TAWNY

BY DONALD HENDERSON CLARKE

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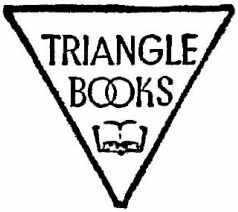
BY DONALD HENDERSON CLARKE

AUTHOR OF "MILLIE," "LOUIS BERETTI," ETC.



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Tawny

I

Gramma and Aunt Mary were singing:

"The band played Annie Laurie and the horses wore high hats. . . ."

They were in the double brass bed, and Tawny was lying on a feather bed supported by an ironing board placed upon three kitchen chairs as close to them as possible. Tawny loved to hear Gramma and Aunt Mary sing after they all were in bed. She was thinking that the horses they mentioned were the horses that dragged the street car across town in Twenty-third Street, where she used to live.

These horses wore big, floppy straw hats and their twitching ears stuck out, through holes provided. Tawny loved horses, and she thought of the beautiful ones around in the horse market of Fiss, Doer and Carroll in Twenty-second Street at Second Avenue. There, horses of all sizes and colors were paraded in the street at auctions. The horse market was a fascinating place with a wooden front painted a light blue on which the firm name was printed in big white letters.

Gramma was singing alone now. She sang:

Dan and his girl got married—Oh
Through love, you know, and so and so.
And all the boys from there below
Assembled at the spree.
There was Mike and John and Mary Ann
And Pat McCann and me.
We had a row that very night,
Put the ladies in a fright.
There was murder, right and tight—
And hurroo, boys, here we are again; here we are again; here we are

again.

And hurroo, boys, here we are again; here we are again; here we are again.

Tawny shivered with sheer pleasure. She loved the rollicking, stirring tune of the old Irish song, and she thought this must have been quite an exciting party that Gramma sang about—something like the party at the Clancys upstairs a month back when the police came with swinging hickory sticks, and an ambulance arrived with a clanging bell, and a patrol wagon. They carried a man on a stretcher to the ambulance. He was all bandaged up and he breathed very loud, although unconscious. And the policemen took two men away in the patrol wagon, and a big throng had collected in Twenty-third Street around the Elevated station. A woman kept up a monotonous shrieking upstairs. Tawny wondered if that had been murder right and tight.

She shivered again with delicious fear. She knew where there had been a murder—right in the same apartment house in which she now lived in Bradhurst Avenue, Washington Heights. A man had murdered a girl and cut up the body and thrown the pieces in the river. But the pieces had been found and the man had been electrocuted in Sing Sing. And all the little girls in the neighborhood knew what might happen to them if they spoke to strange men.

Mr. Stong, the janitor of the Bradhurst Avenue apartment, was a little man with straggly gray whiskers, bent shoulders and close-set bloodshot dark eyes. He was accustomed to lurk in dark corners in the halls and jump out suddenly at Tawny and other little girls who lived there. He'd say:

"If I get you down cellar, I'll cut you up."

"If I get you down cellar, I'll sit you on a lighted candle."

Life was exciting and exquisitely terrifying, either uptown in Bradhurst Avenue where Tawny lived with her father and mother, or down here in East Twenty-third Street where she visited Gramma, her mother's mother, week-ends, and where even now in bed she was conscious of the sweetish-sickish smell of the Gas House over in Avenue A between Twenty-first and Twenty-second Street.

Far from disliking this odor, Tawny loved it. It made her think of the beautiful effects when the stacks of the Gas House flared, lighting the sky and illuminating the entire neighborhood. There was nothing quite so lovely as the Gas House.

Lying on her ironing-board bed she couldn't see those flares from the Gas House. The windows in the three bedrooms of Gramma's six-room railroad apartment all opened into the long hall which extended from the front door back to

the kitchen. The only windows giving a glimpse of the outer world were those in the parlor in front, which offered a splendid view of the Twenty-third Street station of the Second Avenue El, that at this point swings around from First Avenue, through Twenty-third Street, into Second Avenue, and the kitchen windows in back, which looked out upon the backyard. But if Tawny couldn't see the flares, which were most beautiful observed from the recreation pier at the foot of Twenty-third Street, she could imagine them. She was pretty happy lying there drowsily listening to Gramma sing and breathing the aroma of the Gas House.

Gramma's flat was on the second floor and nowhere near as elegant as the five-room apartment in which Tawny lived with her father and mother uptown. The parlor seldom was used, except when there were callers or when Tawny leaned out the window watching the elevated trains pull into the stations and enjoying the embarking and debarking of passengers.

The most interesting passengers were the immigrants in their outlandish costumes and their dazed or excited expressions, toting bags, boxes and even small trunks, with perhaps a bird in a cage now and then. A great many immigrants got off at the Twenty-third Street station of the Second Avenue El in those days, and they added mightily to one's enjoyment of life.

Tawny's Uncle Dan, her mother's brother, occupied the bedroom next to the parlor. Uncle Dan was a bartender in Forger's Saloon on Third Avenue near Twenty-third. He had dark hair with reddish glints, which he slicked down in neat scallops over his forehead, bold dark eyes, always bloodshot, fiery red cheeks, what has been termed a walrus moustache, and a paving block chin. He was six feet, with big shoulders and a bull neck, and the beginning of a paunch. His great, hairy hands were hard and rough and reddened from sozzling all day in beer and the water tank in which the big schooners were rinsed. He drank flats—that is, whisky glasses—of beer all day long with customers, and before he went to bed absorbed a quart of Old Bushmills. The quart of Old Bushmills made him sleep as soundly as if he had taken hypnotics. No one, except Uncle Dan, knew about this quart of Old Bushmills. And such was the iron of his great body, and its lack of nerves, that he arose in the morning and dressed in checked suit, with a yellow diamond in his black cravat, with hands as steady as if he had drunk nothing but water. They were mighty hands, with mighty fingers, attached to mighty arms. No one, not even the giants of the beer trucks drawn by their great Percherons, could put Uncle Dan's arm down or crush beer bottle caps between thumb and fingers as easily as he.

Cousin Joe had the bedroom between Uncle Dan's and Gramma's. Cousin Joe was five feet ten, with dark blond hair and blue eyes, and was very serious about life

and work and the future, as only a serious youth may be. He was twenty and worked as telephone clerk for Harder & Harder, stock brokers, in Wall Street. He always wore blue suits with black four-in-hand ties and black shoes, well polished. He manicured his own nails and was a teetotaler, being a member of the St. Jerome Society.

Cousin Joe never had very much to say around the house, but he was amiable and pleasant and gave nickels to Tawny now and then. He was always reading and went to night school. Gramma said:

"Always got your nose stuck in a book. No good'll ever come of it."

There was no dining room. The family ate in the kitchen which looked out upon the bare backyard where there was a privy. It wasn't always necessary to use this privy because between the kitchen and the kitchen of the adjoining apartment was a toilet, with doors opening into both kitchens and keys by which to insure the proper privacy. Slops always were emptied in the privy.

There was no bathtub and no hot water, but there was running cold water in the sink and a coal range, and the kitchen was large and bright, a most happy room to Tawny. It was here that Uncle Dan and Cousin Joe and Gramma and Aunt Mary, who never had married and never would marry, took their Saturday night baths in a washtub, the water being heated on the coal range.

Gramma was obsessed with the idea that a Saturday night bath was a prime necessity of life. But she never had any use for bathtubs. In fact, when Tawny's father showed her the nice porcelain tub in the tiled bathroom in his flat uptown, Gramma said:

"I'd never get into wan of thim. If I ever got in I'd never get out."

No one pretended to understand the processes of Gramma's reasoning, but knowing Gramma, no one argued with her. And she never got into a bathtub until the day she died.

Tawny thought her father was the handsomest man and her mother the most beautiful woman in the world. Charles David Simon Bohun was six feet in his stockings and straight as an officer and gentleman physically. There was a difference of opinion about his morals. He had black, wavy hair, and dark gray eyes, with thick black brows and lashes, and a long, lean, handsome, reckless, clean-shaven face. A devilish spark burned deep in his eyes and a hint of devilish swagger was in his gait.

Many women felt their hearts jump the instant they saw Dave Bohun. And that had been the case with Birdy McKinley, Tawny's mother, then in the chorus at Weber & Field's Music Hall. However, in this instance, Dave Bohun's heart had turned over also, and the two turning hearts had rolled a pair of irresponsibles into

the Little Church Around the Corner one afternoon after champagne in J. B. Martin's and made them one in the eyes of all others except Gramma, who said that no marriage was binding unless it took place in the Catholic Church.

Tawny's mother had the same effect on men that Dave Bohun had on women, only perhaps a little more so. Birdy was no modern bean pole upon which to hang a frock. She was a female of the species with curves which had to be fitted. She was five feet five and weighed between one hundred and thirty and one hundred and thirty-five pounds.

"And sure," Gramma said, "Dan can shpan Birdy's waist with his hands."

But it wasn't Birdy's undulating shape, nor her honey-colored hair, nor her big almond-shaped brown eyes, nor her naturally glowing cheeks, nor her slightly tip-tilted and adorable nose, nor her dimpled chin that were altogether responsible for her attractiveness. It was the intense femininity of her, and the high spirit of her. She radiated health and personality.

Birdy drank a great deal of anything that was handy—beer, whisky, gin or champagne. And when she had drank a bit more than a sufficiency she was more likely than not to start a riot in a restaurant, on the street, in a hansom or in the Bradhurst Avenue flat.

She had a knack for throwing objects like water glasses, perfume bottles, hair brushes and even mirrors. But Birdy always was careful never to make a bull's-eye. She hurled her ammunition in the general direction of the human target, but never directly at him. Dave understood this, and so did Birdy's other men friends and proprietors of restaurants and head waiters and captains and waiters.

Birdy wouldn't have stepped on a worm if she could have helped it. She wasn't out to hurt any living thing. She merely was obsessed with the idea of putting on a good show and proving that she was a young woman of temperament who was not to be trifled with and who was to be given a great deal of attention. She was kind hearted but she had to be the center of attraction.

The blend of Dave and Birdy had given Tawny hair and eyes which weren't yellow and weren't brown, and a skin which wasn't dark and yet wasn't dazzling white like her mother's, although its texture was as soft and perfect. When she was three her father said she reminded him most of a little lion cub.

"She's tawny like a lion," he said.

"Tawny's a nice name for her," Birdy said. "Give mama a kiss, Tawny."

And that's how it happened that no one called Tawny by her real name, which was Miriam Louise.

Dave Bohun had a large amount of heavy old silver marked with crests in the

Bradhurst Avenue apartment, and brilliant uniforms and swords, only remaining souvenirs of the days when he had been an officer—and a gentleman who played cards without the wherewithal to pay his losses.

When she was a little girl Tawny wasn't overly impressed by the silver, but she was overwhelmed with delight by the uniforms which her father donned, ostensibly for her benefit, but to no little degree for his own, in the privacy of the apartment. She shrieked with pleasure to see her handsome father in his glittering regimentals, and even at the age of five she was trying to fence with him, clashing one shining sword against another while Birdy cried:

"You're crazy, Dave. Someone'll get hurt. Those swords are sharp."

But no one ever did get hurt. Tawny and her father only had fun. And part of the fun was when Tawny played she was the queen, and her father kneeled in front of her sitting on her throne in the living room, and she knighted him for his valiance in the wars. Dave had enough medals and decorations for real valiance in real wars to warrant knighthood, maybe, but those cards and the little ball which hops around a whirling wheel and galloping horses had put an end to all such ideas except in make-believe.

