Greg!” the perfect lips articulated. “Greg—how did you come here?—Go away!”

“Go away! When I've done nothing else but aim for your side since I heard. . . . How are you feeling, dear? They told me downstairs that you would be quite all right in a short time——”

“You don't understand, Greg. They didn't tell you——” the bandages quivered. Joy interposed.

“Félicie, you really aren't well enough—we'll go now, and come back later——”

“I want him to hear first! I want him to hear first! Greg,—my face is cut to pieces. I shall never be beautiful again. I can say I was now, because I'm—not—any more. I'll be ugly—horrible—do you hear? Now go away! I never—never want to see you again!”

The brown eyes closed, the mouth relaxed, drawn down by little quivers of agony. For one minute of heart's horror Greg stood silent above the bed. Over by the door Joy watched, breath caught in midair, as the boy suddenly went on his knees beside the bed and fell to stroking her

prodigal hair.

“Why—sweetheart!” he said, in a crooning voice—almost like that of a mother soothing a Bogey-terrified child—“what do you think a few little cuts on the face amount to? You couldn’t be anything but beautiful if you—tried! Your hair—it’s the most wonderful hair in the world! Your form—that in itself would make a beauty out of most girls! Your eyes, Félicie—and your—lips!”

And, his head bowed, he kissed the lips.

It was then that the nurse returned, armed with an official looking interne. Miss Durant was to remain absolutely undisturbed, which was certainly not her condition at present. . . . Tomorrow she would be better able to receive—strenuous callers. . . .

Joy and Greg left in a silence which lasted until they reached out-of-doors. Then Greg spoke: “I’ll go in town and get settled somewhere, then I’ll come back and camp around the place. They’ve got to let me see her again to-day.”

“But do you think they will, when they said——”

“She’s got to hear me! There she is thinking—thinking a few little cuts will make any difference to me——”

“It’s—it’s more than few little cuts, Greg.”

“Well—what if it is? She’s the girl I love. How could she think that I would—that I could—stop caring for her—because she is the victim of a hideous accident?”

Joy became conscious that she was looking at a very wonderful thing. A man in the world she had been learning to view so cynically—a man who was not made of such slim elements that he could cease to love. . . . And so she made her discovery. *A man does not love a girl for what is in her. He loves her for and with what is in him.* What could be greater honour than to have the love of a man such as he?

He took her to the door of Félicie’s apartment, and she went in to reassure Madame Durant with tales of how much Félicie had been able to talk and how comfortable, comparatively, she was. It approached the time to start in town for her lesson, and she gathered up her music from the little upright, with loving hands. All passes; Art alone endures.

Then suddenly Joy cried: “*No—No!*” in such a rending voice that some faint echo penetrated even to Madame Durant, who made her way into the living-room in time to see Joy throw her music violently from her. It scattered over the room, in a chaos of sheets, a wilderness of notes.

“Why, Joy!” the old lady said reprovingly, and reached for the ear-trumpet to hear an explanation of this pettish behavior. But Joy, with a strange, breathless look, dashed by her down the hall.

She went into her room and closed the door. It was a long afternoon. Part of the time she would fall into a sleepy contemplation of the wall, but between these blanks she thought. The only things that matter! They all come under—love.

She had always known this. She had been building of herself a temple to love, when blaspheming hands had shaken the temple, leaving love a thing to be feared. She had shuddered away from love and turned to music. That could not turn and rend her. . . . Then love had come, again, so bright and pure a thing that she could not be afraid. But the bright blaze had burned itself out, and then when nothing was left . . . there was music. And the soul of music had united with her own soul as had been predicted—weaving itself ever more closely into her being. Then love had come again—and this time it had not burst upon her in the flame of romance, the golden glory of dreams; instead, it had quietly encompassed her until she knew

—that it spelled all of life to her. Keeping pace with music, it had woven itself ever more closely into her being. The discovery had made her dismiss it—as if a thing that had had become a part of her, could be dismissed. *But music was a part of her, too!*

Félicie had given up “the only things that matter,” and met her terrible lesson. She, Joy, must cease wavering in the world of phantoms, of those who put love aside, those to whom it does not come, and those who are incapable of love.