Dave dressed, more often than not for Sunday, in shining silk top hat, frock coat and striped trousers. Tawny loved to go to church with her father. She wore green a great deal, which harmonized with her coloring, making her a green and golden little girl. If she wore a green frock, her hair ribbons were green and her sash was green and she carried a tiny green parasol to match. And she swayed her hips a little as her mother, who was a perfect example, did and was proud because her father was the handsomest man in the world and all the other ladies looked at him.

Dave called for Tawny Sunday afternoon in June. They boarded one of those Twenty-third Street cross-town horse cars, and sat close together on the hard seat, upholstered in carpet cloth, while the horses clopped along over the pavement. A nice old lady in a black bonnet and a black bombazine dress said to Tawny:

"You are a sweet little girl."

"I am not a little girl any more," Tawny replied. "I reached Gramma's toilet bell today."

That's what she called the chain which flushed the toilet—a bell.

The old lady in the black bombazine dress stiffened up very straight, grasping her black reticule in black-gloved hands, her corsets creaking a little. Dave Bohun, polished ebony stick slanted gracefully against the slatted floor between his slender polished shoes, smiled ever so slightly and squeezed Tawny's hand in his.

They both, each in his way, thought life was mighty joyful.

When they entered their five-room flat on the fourth floor of the six-story apartment house in Bradhurst Avenue, Birdy wasn't there to greet them. But there was a note for Dave on the yellow silk-covered pin cushion in the matrimonial bed chamber. It read:

> "*Dear Dave*:
>
> *I have gone to Philadelphia with The Lancers. It is no use to come after me. Goodbye.*
>
> *Birdy.*"

"Your mother has gone away for a while," Dave told Tawny. "I guess we'll have to invite Gramma to come up here and live with us."

Tawny stared at her father. She felt awfully empty because her mother had gone away and she wanted to cry, but first she had to get the cue from her father. He smiled down at her and said:

"Anyway, first we'll go out to a restaurant and have dinner and a nice party. That'll be fun, won't it?"

Tawny nodded, a trifle uncertainly, her eyes still big and wondering, slightly moist with unshed tears. But she smiled hesitantly, and replied:

"Yes, sir. That'll be fun."

II

Gramma came next day to live with Tawny and her father. First thing she said was:

"There's such a thing as bein' too polite. It's affected for you to be always sayin' *sir* and *ma'am* and *please* and *thank you* and *if you don't mind*. You father's puttin' too many highfalutin idears in your head. You're just common folks like everybody no matter how thick you spread the butter."

Gramma repeated the objectionable politeness in a mincing manner and with a sarcastic intonation, but although Tawny loved Gramma a lot, she loved her father more, and she continued to be polite—except to Gramma.

When the first Saturday night came around Gramma put water on to heat on the gas range in the kitchen. She didn't like gas, which was a new-fangled notion, and missed her good coal range, but what could she do?

"Aren't you going to take your bath in the tub, Gramma?" Tawny asked.

"Most certainly not," Gramma replied with dignity.

"But there's hot water in the faucet, Gramma."

"Sure, and I never thought of that now. Tawny, will you be after fillin' the tub for me in the kitchen?"

So Tawny filled the washtub resting on the brown linoleum of the kitchen and Gramma took her Saturday-night bath just as she always had.

Tawny bathed daily in the tub, as was the habit of her father and mother. But Gramma said:

"You can overdo this washin' yourself. Too much washin' is liable to bring on a decline. Once a week, of a Saturday night, is enough for annywan."

Gramma also said the night air was bad for humans, and argued to keep the windows closed in the bedroom which Tawny now shared with her father. Gramma said:

"Sure, there's consumption in the night air. I've been healthy all me life, and all me folks before me, and never a windy was open at night."

Gramma also considered that the moon shining on a sleeping person's face engendered insanity. Dave said:

"The only superstition I've got is that it's bad luck to be run over by a red train. You'd better adopt the same one, Tawny."

This puzzled Tawny. She asked:

"What is superstition?"

"It's being silly enough to think seeing a black cat or walking under a ladder or breaking a mirror brings bad luck, or that sleeping with the moon shining in your face makes you crazy."

"Oh," Tawny said. "But if anybody was run over by a red train they'd be killed, wouldn't they?"

"That's the point," Dave explained.

"But it wouldn't matter what color the train was."

"That's another point," Dave said. "But just you don't be afraid of anything except a red train, and you'll be all right."

Tawny never forgot that.

The Bradhurst Avenue apartment house was considered quite refined and high-class for the period and neighborhood. It was constructed of red brick, was six stories with basement, and there were six apartments on each floor.

In front was a marble stoop reached by three marble steps. Another marble step led to the front vestibule, also of marble. This grandeur was heightened by an intricately wrought iron railing.

On either side of the vestibule were rows of black buttons, eighteen on a side, and one for the janitor. The door from the vestibule into the hall always was locked. One pressed the proper button in the vestibule which rang a buzzer in an apartment. Pressure on a button there unlocked the door with a click.

It was a so-called walk-up apartment. There was a dumb-waiter for the delivery of groceries and supplies, but no passenger elevator. Tenants and visitors reached their destinations by ascending flights of twisting marble stairs along which ran a wooden handrail with an ornamental iron railing on top in harmony with the iron railing outside.

No children were allowed to play on the front steps of this apartment house. Mr. Stong, the janitor, or Mrs. Stong, his wife who did washing and ironing for many of the tenants, saw to this. It was high-class.

But Tawny and the other children never suffered the slightest regret because of this ruling. Adjoining the apartment house and separated from it only by a narrow area was a two-story frame house, a relic of the days when all this had been farming country, and that not so long past either. The most important architectural feature of this house, so far as Tawny and her friends were concerned, was a wide wooden porch, attained by climbing a flight of more or less dilapidated wood steps. This porch and the steps made a famous playground.

The house itself had a peaked roof in front and a flat roof, reached through a skylight, in the rear. Tawny had a full and interesting view of this roof from the fire escape outside her bedroom window and even from the window. Joseph Cella and his wife, Rosa, who lived in the house, dried out tomato paste in trays on the flat part of the roof in the summer and Tawny thought it was an interesting but strange and outlandish custom. But what could you expect of Eyetalians in the first place? And, in the second place, Mr. and Mrs. Cella, if victims of odd habits so far as tomato paste was concerned, were the most kind-hearted persons in the neighborhood. They not only allowed the children to overrun their front steps and porch, but also occasionally gave them thick, crusty buttered bread, salami, and little glasses of wine.

Mrs. Cella, who had blue-black hair and a thick black line of eyebrows right across her face, a Roman nose and a chin like the wooden Indian's outside of Morris's Cigar Store over on Eighth Avenue, said:

"A leetle wine is good for the bambinos."

Mr. Cella, who had gray hair and wore red flannel shirts crossed by suspenders in summer time, and a thick blue sweater in winter time, grinned and nodded and said:

"Si! Si!"

Mr. Cella always seemed to agree with everything his wife said and be quite happy about it, but there was a funny look sometimes in his eyes when he was watching the children play or eat, and Tawny wondered, vaguely, if he was going to cry.

Tawny drank the wine at first out of politeness, but it created a pleasant warmth in her stomach and she grew to like it very much.

A grand adventure for Tawny was going shopping over on Eighth Avenue, where were the stores and the elevated. On each of the four corners at One Hundred and Forty-fifth Street was a saloon with swing doors in front and family entrances. Tawny never passed the saloons without thinking of the Dawsons who occupied the adjoining apartment. She heard the sound of blows coming through the partition, and Mrs. Dawson wailing:

"Oh, Timmie! Don't beat me."

Then would come the sound of a fist striking soft flesh, the thump of a body hitting the floor and the sad symphony of a woman's low sobbing. Gramma would say:

"Her man is drunk again."

This did not depress Tawny. It excited her. It was just one more detail of life

which sent an extra thrill through her nerves. It made her hate men, except her father and her Uncle Dan and Cousin Joe.

Those four saloons on the corner stood for places where husbands got drunk so they could go home and beat their wives. She also wondered if in those places you could get nice wine such as the Cellas had, but she supposed all they sold was beer and whisky.

Tawny's most common errand over in Eighth Avenue was to buy a quart and a pint of milk at the Sheffield Farms Dairy. Gramma gave her a dime and the family milk can. Milk was six cents a quart and the cent in change was Tawny's to spend. She spent long, delightful minutes in Horvath's Store, deciding whether to spend the cent on all-day suckers, strips of licorice or gum.

Tawny went to school when she was six years old in the Primary Department, Public School No. 5, One Hundred and Fortieth Street and Edgecombe Avenue. This was a white school then but it is colored now.

At that time a few Negroes lived in the neighborhood of One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street and Lenox Avenue but were seldom seen by Tawny and her friends, except as natural curiosities in the distance.

This school was a mixed school, boys and girls, and comprised the first four primary grades, which were subdivided into 1A the first half-year, 1B the second half-year, 2A the first half of the second year, and so on.

Tawny was a brilliant student and loved her teachers and her work from the first. It was seldom that she was not at the head of her classes.

The city at this time was building Colonial Park, which runs from One Hundred and Forty-fifth Street to One Hundred and Fifty-fifth Street and from Bradhurst Avenue on the flat lands there to the rocky cliffs above which, and along which, runs Edgecombe Avenue.

Contractors had turned this area into a sea of mud with streams of water from hoses attached to hydrants, and all the young fry of the neighborhood went there daily to play after school. Tawny was wearing a freshly washed and ironed ensemble of yellow—hair ribbons, frock with waistline about at mid-thigh and sash to match. Harry Frank, sixteen, one of the backward boys then in Grade 4B, grabbed Tawny by the wrists and said:

"Say—"

And he said a word which Tawny had been told by Gramma was a dirty word. Tawny said:

"I won't. I won't."

"I'll kill you if you don't," he promised, twisting her wrists.

She screamed and kicked at his shins. Under the violence of her attack he released her but promptly picked up a rock.

"Say it, or I'll hit you with this rock," he yelled.

Tawny turned and ran, breathing hard, but not sobbing. She was tall for her age and long-legged and could run like a young antelope. Harry threw the rock. It struck a puddle of mud beside her, and splashed her with mud and water, quite ruining the lovely yellow ensemble. Even the hair ribbons were dirty.

When Tawny arrived home, out of breath, Gramma asked grimly:

"How did you get yourself all dirrty?"

"A boy tried to make me say a bad word and I wouldn't, and he said he'd kill me, and he threw a rock at me, and the mud went all over me."

"It's no excuse for playin' in a mudhole," Gramma said, getting out the switch. "Come here and I'll learn you—me stayin' up till all hours, washin' and ironin' and sweatin' to keep you lookin' nice."

Swish. Tchk! Swish. Tchk! The switch swished and bit, swished and bit into tender flesh. Tears gathered in Tawny's amber eyes, but she didn't cry. She was too proud and too indignant to cry. Here she had protected her virtue at the risk of her life, and what had she got as a reward—ruined clothes, a ruined afternoon and a whipping.

Tawny never forgot that occasion nor the pretty starched yellow dress which was made of muslin, nor Harry Frank, nor the reward for virtue. It was one of the highlights, one of the unforgettable events of her early years, and one which influenced her life. She not only never used a profane or so-called obscene word herself, but she suffered a curious crawling sensation when she heard such words used by others, or saw such words written or printed.

While Tawny was going to school and running errands for Gramma over to Eighth Avenue, she was living a full and romantic life, adventurous and exciting. She played "Ring Around the Rosy," "Potsie," "Cops and Robbers," "Cowboys and Indians," played house with dishes and dolls, skipped rope and roller skated.

She had a doubly interesting time because of her week-ends in the Gas House district, where Aunt Mary, Uncle Dan and Cousin Joe still lived in the old railroad flat. Few automobiles were abroad in those days, and roller skating was comparatively good and fairly safe in all of the avenues, but it was best in St. Nicholas, which usually was thronged with happy skaters on all pleasant afternoons. But Tawny enjoyed her most romantic moments near the Gas House.

The recreation pier at the foot of East Twenty-third Street, where the Gas House

still turns the sky red and redly illuminates the night scene, was above the regular pier where the boats land and reached by stairs. Piles of gravel lay near the pier and all the children liked to play in these.

But it was on Sundays and holidays that the pier was at its gayest, brightest best. Then brass bands played and the benches were thronged with men and women in unaccustomed Sunday go-to-church clothes, and the boys with baskets with pretzels impaled on sticks and chips in bags called their wares more briskly, and the sun shone more brightly during the day, and the Gas House burst into eruption more redly during the night, and stained, untidy waters of the East River took on a new sparkle. It was lovely out on the pier, particularly when Dave in his silk hat and striped trousers, stick held gracefully in gloved hands, was there with Tawny.

Dave might be the only man dressed like a dude from Fifth Avenue, but none of the rough young men of the neighborhood cast any slurring remarks at him. The rough young men might, at first glance, open their mouths, but after a second glance the words never came. It was a neighborhood which recognized the quality of a man without investigation. And Dave, somehow, was the sort one didn't call names, even if one happened to be a little rough and tough and rather hard and brought up in the best Gas House tradition.

While her father watched with his gray eyes under thick lashes, Tawny and her friends walked around and around the pier between the benches and the rail in time to the music of the band. And between selections they hung blissfully over the rail, looking up and down the river at the tugs and ferryboats and yachts and Sound steamers. And there was a battleship now and then. It was a marvelous spot, the pier, and one never to be forgotten. And every time you breathed, you breathed in the sweet-sick aroma of the Gas House, also hauntingly unforgettable.

One night in August Tawny was walking back to the Twenty-third Street flat with Gramma when a man dashed from a doorway and ran fast south down First Avenue. An instant later, a second man popped from the doorway and pointed a shotgun after the fugitive. Wham! A burst of orange flame sprang from the muzzle and a roar of exploding powder echoed under the El. Wham! There was a second burst of flame and a second roar as the second barrel discharged. Tawny could hear the shot whine.

Gramma clutched her hand tightly and said:

"The murderin' spalpeens! Don't be afeard, Tawny."

"I'm not afraid," Tawny replied, "but I'm glad he got away. He did get away, didn't he, Gramma?"

Gramma laughed. She said:

"That wan was runnin' fast enough to be in China by now. And I guess them little bullets in thim shot-guns wouldn't do much more than sting at such a distance."

Tawny was not unaccustomed to shooting. There had been a beautiful row over in Second Avenue at Eighteenth Street, fought first with bricks and then with revolvers, with three dead young men lying in the street as proof the combatants were serious minded.

It all helped to make life stirring and complete. Even visiting the privy in the backyard was a novelty and far from a hardship. These matters depended upon the point of view, and from where Tawny observed they all appeared in exaggeratedly exciting lines and colors.

Just so, the fact that the windows in the railroad flat didn't open upon the out-of-doors, but upon the hallway, instead of displeasing Tawny because of the attendant lack of sunshine and fresh air and view, secretly delighted her because of the novelty. And if the flat smelled of the Gas House and Uncle Dan's rank pipe and of corned beef and cabbage and must, it was all as natural as rain to her as she lay on the improvised bed of feather tick on ironing board on three kitchen chairs and listened to Gramma and Aunt Mary sing. Life wasn't merely pleasant. It was swell. Even sadness was swell.

Only another night to roam,
Only another day to stray,
Then safe at last, the darkness past,
Safe in my father's home.

Gramma and Aunt Mary dolorously sang this sad tale of the sailor boy, who expected to be safe in his father's home, but wound up, through a grand storm with thunder and lightning in which the ship sank, by being safe in his Father's (With a capital "F") home, instead of his father's (with a lower case "f") home. Very sad it was, making Tawny feel weepy. But it was a sweet sadness and most enjoyable.

Tawny was nine years old when she was in Grade 4B, a class in which were backward boys and girls as old as sixteen, as well as normal youngsters. The seating arrangement in this room went according to the heights of the pupils. The short ones sat in front and the tallest ones in the rear seats. This system placed Tawny, who was tall for her age, in the next to last row, among the not-so-brights. And she wasn't happy about it. She was less happy when Gramma said one night:

"What're you scratchin' your head for? Lemme look."

After a look at Tawny's head, Gramma said:

"Lice, as I live. Here! Run down to the drugstore and get a bottle of Tincture of

Larkspur."

Gramma soaked a towel with the tincture and wrapped it around Tawny's head. Then she soaked a rag in kerosene, and Tawny said:

"Ouch! You're pulling my hair."

"I'm cleaning out the nits," Gramma said. "Be still."

Next day, in school, Tawny said to sixteen-year-old and fat and stupid Annie Pettus, who sat in the back row right behind her:

"I got lice from you, you dirty thing."

"Wait till I get you outside," Annie replied. "I'll fix you."

"I'll be there," Tawny said.

Tawny felt no fear of the results, perhaps because Annie was so dull. After school, the boys and girls gathered around and Annie scratched at Tawny. Tawny gave a big push and Annie fell down on the sidewalk and Tawny gathered Annie's brown braids in her hands and banged Annie's head on the sidewalk while Annie howled and the boys cheered.

"That'll teach you to give me lice," Tawny panted.

Beatrice Faurot said:

"Let her up. She's had enough."

Tawny arose, and Annie ran crying home. This made Tawny a great heroine. She was the smartest girl in the class, and now she had met and conquered physically the biggest girl in the class. Benny Field, Jimmy Ostrander and Ernest Locke argued for the privilege of toting Tawny's books to school next morning. Tawny had no favorites at this age so they took turns, Benny carrying them the first day. Tawny loved the limelight and the attention, but not the individuals.

One day in June of this same year, Tawny arose and looked out the window past the fire escape where she liked to sit and send soap bubbles floating out over the Cellas' roof, and saw the warm sun shining. She decided it was too lovely a day to go to school, so after breakfast, instead of heading toward school, she set a course for the Speedway, where the Harlem River runs quietly between grassy banks on the East and grass and trees grow against rocky cliffs on the West.

Pot-bellied, bright-eyed robins were hauling reluctant worms from the emerald sod. Other birds were singing in the trees. The sun sparkled on the river. The fleeciest clouds imaginable sailed like gossamer across the infinite vault of the sky. It was a day of days.

Tawny wandered happily until she came to an abandoned viaduct, a favorite spot because it provided a long, smooth marble grade down which Tawny and many

other girls and boys had slid many times and worn out many pairs of pants. She began to slide down the marble balustrade.

A man happened along on foot. He was an old man, according to Tawny's view. He must have been thirty. He wore a gray felt hat, turned down in front, a blue suit not too well pressed and black shoes not overly well cared for. He had brown hair and blue eyes and a pasty complexion, a little bloated. He failed to impress Tawny favorably. He asked in a husky voice:

"What're you doing, little girl?"

"I dunno," Tawny replied, embarrassed.

"Having a good time?"

"I guess so."

"Isn't it lonesome, being all alone?"

"I dunno."

"What's your name?"

"Miriam Louise Bohun, but everybody calls me Tawny."

"Tawny! That's a nice name."

"It's because I was the color of a lion, my father said, when I was little. My father is Charles David Bohun."

And Tawny told where she lived, and the man said:

"Oh, yes. I know your father. We are friends. I guess he wouldn't like to know you are playing hooky, would he?"

"I guess he wouldn't."

"Come on and I'll buy you some ice cream. I won't tell your father if you're nice."

They walked together to the top of the Speedway, up the hill, and Tawny ate ice cream. Then they walked back down the hill again and went into the woods and sat on the grass. The man glanced quickly up and down the Speedway and tried to pull Tawny to him. Frightened, she pulled away. He said:

"Don't be afraid, Tawny. I was just going to play with you. I'd like to hug you, you're such a pretty little girl."

"I don't want to."

The man argued and Tawny protested. The man said:

"I'll give you fifty cents if you'll go into the woods with me."

He held out a fifty-cent piece. Fifty cents was a huge sum to Tawny. She took it and said:

"Thank you, sir."

"That's all right," the man replied. "Now we'll go in the woods and play."

“But I have to go into the woods first alone,” Tawny asserted.

“I’ll go with you.”

“You can’t go with me right now,” Tawny insisted. “Don’t you understand. I must go alone for a little.”

“Oh!”

Tawny walked into the shelter of the trees, frightened by the man but pleased with her smartness and the fifty-cent piece clenched in her sweaty palm. Once among the trees, she took to her heels. She never looked back until she burst into the vestibule of the apartment house and pushed the button.

She saw the man two days later, but dodged him. She wondered if he did know her father and, if he told her father about the playing hooky and the fifty cents, what her father would do about it. Her father never had punished her, but Tawny was more afraid of her father who never had whipped her than she was of her Gramma who often used the switch. Dave Bohun was that kind of man, and besides, the unknown is much more terrible than the known.

Tawny felt a shivery sense of guilt and terror, not unmixed with pride, as she gradually spent the fifty cents and worried about the strange man. She had deposited the money in Bogue’s Candy Shop, bought candy against her account. She saw him two or three times before he disappeared for good. But it was weeks before Tawny ceased being as watchful as an Indian Scout on the warpath.

Only one real grain of grit marred the smooth ointment of Tawny’s life. This was the unexplained absence of her mother. For much as she loved and admired her father, her mother was the most perfect of all God’s creatures and was adored with a passion difficult to describe. When Tawny asked Dave where her mother was, he merely said:

“She is still on the stage, Tawny.”

“When am I going to see her?”

“I don’t know, baby.”

“But I am going to see her.”

“Of course you are.”

Gramma gave her more encouragement. She said:

“Your mother will be home soon. Don’t cry, Tawny. She always was crazy about the stage and dancing and music and parties.”

Then, one day in November, when Tawny was in Grade 5B, she came out of school to see at the curb a yellow touring car, of a most dashing and striking pattern, shining with brass gadgets, around which a throng of admiring children were standing.

“Oh!”

“Ah!”

“What kind is it, miss? Hunh?”

“Gee. Lookit the auto.”

“Ain’t it a peach?”

“I bet it cost five thousand dollars.”

“It’s a Lozier. I seen one once before.”

In the car, at the wheel, was Birdy, a small green turban on her honey hair, a voluptuous mink cloak concealing her curves. She called:

“Tawny.”

Tawny was staggered with the shock and stirred with mixed emotions of love for her mother and an enormous pride in the lovely automobile and the magnificent fur coat. No other kids’ mothers had any such possessions. And no other kids’ mothers were half so beautiful; not even a quarter so beautiful. And no other kid’s mother was an actress.

Tawny rode away from the school with her mother in a haze of pride and glory and love.

III

Birdy led Tawny through the lobby of the Hotel Fenton, and Tawny wished her friends could see the way everyone, especially the men, looked at her mother. They soared twelve stories in an elevator, walked along a corridor to a white door with gold numbers and entered a sitting room.

A man with smoothly brushed iron-gray hair, gray eyes, smooth-shaven pink cheeks, a gray and red bow tie, a gray suit and shining brown shoes arose from a stuffed green armchair and looked inquiringly at them. Birdy said:

"Hello, Tom. This is my daughter Tawny. Tawny, I'd like to have you meet my friend, Mr. Barty."

Mr. Barty held out a white hand with pink, carefully manicured finger nails and said in a pleasant voice:

"Hello, Tawny. What a pretty little girl you turned out to be."

"I'm glad to meetcha," Tawny said, wriggling a little.