It was towards evening that she telephoned Jim. A dreadful fear assailed her while she was waiting for him to come to the wire. Supposing he were sick! Supposing he wouldn't be there—She had always regarded him as an institution that never failed. She had heard of girls regarding men in that way before—and how they had been surprised when they turned to the institution, after a long time. In her overtired, overwrought condition, his familiar voice brought a relief so great as to be almost hysterical. She babbled out the story of Félicie's calamity, and implored him to come out. She implored him with unnecessary fervour. . . . When she had rung off, she realized that she was overdoing things, and calmed down to the extent of telephoning the hospital and getting Greg on the wire. He informed her that as yet he had not been able to see Félicie.

“I brought bales of roses that they've surrounded her with in her bed,” he said; “and she always likes things like that.”

“I'll be up later;” and Joy relayed the latest bulletin to Madame Durant, who had several times during the day arrayed herself in her bonnet and cloak preparatory to another journey to the hospital, being stopped each time by Joy's assurances concerning the futility of another visit that day.

“Why don't you practice?” asked the old lady, now noting her restlessness. “You haven't practiced at all to-day—and I don't know what Félicie'd do, if she could see all that music spilled on the parlour floor.”

Joy took the hint, and went to pick up her music. All the sweepingly dramatic moments of life seem to have the inglorious aftermath of picking up after oneself. It was a slow process, putting the sheets together, sorting them. When she came to a favorite, or an intriguing bit, she would sit on her feet and play on the glorified instrument that her voice had now become, and amuse herself by letting her voice go off in sky-rockets.

It was so that Jim's ring found her—eyes a warm heliotrope, cheeks in exultant flame, as singing well always left her. He dwelt on her radiance a moment before he spoke.

“Joy, that's ghastly about Félicie—but I've been thinking it over—and I know this plastic surgery they used in the war can do something—they say sometimes it makes people better looking than they were before they had to have it done.”

“Plastic surgery!” Joy cried.

“Yes—Of course, Nature had done so much for Félicie that it might be hard to improve upon what there was before in that case; but they can do a lot. The doctors there have probably got that up their sleeves, and are waiting to see how the cuts heal.”

“I must telephone Greg;” Joy flashed; but she paused a moment before going down the hall. Madame Durant's door was open, and if she saw that Joy had finished her picking up, she might come into the parlor. Once there, she was good for the evening, as Félicie had often warned her.

“Jim,” she said softly, “you're always solving problems for me—aren't you?”

She came up to him, gingerly, and stopped while still a little distance away. Although the fire of song was still spreading its flame within her—she was very sure. But how did one say

these things?

“Solve just one more for me, Jim—and then we’ll either be through—or just beginning. If—if I needed you—and needed my music too—what—what would be the answer?”

“I—I don’t know what you mean, Joy,” he said, all at once very white and intent. “But any answer to a question like that would be—love. I love you—all of you. Your voice, your music is a part of you and I love that too. If—if you needed me—and needed music—you could have both. It’s been done by others. Men are not so conceited nowadays that they imagine they can mean everything to a woman. Does—does that help you in your problems?”

“Yes, it does!” she cried, suddenly exultant, “Jim—I need you more than my music, or anything else in this world! Music and love go hand in hand—but now I know—that love always leads the way!”

She was in his arms; peace that she had never known was sighing its way into all her being; and an ecstasy born of that peace, that transcended all the beauty of music heard or dreamed.

THE END

Transcriber's Notes

Obvious printing errors have been silently corrected.

Inconsistencies in hyphenation, spelling and punctuation have been preserved.

[The end of *Dancers in the Dark* by Dorothy Speare]