"Hey!" Birdy laughed. "It isn't classy to say, 'I'm glad to meetcha.' You must just say, 'How do you do?' "

Birdy assumed a mock stately manner and an exaggerated accent for the illustration and Tawny promptly copied it and echoed:

"How do you do?"

"Mr. Barty," Birdy coached.

"Mr. Barty," Tawny repeated.

"After all that, just call me Tom," Mr. Barty said.

Tawny smiled up at Tom and he smiled down at her. He not only looked as if he had lots of money, but he smelled as if he had lots of money. He smelled of soap and water and Turkish tobacco and fresh wool—a clean, man smell. Somehow, without being told, Tawny knew where the yellow touring car had come from.

Tom helped Birdy off with the mink coat. Birdy tossed her turban on the green couch with the red and yellow pillows. Vases of flowers stood around on two tables and on the mantel. There were snapdragons, and chrysanthemums, white and yellow, and roses, red and white. Tawny never had seen so many flowers except at a funeral or a wedding or in a florist's. She drank in the beauty and the aroma as a thirsty man absorbs water. Her yellow eyes were bright with excitement. Birdy said:

"Tawny's going to stay with me over the week-end, Tom."

"That's nice," Tom said, "but there's no reason, is there, why she can't run

downstairs for an hour or two?"

He handed Tawny a crisp new five-dollar bill. It was the first brand-new bill Tawny ever had seen—and five dollars! She stared at it. Birdy laughed again and said:

"The poor kid's never seen so much money all at once before in her life, I guess. Give her a little silver, Tom. And don't go far from the hotel, Tawny, and be back by six o'clock."

A half hour later, Tawny was singing in McCarthy's Dance Hall, in Sixth Avenue. She sang first the one Gramma called the Englishman's Song:

Up in a balloon, boys.
Up in a balloon.
Sailing around the little stars,
Cruising around the moon.
Up in a balloon, boys.
Up in a balloon.
Oh, what a very jolly way
To spend a honeymoon.

Tawny had a sweet voice and no nerves at all, and she sang just as Gramma did, with all the quavers and long drawn-out effects. The dancers cheered and clapped and tossed dimes and nickels at her. They called for an encore. Much pleased with herself, Tawny sang:

When leaving dear old Ireland
In the merry month of June
The birds were sweetly singing
And all nature seemed in tune.
An Irish girl accosted me,
And as she spoke the words to me,
How bitterly she cried.

Take these to my brother,
For I have no other.
They are the shamrocks
From his dear old mother's grave.

Three leaves of shamrock,

The Irishman's shamrock,
From his own darling sister
Her blessings to him she gave.

Take these to my brother
Who is far across the sea
And don't forget to tell him, sir,
That they were sent by me.

Tell him since he went away,
How bitter was our lot,
The landlord came one wintry day
And turned us from our cot.

Our troubles they were many,
Our friends were ever few,
And all I've left in life to love
I'm sending now with you.

Of course, Tawny sang the chorus between each stanza. When she finished, there was more applause and more dimes and nickels tinkled at her feet. The boys said:

"She's a cute kid."

"Wait till she gets a little older."

"She'll make 'em sit up."

"What's your name, Kid?"

The girls said:

"Poor little thing."

"She ought to be home with her mother."

"It's a shame."

"Bold as brass."

"A nice voice."

"She'll be an actress, all right."

"Talent."

"But at her age."

Tawny was happy as an angel in heaven. The music was a waltz. The boys and girls were dancing, and Mr. McCarthy himself gave Tawny sarsaparilla and pretzels

and showed her how to take the wax from the dance floor, and make a wax doll with a toothpick for a backbone. And he wrapped up the dimes and nickels in one of his own handkerchiefs. Heigho! That was the life.

Birdy looked at the silver in the handkerchief, heard the story, and laughed and laughed until she cried. She was wearing a lovely green kimono over a yellow silk nightdress, and her white feet, generously proportioned but shapely, were poked into golden boudoir slippers with green pompons. She poured herself a drink of Old Taylor Bourbon from a bottle on the table by the couch and lighted a gold-tipped Egyptian cigarette. She kissed Tawny, a caress bringing with it the mixed aromas of Bourbon, Turkish tobacco and gardenias. Birdy always smelled like gardenias. She said:

"You'll get along, Tawny. When a kid, nine years old, can go out on Broadway with fifty cents and come back with a profit of two-seventy, you don't have to worry about her."

Birdy got dressed and they ate in the Hotel Knickerbocker dining room. Tom, wearing a tuxedo, came over to their table and bought champagne, and there were other men, and a deal of laughter, and talk about show business and horse racing and London and Paris.

One of the men poured a little champagne in a glass and offered it to Tawny. Birdy snatched it away and cried:

"Don't give my baby anything to drink."

To Tawny she said, her voice harsh:

"If I ever catch you drinking or going with men I'll kill you, so help me God."

"She doesn't want me to have a good time like she has," Tawny thought. "I'll just never let her know."

The man was protesting.

"A little champagne wouldn't hurt the kid," he asserted. "It would be better to let her taste it and find out what it is when you're along than have her find out when you're away."

"You shut up, Ed," Birdy snapped, "and mind your own business. I'm the kid's mother, not you."

Before she went to bed, Birdy got out a hypodermic needle, an alcohol lamp, cotton, a spoon, and some little pills. Tawny asked:

"What's that, mother?"

"Don't call me mother. Call me Birdy."

Birdy was holding the spoon over the alcohol flame.

"What's that, Birdy?"

"Heroin. And if I ever catch you drinking alcohol or taking drugs or going with men, I'll kill you."

Birdy filled the barrel of the syringe and pulled up her nightdress, baring her shapely white thigh. She scrubbed an area near the knee with alcohol, thrust the needle to the hilt, and pressed the plunger. Tawny asked:

"What does that do, Birdy?"

"Makes me feel good for a little while, but makes me feel terrible if I don't take it. You mustn't ever tell anyone anything about me, Tawny."

"Oh, I wouldn't, for anything."

"Do you love me?"

"More than anybody or anything in the world."

"I love you, sweetheart. And when you're through school you'll come and live with me forever."

"I'd love to," Tawny said.

"Do you love me more than your father?"

"Yes, I do."

Tawny thought living with her mother would make the world all roses and perfume. No one was so lovely and charming and beautifully dressed as her mother. Men didn't hang around other women the way they did around her mother. She began right there to look ahead to living with her mother after she got through school in the same way that a good Mohometan looks forward to entering Paradise. She made up her mind right there to get through with school just as soon as possible in order to hasten the happy day.

The bathroom was shining and beautiful, with a thick, white porcelain tub, and a thick blue and white bath mat, and great, thick towels. It was all blue and white tiles, and there was a shower, the first Tawny had seen. It all certainly was grand.

She and her mother lay on the softest and springiest mattress Tawny ever had known, and Birdy smoked cigarettes and sipped Bourbon and water and talked drowsily, in a voice which was a trifle dry. That was from the drug, although Tawny didn't know it.

"If I didn't have a car, I'd get one quick enough," Birdy said. "If I didn't have pretty clothes, I'd get pretty clothes. Whatever I am, Tawny, no man gets me cheap. Even your father had to marry me."

Nothing could be nicer than lying there listening to Birdy talk, just as if Tawny were a pal of the same age. Tawny asked:

"Who was that funny man that kissed me on the cheek at the hotel?"

"That was Teddie Later—Theodore Roscoe Later. He's a fairy, darling."

"What's a fairy?"

"He's a man that loves men and doesn't love girls, darling. A girl always is safe with a fairy. You can tell them when you get to know them. They think they're girls."

Birdy laughed and Tawny laughed with her. It did seem funny.

"They think they're girls, but they've got men's bodies. And they walk like girls and talk like girls and there's never any harm in them for girls. I love fairies."

"What does Mr. Later do?"

"He's an actor, Tawny—a swell actor and a swell girl. There's some who look down on fairies, but I've known a lot of 'em, and they can't help the way they are any more than a humpback, like Petie Paul down in Twenty-third Street, could help being born a humpback. Some are born to be rich, and some are born to be poor, and some are born to be queens, and some are born to be hustlers."

"What's a hustler?"

"A hustler is a streetwalker, Tawny. And there's many a person that sticks up his nose at a poor streetwalker that hasn't half as good a heart."

Tawny knew, as a child does, vague half-truths about streetwalkers, and much worse names for them which would never pass her lips.

"If I didn't have the looks and the class I might be a hustler myself," Birdy said benignantly. "But most people don't realize how much luck has to do with their conditions in life."

Tawny got out of the yellow touring car in front of her apartment house at ten o'clock Sunday night. She had all she could do to carry three packages into the house—silk bloomers with elastic bottoms, pink and white; silk undershirts, pink and white; silk stockings, black and tan; and two frocks, red and tan.

"A girl must always be bathed, and dressed in the best," Birdy said.

Grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 were called the Grammar Department, and were in Public School No. 90, in One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues. It was a much better and more modern building than No. 5, and had a big courtyard.

These schools are attended by Negroes now, but in those days they were all white. The Negroes still were confined to the general neighborhood of One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street and Lenox Avenue, but Tawny and her friends had begun to hear it said that they were spreading. Minnie Dorfer said:

"A Nigger has bought a house in a Hundred and Thirty-sixth and Pa says that block'll go black now. He says the Niggers'll run us out of Harlem before long, and out of New York, if we ain't careful."

No boys attended Public School No. 90, but there was a deal of obscene writing and printing in chalk and lead pencil on the walls in the toilets and in the hallways and on the stairs. Miss Nash, the principal, sent for Tawny one morning and said:

"Please take a pail and some soap and a cloth, and remove the terrible writing on the stairs, and in the wash rooms. I don't like to ask Mr. Hanly to do it."

Mr. Hanly was the janitor, and a man; and Tawny, with her aversion to obscenity and profanity, could understand just why Miss Nash wouldn't care to speak to a man about such a delicate matter. She wouldn't herself. She expunged the objectionable words and sentences with a crusader's zeal. And after that this was one of her duties.

In this school building, fireproof glass over wire-enclosed staircases leading to five landings. Monitors were selected from among the brightest and most trustworthy pupils to stand on the landings and see to it that the other pupils marched out in orderly fashion, two by two. Tawny always was a monitor.

She was in Six B when, one Easter Sunday, she went to St. Thomas's Church with her father and then joined the Easter Parade in Fifth Avenue. It was a beautiful April day, and Tawny knew there wasn't any man on the avenue that was better dressed or any man who was as handsome and debonair as her father.

She loved to see the ladies' eyes widen when they saw his long, handsome, daring face bearing the eternal tan of years in India, and the fresher tan of hours at race tracks in South America during the Winter. The streaks of white beside his temples added to rather than detracted from his charm. Then, no one could wear a hat at just the jaunty angle that Dave Bohun could, and no one could boast a more military figure.

But there was an aura about him that told his story. There were lines in his face which spoke of recklessness and waste. Voices whispered:

"Isn't he handsome?"

"Looks like a gentleman gone to hell."

"I could go for him in a big way."

"*There's* the picture of a sporting man."

"Wager that lad's seen service."

"Good blood lines."

"There's the picture of a rake for you."

"Gambler!"

That was it. Dave Bohun was a gambler at cards and life, and to hell with everything. He was the kind to take a machine-gun nest single-handed and think

nothing of it, to have the world in his hand and toss it away, and think nothing of it. Excitement was life, and without excitement, Dave would much rather be dead, dead, dead.

They walked through Central Park to the Zoo. Tawny fed peanuts to the elephants and squirrels, admired the lions, and thought of herself with a pretty pride. She guessed she was not so bad-looking herself. She certainly could have all the boys she wanted—and older men. You'd be surprised.

They were strolling up Central Park West when Tawny stopped and cried out:

"Oh, the darling little puppies."

An old Negro, with white hair, faded dim brown eyes, and skin as black almost as coal, bent shoulders and a shuffling walk, had two fluffy, light brown puppies on a string. They were yapping and dancing. Tawny rushed over and gathered one in her arms and hugged it to her breast. It ran out a long pink tongue and licked her lips. She started and scrubbed her mouth with the back of her hand, but clung to the puppy.

"Oh, I love him, Dad. Can I have him? Please? Look, he likes me already."

"He's sure a sweet puppy," the Negro said softly. "A sweet puppy. Two dollahs an' a ha'f for him, and fouah dollahs an' a ha'f for him and his little sisteh."

"Please, dad."

"What kind of dog is he?" Dave asked.

The Negro's old face wrinkled in a grin.

"Ah don' rightly know, sah. Ah reckon he's jus' a dawg. But his momma's a right sweet dawg, sah, an' that knowin'."

Dave regarded the puppy speculatively.

"Looks something like a Maltese terrier."

"Please get him, dad. Please."

"Take 'em both, sah. They plays so pretty togetheh."

"I'll take the male."

"Oh, dad! Oh! I always wanted a dog. Oh, dad!"

"What's his name?" Dave asked, as he held out the money.

"He ain't got no name, sah—jus' Puppy."

"What's your name?"

"Benjamin Gay, sah. Ole Benjamin Gay."

"A good name, and not common. We'll call the puppy Benjamin Gay."

"But, dad! That's not a dog's name."

"All the more reason for calling him Benjamin Gay, Tawny. You call him Ben, and I don't think there'll be any other dogs who'll be confused by the name."

"But, dad."

"Benjamin Gay is his name, Tawny. You trust me."

Tawny went to dancing school, first to Mr. Hendon, then to Mrs. Baum, and finally to other schools, including ballet schools. The lessons were five dollars each, but Dave thought it was a good idea. In the early days she went only once a week.

She didn't forget her lucrative and exciting experience at McCarthy's Dancing Academy on Sixth Avenue, and repeated the performance at the first opportunity at the old Harlem Casino, One Hundred and Fifty-fifth Street and Harlem River. She opened with a popular song of the period, "Take Me up to the Ball Game."

She was a big hit, just as she had been on Sixth Avenue, and the rain of tinkling nickels and dimes counted up to three dollars and twenty cents.

She sang at Laughlin's Dance Hall, One Hundred and Forty-fifth Street and Broadway, and made wax-toothpick dolls, and drank free sarsaparilla and free pretzels, and wondered if there could be as talented and charming and happy a girl anywhere as she. She sang the rest of the song about the poor sailor boy:

Flying with feathery prow,
Bounding with slanting bow,
Swift on the summer sea,
Homeward bound was she.
Flying with feathery prow,
Bounding with slanting keel.
And glad—and glad
Was the sailor lad
As he steered and sang at his wheel.
Only another night to roam,
Only another day to stray.
Then, safe at last, the danger past,
Safe in his father's home.

(*fortissimo*)

Sudden the thunder crashed.
Bright lightnings split the sky.
Sudden, the waters lashed.
Alas for the boy and gal!
And when the storm had passed,

A dreary wreck lay she.
But bright was the starry light
That shone on the summer sea
(*pianissimo*)
And a soft Voice came from the clouds,
And a voice from the whispering main,
Saying, Safe—safe, at last
The danger past—safe in his Father's Home.

Tawny had heard Gramma and Aunt Mary sing that one in bed ever since she could remember, and she put it over with a sob in her voice and tears, purely histrionic, in her eyes, and brought down the house. Oh, you couldn't keep a smart girl down.

Miss O'Brien was Tawny's teacher in Grade 6B. Miss O'Brien had rare black hair, brown eyes, a ready smile, a soft voice and a vibrant personality, and Tawny loved her. Miss O'Brien, despite the blackness of her hair, was forty-five and a militant Suffragette. And so was Tawny. Tawny said:

"I hate men. They beat their wives."

"Wait till you get older, Louise. You'll like men and they'll like you."

"I'll never like men."

"Oh, yes, you will. There are nice men and bad men, just as there are nice girls and bad girls. You'll like men very much."

"But the world is a terrible mess, and men run it. It's all men's fault. That's why they buy votes on election day. I hate men."

The school doors were opened at eight o'clock in the morning. Teachers were due at eight-thirty, pupils at nine. But it was not unusual for Tawny to arrive as early at seven-thirty, such was her love for Miss O'Brien. She loved to clean the blackboards and put out fresh erasers and chalk and dust the desks.

Miss O'Brien sponsored a competitive system by which the girls in her class received imaginary money as rewards for work well done. The girl who had earned the most money at the end of a month was president. Tawny was president, and it was her job to keep books.

Tawny stood, as monitor, on the cold stone landing in January. It was a cold day and a bitter wind blew through the great windows and the opened doors and turned the staircases into Arctic crevasses. Tawny stood there shivering and suffering the agonies of hell.

She suffered for three days without telling anyone—suffering as she never knew anyone could suffer, and then she went to Dave and said:

"Poppa, I think I'm going to die."

"That's nothing," Dave said awkwardly.

He left the living room, and spoke to Gramma in the kitchen. Gramma said:

"Come with me."

They went into the bathroom and Gramma gave Tawny a cloth. She said:

"Don't worry; all girls have that. It happens every month."

And that is all that Tawny ever was told about her body, or about sex, in her family. It was not a subject nice people discussed. And Dave and Gramma and Birdy each had a sense of nicety.

IV

Benjamin Gay was a dear little puppy but stubborn as they come. He tried the kitchen, the living room, each bedroom, the bathroom and even the beds and the couch, before he would admit to himself that out-of-doors was the only place a dog should do what Gramma called his chores. Any job was a chore to Gramma.

"Don't whip the little fellow because he wets," Dave said. "He's just a baby, and his little bladder isn't big enough to hold much."

Benjamin Gay got many a spanking, however, for the spots he picked, until one great day, when he had been left alone in the flat from morning until night, Gramma discovered he had used the bathtub.

"Wasn't that smart?" Tawny asked. "You're a smart little boy, Ben Gay."

Ben Gay looked up at her from bright eyes masked by yellow-brown curls and protruded a pink tongue.

"Look, Gramma, he's smiling about it. Oh, you sweet Benjamin Gay."

Tawny was in St. Nicholas Park at ten o'clock one night in November, and Benjamin Gay was nowhere in sight. She called:

"Here, Ben! Here, Ben!"

A Negro jumped out of the bushes and grabbed her. He smelled musky and was strong. As in a dream, Tawny kicked and struggled, but didn't make a sound. She was strong and agile, and used to kicking and dancing. She jabbed with her knees. He grunted, relaxed his hold. She made a great effort, and was free and running like the wind.

The streets were deserted. No human being was in sight. Tawny was wearing sneakers. She ran as if there were wings in her toes. She ran down the steps out of the park. She heard the beat of pursuing feet, heavy feet. She was conscious of a pale full moon riding high, those feet behind. They were the flying feet of Fear that trod her heels. She ran faster, conscious of the wind rushing by and rejoicing in her agility even while afraid. She blew down One Hundred and Forty-first Street like a leaf before a gale.

Breathless, she ran up the marble steps and into the vestibule. In terrified haste, she pressed the button, pressing hard and long. The door clicked. She burst through it, swung it shut with all her strength, and leaned desperately against it.

A big body struck against the door exactly with the click of the patent lock. Fists beat upon the door. A voice raised in a yell of animal rage and disappointment.

Tawny sped up the stairs and into the flat, arriving breathless. Gramma asked:

"What'd you ring the bell so hard for?"

"I dunno."

"Where's the dog?"

"I lost him in the park. I called and called, but he wouldn't come, and it was so late I thought I'd better get home."

"I'm glad you showed some sense at last."

Tawny undressed and went to bed still trembling. She couldn't tell Gramma about the Negro. She'd never be allowed out at night again if she did. She was glad she was strong and had long legs. Sleep was a long time coming and then she had nightmares.

Benjamin Gay scratched at the flat door in the morning. He had slipped in the apartment house door when an early tenant departed, and now he was home, writhing and twisting with happiness. Tawny hugged him, and fed him buttered toast and said:

"You're a smart dog, Benjamin Gay."

Gramma, all unconscious of near tragedy, was in the kitchen singing:

When I was a chicken
As big as a hen
Me mither, she hit me,
And hit me again.
Me father came out
To order me out
I up with me fist
And gave him a clout.

It was funny what a girl could go through and leave no traces of it in her eyes or in her features or in her manner. One's secret life was one's own. Nobody could know unless you told them. And what a wonderful feature of life that was.

Gramma probably was singing when the Negro grabbed her. No doubt children were being born at the same minute, and people were dying. And chances were Dave was playing cards or drinking a highball, and Ida would be asleep.

The Negroes certainly were spreading out. A couple of more blocks had gone black. There were more of them in the market, and in the five-and-ten in One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street. But they weren't allowed in the smaller shops.

Tawny knew what happened to girls who were caught alone in the parks at night. And there was that girl who had been murdered and cut up right in this

apartment house. Tawny shivered and drank coffee. She was lucky, all right. Benjamin Gay was sitting up, beseeching brown eyes fixed on hers. She popped another bit of buttered toast into his pink mouth.

Gramma came in from the kitchen and sniffed. She said:

"Silk underwear! Nobody but fast women wears silk underwear."

Tawny didn't make any reply. Nothing much could be gained by arguing with Gramma. Gramma said:

"A girl your age with silk underwear. The very idea!"

Tawny took a drink of coffee, and gave Benjamin Gay a bit of toast. The silk underwear was the pride of her life and the envy of all the girls she knew. The sensation of owning and wearing and being able to display silk underwear was something every young girl should know. It was indescribable. It was marvelous. It was without compare.

Tawny was an expert Potsie player. She had experimented with various Potsies, and had settled upon a bit of silver mesh from one of Birdy's discarded mesh-bags as the Potsie best calculated to sail accurately through the air and stick when it landed in the proper division of the chalked diagram on the sidewalk.

Ida Bayer became her girl friend suddenly and mysteriously. Ida was homely where Tawny was attractive. Ida was dumb where Tawny was brilliant. Ida was conservative where Tawny was daring. But they sat together in 6B because their names both began with a "B," and they went together to the Hamilton Grange Branch of the Public Library in One Hundred and Forty-fifth Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue to join the Waverly Club. The Waverly Club was an organization for the mutual enjoyment of Scott's novels.

Tawny began to talk about Kipling, whose verse had fascinated her at seven and whose *Plain Tales from the Hills* she was reading. Ida loved Kipling too. She had read the Jungle Books.

They walked together, talking, from Eighth to Bradhurst, and up the steep hill past Edgecombe, St. Nicholas, Convent and Amsterdam, along the top of the hill to Broadway and down the hill to Riverside Drive. It was beautiful on Riverside Drive in the summer time, with the green grass, the rolling, sun-sparkled waters of the Hudson, the soaring Palisades on the Jersey shore. Fifth Avenue buses, seats on top packed with sightseers, and automobiles and taxicabs rolled north and south over the smooth asphalt in endless streams.

Nursemaids and mothers brooded over baby carriages or shepherded romping children. Elderly men and women sat on benches staring into the mystery not so far ahead. Young men and women laughed or talked earnestly in low tones or sat silent,

holding hands under the spell of a mutual emotion stronger than reason.

If the warships happened to be anchored in the river, the Drive was more populous than ever and the river a scene of continual activity, with sailors on shore leave and girls in their best clothes laughing as only youth and irresponsibility may laugh.

Strangely, Ida held the same views as Tawny but not so strongly. She was a Suffragette, but not militant, unready to break windows for the cause. She thought men had their faults but that women did too, and that politics were rotten, but nothing could be done about it, so why worry. She loved to read.

Ida wasn't really homely, and the more you saw of her the nicer she seemed. She was almost as tall as Tawny and slightly more plump and not as lissome and graceful. But she had a sweet expression in her blue eyes under a rounded forehead shaded by brown hair, and when she laughed, which she did readily at Tawny's remarks, her generous mouth opened to disclose big, solid, white teeth.

She was healthy and normal and not too bright, always standing fourth or fifth from the bottom of the class. But she was easy to get along with. She had those psychological characteristics which, for lack of a nicer discrimination, always have been called masculine—as if there weren't a predominance of so-called masculine traits in some women and an equal predominance of so-called feminine traits in some men.

Ida didn't say mean things about other persons. She wasn't vain or sensitive or self-conscious. When she arose in the morning she bathed and pulled on her clothes and gave her hair a lick with a hair brush. After meals she scrubbed her teeth well. She was careful about the care of her nails, on both hands and feet, which was a trait she shared with Tawny. Even this little detail made them feel closer together and superior.

Tawny's care of her feet really was based on her love for dancing. A dancer must have strong supple feet, well tended. Ida merely enjoyed having her toes and toenails appear as tidy as her fingers.

This was Tawny's first real friendship, as it was Ida's, and they were very serious and solemn about it. There was really a serious and solemn quality in discovering a kindred soul, a sister soul, in the strangely magic world of youth. They told each other all their secrets. It was wonderful. It would last for ever and ever. Nothing could or would break this mystic, indescribable union of girl souls.

The roof of Mr. and Mrs. Cella's home burst into flame one Saturday afternoon just as Tawny was coming back from buying a peppermint stick at Bogue's Candy

Store. She bought a peppermint stick one day and a lemon stick next day, regularly.

These sticks were huge affairs, peppermint striped red and white, and the lemon pale yellow with white stripes. They lasted a long time and tasted simply heavenly. And they only cost a cent each. A girl was pretty lucky if, besides taking dancing lessons, which were expensive, she could afford a lemon or peppermint stick every day.

The flames shot up from the Cella roof. Fire apparatus came clanging and roaring and rattling. Bells banged. Men shouted. Men hustled. Hoses writhed with surging water and spouted glistening streams. Firemen half-dragged Mr. and Mrs. Cella from the house.

Firemen went into Tawny's apartment house. One, in rubber hat and rubber boots, face glistening with sweat, carrying a red fire axe, strode into the Bohun flat, and looked out over the fire escape at the flames. He smelled of wet rubber and sweat and pipe tobacco, and had hot blue eyes, as if they had absorbed the heat of a thousand fires, and red cheeks, as if they had been scorched, and red hair like a flame.

He looked at the fire as Alexander the Great might have looked at a savage foe about to be overwhelmed. Tawny thought he looked like an ideal figure of all firefighters that ever were all rolled into one. His jaw stuck out. He said:

"It looks as if we're getting her under control, but you never can tell. Get ready to leave if necessary. Throw together any valuables you've got, easily carried. Don't be frightened. Hang wet towels over these windows here, so the heat won't break 'em."

He wet a bath towel and placed it against the window.

"Like that. Don't be frightened. It looks all right. But you never can tell about fires. Treacherous. Best to be prepared."

He was gone. Gramma and Tawny worked feverishly, Tawny taking constant peeps at the flames, and the streams of water shooting from jumping nozzles held by two-three struggling, fighting, crouching firemen in wet and shining rubber uniforms. It was exciting. It was glorious. It was living a thousand years in a moment.

They hung the wet towels and piled up the crested Bohun silver in a table cloth —old, old silver, heavy and massive. There was a great flower bowl of solid silver, a present to a Bohun from George III, and wine coolers and candlesticks of Sheffield plate, and platter and knives and forks and spoons, of course.

"They'd bring a pretty penny," Gramma, said, "but your father would rather starve than part with 'em. It's all part of the affectation of life. What good are they to anybody?"

Tawny didn't answer. Why answer Gramma? Gramma didn't want to be answered. Gramma always knew she was right. And of all the facts in life about which she was sure that she was surest was that the gentry, King and Lords and Ladies, were no good to anyone, much less to themselves.

"Nothin' but robbers of the poor," Gramma said.

Gramma never approved of Dave. She sniffed at Dave. What was he anyway? Nothing but a gambler and a loose liver—just what a body'd expect from an offspring of the gentry. Sniff! Gramma amused Dave. He smiled his rare smile—just an imperceptible change in the position of his lips and a brightening of the light in his gray eyes.

Tawny felt she knew why Dave smiled. She thought Dave thought Gramma might be right! Dave seemed to think anyone might be right. He never argued. He just went about his business, which was playing cards, and watching the little ball hop and skip on the whirling wheel, and seeing horses and jockeys bob around a field and come roaring down to the Judges' stand. He was home very little now, not more than a day or two a month, and he slept on the couch in the living room when he spent the night. Tawny was old enough now to have a room of her own.

The fire, disappointingly, bowed to the skill of the firemen. The roof was blackened and charred. And, inside, Mrs. Cella was weeping over the ruin water had brought. And she wouldn't stop her wailing even when Mr. Cella, rubbing his hands together, said, over and over:

"Think of the fire insurance, Rosa. We have paid the fire insurance so long, and now we get it all back, and more. The house will be much nicer—much nicer. Don't worry, Rosa. Think of the fire insurance."

Tawny helped Mrs. Cella make the house tidy, and drank two glasses of red wine and ate salami and Gorgonzola cheese. Alone in the dining room, she poured out some brandy from a bottle on the big sideboard and drank it quickly. Her eyes were bright and her cheeks were flushed. The world suddenly was a brighter and more beautiful world. Mrs. Cella said:

"You should not give Tawny so much wine, Joe. Too much wine is bad for a young girl."

Mr. Cella laughed.

"She is all right—just two little glasses of good wine."

"I'm all right," Tawny said. "Honest."

She walked home on feathers. Gramma said:

"What's the matter with you, Tawny?"

"Nothing."

Going to sleep was difficult, and she felt strangely heavy when she awakened in the morning. Gramma asked:

"Why don't you eat? Are you sick?"

"I'm not sick. I just don't seem to feel hungry this morning."

In Grade 7A of the Grammar Department, five of the forty girls were colored. Harlem was growing darker. Ida said:

"Dad says a house on One Hundred and Forty-second has been bought by niggers—and now that'll be black."

"It's awful."

"What's the world coming to?"

"Something should be done about it."

The streets between One Hundred and Thirty-eighth Street and One Hundred and Forty-first Street, Seventh to Eighth Avenues, were the pleasant sites of brownstone homes with carriage entrances and courtyards, with a sprinkling of better-than-ordinary apartment houses. The wealthy Catholic church of St. Charles Borromeo, on One Hundred and Forty-first Street, between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, always had been an all-white and prosperous parish. The St. Nicholas Avenue Presbyterian Church, at One Hundred and Forty-first Street and St. Nicholas Avenue, had an all-white Protestant congregation.

This was a neighborhood of quiet, tree-lined streets, where lived principals of schools, doctors, lawyers and more successful men of business. The St. Nicholas Avenue Presbyterian Church stands at the head of St. Nicholas Park, which extends to One Hundred and Thirtieth Street and St. Nicholas Avenue, and to Convent Avenue, with City College perched on top of the hill. St. Luke's Episcopal Church, larger and richer, was, and is, at One Hundred and Forty-first Street and Convent Avenue.

The United States entered the World War, and the children in the schools did their share by selling Liberty Bonds and Red Cross stamps, and giving pageants in the auditoriums. Tawny was a total loss at ringing door bells and peddling Liberty Bonds, but she was a gift to the neighborhood when it came to pageants. She acted many roles, including Stricken Belgium, Triumphant America and Winged Victory. She felt she was hot stuff, and that Broadway, Paris and London were just around the corner. As Stricken Belgium, she achieved her greatest triumph. She walked drooping onto the stage attired in a black lace veil, and a black lace dress and said, in tones which told of an aching heart:

"Here Stricken Belgium comes, proudly defiant. My homes were burned, my sons deported, the wail of mothers and the pitiful faces of starving children beset me

on every side. Still I stood staunch."

(Hurrah!)

Ida, representing America, said:

"Courage, Stricken Belgium."

The Nations then gave Stricken Belgium a Belgian flag, and when Tawny kneeled with the grace of dancing-school training and kissed the flag, tears flowed freely among the spectators.

"Oh, Louise, it was wonderful."

"I thrilled all over when you kissed the flag."

"You were marvelous, Tawny, simply marvelous."

"I couldn't help crying—the way you acted."

"I forgot it was you, and thought it was Belgium."

"Let me kiss you."

"I couldn't see for the tears."

"A Nigger has bought a house on One Hundred and Forty-third," Ida said.

"Now that'll go black."

"It's getting worse and worse."

"Where will it end?"

Ida heard a deal of talk at home about this gradual metamorphosis of Harlem. She said:

"My father says some Niggers are making an awful lot of money. You see they buy one house in a block for a high price and Niggers move in, and then the white people move out, and they can buy the rest of the block cheap."

"I guess it's changing everywhere," Tawny suggested. "Even the people around the Gas House aren't as nice as they used to be when I was a kid. A lot of foreigners are moving in."

"The foreigners are moving in and crowding the Americans out."

"They're letting the Niggers in the stores on One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street," Ida said.

When Tawny and Ida reported for the first day of school in September in Grade 9A, Junior High School, there were twenty-six pupils, thirteen white and thirteen colored.

"Look at them," Ida said. "Dad says it won't be long before the school is all black."

"Did you hear a Negro had rented a suite in the Hotel Harrison?" Minnie Dorfer asked at recess.

"No. Is it true?"

"My uncle is in the real estate business. He knows."

A maroon-colored limousine whirled down St. Nicholas Avenue, scattering the roller skaters. A colored chauffeur in uniform was at the wheel. A high yaller, in silks, satins and diamonds, lolled on the cream-colored upholstery.

"Look at her now."

"Look at the diamonds."

"What a shame!"

The black tide had flowed through One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street to Seventh Avenue and was surging northward on Seventh, seeping into the side streets. Baron Wilkins and other proprietors of Negro Cafés moved from the Tenderloin, west of Seventh Avenue in the Thirties, north to Harlem. Negro policemen appeared on the streets. Barbecue stands blossomed. The odor of fried chicken and pork chops made itself known. But whatever the children's point of view, or the opinion of their elders, this invasion of Harlem by the colored race was a peaceful process, and irresistible. The new residents kept the streets clean. Their children always were well dressed and happy and smiling, and they themselves, male and female, brightened the streets with many-hued garments—magenta dresses, cerise dresses, mauve suits, heliotrope fedoras, toothpick-toed patent leather boots with brown, white, green or yellow tops, green hats, red hats, pink hats, old rose hats, yellow hats, topaz, vermilion and violet hats—all colors of hats.

Music of Negro orchestras sounded in the night, and the shuffling of dancing feet. White visitors from downtown and Kansas City and Podunk began to invade Harlem on pleasure bent. A new Harlem, a new city within a city, a new pleasure ground was struggling with its growing pains.

People, white and black, began to play numbers, lotteries. Dice cups rattled. Now and then a razor blade flashed, became incarnadined, or a gun barked and leaden pellets whistled. Tired rewrite men on newspapers told police-department reporters over telephones:

"Never mind the story—only a Nigger killed. What the hell!"

"A Porto Rican? Forget it."

"A guy can't get his name in *The Planet* when nobody can pronounce it, even if he does get himself bumped off—you know that."

"Three killed? All Niggers? G'wan back to your poker game."

"A duel? Two dead? Niggers! Say! What the hell do you think we're doing here, Bill—getting out a newspaper or running a Nigger obituary list? Why don't you get busy and dig up a spread? We need a good spread for Page One. Remember me to Banks. G'night."

But the population was no worse than that of many other races who have made their centers in New York, and better behaved on the average than most. They loved finery and show and their children and their pets. The days and nights resounded with musical voices and mellow laughter and soft slurred accents, and like black molasses oozing from an overturned jug they spread slowly, and stuck where they spread.

Birdy was waiting outside the school in the front seat of a long, low, exotic, open touring car, painted blue. Great brass pipes stuck out through the hood. As usual, she was surrounded by a group of gaping admirers. Tawny's heart beat so hard it hurt, and her throat constricted with love and pride. Her wonderful mother! None of the other girls had a mother like that. The usual comments were being made:

"She's an actress, all right."

"Bet she dyes her hair."

"Gee Whizz! What kind of car is that?"

"I bet it can go a hundred miles an hour."

"What make is it, lady?"

"Take me for a ride, lady."

"Shut up, you. Don't get fresh with the lady."

"Isn't she swell?"

"Look at the diamonds."

Tawny walked over to the car through the throng, saying:

"Come on, Ida. Come on. It's my mother. Oh, mother!"

"Hello, Tawny. Gee! I've missed you."

Her mother's breath smelled of alcohol and Egyptian cigarettes, and her mother smelled of Gardenia. Her almond-shaped eyes were a little heavy, and there were faint blue smudges beneath them. But her mother was just as young-looking and just as beautiful as ever. They kissed and Birdy said:

"Love me, Tawny?"

"More than anyone else in the world, mother."

"Birdy."

"Birdy. This is my friend Ida Bayer. Can she come with us, please? She's my best friend."

"Sure," Birdy said. "Hello, Ida. Climb in."

"I'll have to tell mother I'm going," Ida said.

"I ought to tell Gramma," Tawny said.

"We'll have a party," Birdy told them.

"What kind of car is it, Birdy?"

"A Mercedes."

The motor roared with the voice of a hundred lions, and the car moved away from the curb.

"Did you hear that—a Mercedes!"

"So long, Tawny."

"So long, Ida."

In her suite in the Hotel Jepson, Birdy introduced Tawny and Ida to a medium-sized, slim, dark-complexioned man, with black hair brushed straight back and shining like patent leather, a low forehead, big dark eyes, a straight nose, thick red lips and shaven, powdered cheeks, stained blue with underskin beard. He wore a blue suit, and black, polished shoes, and wore a diamond on his ring finger.

"This is my daughter, Tawny, Tony. Mr. Lane, Tawny. And this is Tawny's little friend, Ida—what did you say your last name was?"

"Bayer, Mrs. Bohun."

Tony didn't take the girls' hands. He bowed gracefully and said:

"How do you do?"

"I want you to like Tony," Birdy said. "He's a dancer, and we are going to be married next Monday, so he'll be your new father."

Ida couldn't help glancing at Tawny. She'd met Dave and hadn't heard of any divorce. She knew Tawny would have told her if there had been a divorce because their friendship was so sacred that they had no secrets. Tawny knew Birdy wasn't divorced, but it made no difference to Tawny. Birdy was a creature far above the rules which governed ordinary mortals. Tawny loved and admired her even more at this moment. She hoped it wouldn't be long before she could live forever with the miraculous Birdy.

They all had dinner at the Lafayette, and then took Ida home, and Tawny slept with Birdy in another bed that was heavenly soft, between fresh linen sheets. Birdy drank Scotch and soda and took a shot of heroin, and she and Tawny sang:

Dan and his girl got married—O
Through love, you know, and so and so,
And all the girls from there below
Assembled at the spree.

"Tony is a dancer," Birdy said.

Neither of them mentioned the fact that Birdy was married already. Birdy said:

"You and Ida act as if you were in love."

"She's my best friend and I'm hers."

"Well, don't go Lesbian on me or I'll kill you."

"What's Lesbian?"

"Women that only love women are Lesbians. Haven't you ever seen them? Some of them dress like men and talk like men. I've known 'em to smoke cigars, and one that smokes a pipe—Cissie Vorly."

"I've seen her in vaudeville," Tawny said.

She understood, and yet she didn't understand, about Lesbians. Her mother never had told her anything about sex, but she told stories with sex foundations and talked of persons with perverted sex instincts as if Tawny knew as much as she. And Tawny loved it.

"If you ever drink or have anything to do with men, I'll kill you," Birdy warned.

When Birdy was asleep, Tawny drank a good two ounces of Scotch with White Rock. She made a face, and wondered why anyone could like such nasty stuff, but she choked it down, and it made a warm spot in her stomach which sent streamers of warmth tingling through her body and into her brain, making her happy and slightly giddy.

She felt hot and excited, and strange thoughts flickered in her mind. Her hands caressed her body. . . . She loved her own body, her breasts and soft stomach and thighs. She was so passionate, she couldn't help herself. Nature had made men and women that way—powerless against the forces of reproduction. Relaxed, she slept.

Marriage service for Birdy and Tony was performed in the Granite Church by the Rev. Luther Towne. Birdy wore a green dress and a jade necklace and jade and lapis lazuli bracelets and a green hat on her deep yellow hair, and her mink coat. Tony wore a morning coat and striped trousers and a silk hat. Tawny had a new dress in old rose for the occasion and a new hat and silk stockings. Theodore Roscoe Later, a young chap named Harry Tow and Irene Way, brunette and a friend of Birdy's, composed the wedding party. When they came out of the church, Teddy giggled and said:

"All Birdy has to do to feel married to a man is walk into a church with him and listen to a minister say a prayer."

They all laughed, including Birdy.

"She's a she-Mormon," Teddy asserted in his womanish way. "But you better keep your hands off my men or I'll scratch your eyes out," he added, turning to Birdy.

He kissed her on the cheek.

"But we girls shouldn't be jealous, should we?" he asked.

Birdy laughed and laughed. Tony smiled an artificial smile. He didn't like it so much.

They went in cabs to Birdy's suite and drank champagne. Tawny asked Irene Way:

"Haven't I seen you on the screen?"

"If you've seen a gal being thrown out into a snowstorm with the baby that caused it all wrapped in a shawl, you've seen Irene," Teddy said. "She's lugged a hundred little bastards out into a hundred snowstorms, haven't you, Irene?"

"That was in the old days, Teddy," Irene said.

They talked show business and scandal. Tawny sneaked into the bathroom and drank champagne left in a bottle. It tingled her mouth, but she liked the taste. It flushed her cheeks, and made her eyes sparkle. She laughed like the others, at nothing much.

She slipped into the bathroom, with another bottle, and poured champagne into a tumbler. It more than half filled it. She drank some, and stared at her reflection in the mirror over the porcelain washbowl. Tony said:

"Drinking champagne."

Tawny started violently and said:

"Don't tell mother. She'd kill me."

"I never tell on a friend," Tony said, and put his arms around her and kissed her.

His hands pressed her young breasts and smoothed over her hips, and he pressed her hard against him. What could Tawny do? This was her mother's man, but she was helpless. Teddy whispered:

"That makes me jealous—of you, Tony."

Tony and Tawny stared at Teddy, and Teddy grinned.

"Don't worry, darlings. I've my own love secrets. But as the doctor said to the man with the naughty social disease, there are better places than cans. You better mingle, or lose your social standing around here."

Tony went out with Teddy, and Tawny locked the door. Life suddenly was very complicated. Even if she didn't like Tony and he was her mother's man, he had stirred her all up. She couldn't help it. She stared at her face in the mirror—masses of hair still tawny, but darker than when she was younger. Golden eyes and golden skin, a straight nose and a wide mouth, with lips a little full, but shapely, a good chin and an eager, animated appearance. She was pretty, all right. But what would Birdy do if Tony told her—or Teddy told her?

She was afraid. Birdy had a terrible temper. Birdy had said she would kill her if she drank or ever got mixed up with a man. And now her mother's man had caught

her drinking, and she was on the road toward getting mixed up with him. She sighed and, lifting the glass, drained it.

Life was exciting anyway. She felt like a girl in a play. She felt like a girl who was leaving girlhood behind.

Hands slapped the bathroom door. The doorknob turned. Birdy's voice said:

"Let me in."

She let Birdy in, and Birdy sat down. Birdy laughed.

"That champagne. My God! Are you enjoying the party? Did you like the wedding? Isn't Teddy a darling? Don't you love Tony?"

Tawny went out into the living room. Tony grinned at her and Teddy winked at her. Teddy was drunk and obscene and profane.

Birdie appeared, mad. She held an empty champagne bottle by the neck. She cried in a coarse voice:

"Who tacked my marriage license on the toilet seat?"

Teddy giggled. Birdy yelled:

"You did it, you God-damned fairy. It's just about your speed."

She swung the champagne bottle. Teddy ducked. Crash! A vase of bridal roses burst in bits. Water poured on the rug. Bits of china and bottle glass flew.

"Birdy!"

"Cut it out."

"Calm down."

"Grab her."

Birdy shrieked and threw a champagne glass, which splintered against a window, cracking the window. Tony grabbed her. Irene had hold of her. She spilled over a table, shattering a Chinese lamp. The telephone began to ring. Came a knock on the door.

"It's the hotel manager."

"A detective."

"Answer the telephone."

"Better get a doctor."

"Hold her now."

Birdy was trembling and panting. The wedding was over.

V

Tony wrote Tawny a letter.

> "*Dear Tawny: I am anxious to see you. Birdy is all right now, but the doctor thinks she ought to go to a sanitarium for a while. Telephone me at the Salon Royale, Bryant 290989 between eight and nine P. M. Your secret is safe.*
>
> *Yours,*
>
> *Tony.*"

Tawny didn't want to see Tony and she didn't want to telephone to him. She was frightened, but tempted. He was a grown man, but she was a tall, strong, girl, always skipping rope and walking and running and taking dancing lessons. She knew what Tony wanted. She knew what she wanted herself, but not with Tony; not with her mother's husband, or at least the man Birdy wanted to consider her husband.

Ida read the note, because Ida knew about everything. Ida said:

"You shouldn't drink, Tawny. You shouldn't drink anything at all. Look at the mess it's got your mother in. Look at the fix it's got you into."

"Mother has the best time in the world. She has wonderful clothes and the men are wild about her and she's always singing and dancing."

"But she can't really be happy," Ida insisted. "Her life is all artificial. She drinks a lot and takes drugs and I'll bet she doesn't really know what she's doing. Why, look at the way she married this Tony when she isn't even divorced from your father. That's crazy business."

"It is not crazy," Tawny argued. "Gramma never considered she was really married anyhow, because Gramma is a good Catholic and they were married in an Episcopal Church."

"But she was legally married anyway, and she isn't legally married now."

"But she thinks it's all right because she had a ceremony in a church."

"It's terrible," Ida said. "It's awful, Tawny. And don't you go getting mixed up with this Tony. Don't telephone him. Don't see him."

"But he may tell mother I was drinking champagne and she'd kill me."

"She's all talk. She wouldn't kill a fly. Go tell your mother yourself that you were drinking champagne. I'll bet she wouldn't do a thing. She drinks herself doesn't

she?"

"She keeps a bottle and a glass right beside the bed and first thing when she wakes up she takes a drink. But she'd have one of her fits if she knew I drank."

They discussed the situation earnestly, but couldn't agree. Ida couldn't understand Tawny's fear of Birdy. Tawny couldn't exactly understand it herself. She couldn't understand her attitude toward Tony either. Consciously, she realized that Tony was behaving like a rat and that any true heroine of stage or screen or novel would spurn his advances. But unconsciously she was flattered by Tony's interest in her; his turning his back on Birdy to pay her attention. It was an unconscious triumph to be the successful rival to one's own mother, especially when one's own mother was so beautiful and desirable.

Tawny telephoned Tony and he met her at Fifty-seventh Street and Seventh Avenue, and they rode in Central Park. Tony hugged her and handled her and whispered:

"You're the most beautiful girl in the world, Tawny. I am wild about you."

He taught Tawny how to kiss like lovers—not like the pecks of schoolboys. He left her, shaken and excited. Tony was a famous dancer, a figure on Broadway. He wanted to see her alone, soon. She was to telephone him next night. Forces outside of herself and impulses deep within her were joined and were rushing her along at dizzy speed.

A grown man was in love with her. A dancer, about whom women raved, was raving about her, a schoolgirl. Her mother had told her not to have anything to do with men, but her mother seemed always to have a man and not to be happy without one. Why did Tony have to be Birdy's man in the first place? Why did life suddenly have to become so complicated?

Tony wrote her a second letter:

> "*Darling Tawny: I couldn't go to sleep without writing to you. I can't get to sleep thinking about you. I will be waiting for you to telephone tomorrow. You are the most beautiful girl in the world. I never loved any girl like I love you. You better burn this letter. Till tomorrow.*
>
> *Love,*
>
> *Tony.*"

Tawny didn't burn the letter, however. She placed it, with the first one, in her bureau drawer inside a clean pair of white silk bloomers, under a neat heap of green,

blue and pink silk bloomers which Birdy had given her. Nobody would find them there.

Tony and Tawny rode in Central Park again next night. Tony had the taxicab stop in the little hidden circular driveway, between One Hundred and Third Street and One Hundred and Tenth Street, off the West Drive. Tony was an experienced lover and knew all the moves.

"The driver—be careful," Tawny whispered.

"He should worry," Tony replied. "You are so beautiful, so sweet, so lovely. I'm mad about you. To-day I got a little place just for us. Tomorrow afternoon you will meet me there—a quaint place in Lexington Avenue, in an old office building—but a love nest. No one will know."

"I can't. I won't. Don't, please. Please, not any more. I can't."

A letter came from Tony again next morning.

> "*Darling Tawny: I can't wait for tonight. I will be there waiting for you. It is one flight up, and there are only offices in the building. Nobody will know. It is our secret. I love you. I send you a thousand kisses. I will not sleep tonight.*
>
> *Your Tony.*"
>
> "*P. S. Burn this up like you did with the others. T.*"

But Tawny didn't burn it. She tucked it inside the white silk bloomers. Nobody would find it there.

Tawny said to Gramma:

"I'm going down to see Aunt Mary and Cousin Joe this after. (After was her abbreviated method of saying afternoon.) I may stay to supper, and I may stay all night. Don't worry about me."

"Why should I worry about you?" Gramma asked. "Why should I worry about you today if I never worried about you any other day since you were born? But look out for a dark man and trouble. It's in the tea leaves. And it's in the cards. And tell Mary to give you my darning egg and the silver thimble I left down there a month back. And tell Joe to mind his cough."

There was no telephone in the Washington Heights apartment and there was no telephone in the Gas House flat. There was a telephone in the candy store two doors from the Washington Heights apartment and there was a telephone in Crowley's Saloon on the corner next the Gas House flat. But Gramma had telephoned only once in her life, and that was when Joe had pneumonia and had to be taken to

Bellevue Hospital. Gramma hated telephones and during her one conversation over one had yelled at the top of her lungs, as if the telephone were a megaphone and she were hailing the Gas House by lung, instead of electric, power from Washington Heights.

Tawny could go to Aunt Mary's flat after school and then go out, as if to a dance hall, or a movie, and then go about her private affairs. There were no push buttons in Twenty-third Street, and no self-locking front doors; and Uncle Dan and Cousin Joe and Aunt Mary slept the sleep of the just. They'd never know nor care when she came in.

Tawny was distrait in school. For the first time in her life her responses to questions were stupid. Miss Hadley asked her at noon recess:

"What's the matter, Louise? Are you ill? Perhaps you'd better go home and rest."

"I'm all right, Miss Hadley. I'm fine."

"You don't act like yourself, darling. Is there something on your mind? Is there any way I can help you? You can trust me."

"There's nothing. Honest, Miss Hadley. I'd tell you if there was."

Ida was upset.

"Don't be a fool, Tawny, and ruin your whole life. Don't go."

"I can take care of myself. I'll be all right."

Tawny wished she'd never told Ida. She should have kept her private business private. What she did was no concern of Ida's. Ida didn't seem to have any feeling in her. But, at that, she could envy Ida for the even tenor of her life, for her calm routine of breakfast, school, play, dinner and supper, home work, a lemon or peppermint stick, Potsie, skip rope, movie and bed.

Ida didn't know the thrills of loving, the terrors of fearing, the dread of the unknown, the pleasant warm giddiness of alcohol. But she was safe and normal and steady. And she looked a long way off—the way she looked when Tawny turned her father's binoculars wrong-end-to and peered at Ida that way. Ida was in another world, although they were standing so close that their arms touched. Ida might just as well have been on the moon. It was a queer sensation.

Nobody would find the letters. But Gramma found them. Gramma was the darndest person. You never knew what she was going to do, except that she was going to take her Saturday night bath in the washtub in the kitchen, and never get into the bathtub in the bathroom, and that she was going to sing at night when she went to bed, and go to early mass at St. Charles Borromeo every Sunday morning, rain, shine, snow, sleet, heat, cold or high humidity.

Gramma always said herself that the manners of the gentry were nothing but affectation. The idea that it was improper to read someone else's letters never had entered Gramma's head. If such a suggestion had been made to her she would have laughed and sniffed and said:

"Sure, and that's putting on more airs. Let's hear no more of it."

She read the letters and she got her black bonnet out of the box in the closet and her Paisley shawl from the old Gladstone bag and her reticule with the peppermint drops, white and pink, from the top drawer right, and five one-dollar bills and some change from an old sock of Dave's, which was stuffed into a worn slipper in the darkest corner of the closet.

Gramma walked slowly down the stairs, one black-gloved hand on the guard rail. She planted both feet firmly on one step before she ventured the next. She stopped moving when nine-year-old Willie Myers, fifth floor, raced upstairs past her. She stood motionless while tenants, male and female, passed her going up and down. But if she was slow, she was sure. She was inexorable. When Gramma had a chore to do she did the chore before she thought of doing anything else.

Mrs. Stong, the janitor's wife, short and bulbous, with scant untidy blond hair and a face red from high blood pressure, steam of the wash tubs, heat of the stove, exertion of ironing, exercise of washing, effort at climbing stairs with a basket of freshly laundered clothes, stared at Gramma from blue pop eyes. Gramma only went out to go to church. Somebody must be dead.

"Has anythin' happened, Mrs. McKinley?"

"If there had, I'd be the last to tell of it," Gramma replied.

"I didn't mean any harm, Mrs. McKinley."

"No harm's done," Gramma announced.

Mr. Stong was on the front stoop.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. McKinley. What brings you out of a week-day afternoon?"

"I took a notion," Gramma said. "And since you've got time to be standin' on the front porch, Mr. Stong, you might be puttin' a new washer on the cold water fasset in the kitchen. It's been drippin' for two weeks. And those stairs are a sight. A mop and a pail of water and some soap would do 'em a world of good, Mr. Stong."

Mr. Stong, a god in his own right, stared at Gramma with hostile old eyes.

"If you don't like the way I take care of—"

"You get that fasset fixed in a jiffy or I'll notify Mr. Mandel."

Mr. Mandel was the landlord, and Mr. Mandel was proud of this apartment house and insisted on having it kept in good repair. Gramma knew it, and Mr. Stong

knew it. Mr. Stong said:

"RRRRRG."

Gramma went down the marble steps onto the sidewalk and turned south. She passed Bogue's candy store because the telephone in there was attached to the wall and anyone could listen to a conversation over it. Gramma required a booth.

Gramma went into the drug store of Diehl & Ball, and into one of a cluster of six telephone booths. When Birdy's voice came over the wire Gramma was not surprised. She hadn't even given a thought to the possibility of Birdy not being in. Birdy said:

"Hello."

"Hello, yourself," Gramma replied.

"Oh, Ma. It's you. What's the matter?"

"Matter enough," Gramma said. "I found some letters that Eyetalian of yours has been writing to Tawny—love letters they arre, wit' little crosses at the bottom av thim."

No sound came back over the wire, except a vague humming. Gramma said:

"Birdy! Arre you therre. C'n you hear me shpeakin'?"

"My God!" Birdy cried, her voice choked. "My God!"

"Don't be afther draggin' the name of God into this," Gramma said sternly. "It would niver av happened if you had not forsaken religion."

"I'll kill him."

"Thin you'll be electrocuted, and that would be a foine dishgrace to bring upon your ould mither's gray hairs. Hit him wit' a rollin' pin or a shillaleh if you wish, but don't kill him. But keep him away from Tawny. The shame av you! The dishgrace av the way you live."

Birdy began to sob and scream.

"Shut up your noise," Gramma said sharply. "You tell your foine Eyetalian seducer of young girrls to kape away from Tawny. D'ye hear your mither shpakin?"

Gramma's brogue always became richer as she became more excited or more in earnest.

"I hear. The bastard!"

Birdy was stifling her sobs.

"He's all av that, an' more," Gramma said. "An' now I'm afther goin' down to Mary's to see Tawny if I can."

"I'll go," Birdy offered. "I'll go."

"Ye will not. Ye will see the Eyetalian criminal ye're livin' wit' in sin. I'll see Tawny if she's there."

"Ma! Listen! Ma!"

"What?"

"Tell—tell Tawny to remember all her life her mother made a sacrifice for her—and whenever she is tempted after this to think of her mother before she does it."

"Ye arre not goin' to be foolish now, Birdy. Shtop—"

"Tell her I did it for her," Birdy said hysterically. "Tell her her mother was thinking of her, ma. Oh, God damn it!"

"Shtop your swearin', Birdy."

"I always loved you, ma. I always loved Tawny, ma. God help me. Goodbye, ma. Remember and tell Tawny I did it for her. Goodbye, ma."

A click sounded in Gramma's ears. She said:

"Arre you there, Birdy?"

The line was dead. Gramma replaced the receiver on the hook and went out and walked to the Elevated stairs. The thought of a cab never entered her frugal head. Cabs and carriages were only for weddings and funerals. She rode downtown on the Elevated and across Twenty-third Street on the cross-town electric car. The horses with their ears sticking through floppy straw hats were only a memory. New York was changing. The world was changing. Men were flying now. But the same old human troubles remained. Electricity hadn't changed the human heart, the human emotions. Men were still men and women were still women. Gramma preferred the horses. No power on earth could get her to fly.

Tawny was helping Aunt Mary with supper—corned-beef hash browned in the pan, dill pickles, bread and butter, preserved peaches, sponge cake and tea. Who'd ever forget that meal? Tawny wouldn't. That was sure. Aunt Mary and Tawny stared at Gramma. The blood began to pound in Tawny's temples. A pulse beat in her throat. She felt sick at her stomach. Gramma knew! Gramma had Tony's letters in her hand.

"An' what has happened, ma?" Aunt Mary asked. "What brings you way down here? Let me take your shawl."

Aunt Mary took the Paisley shawl from Gramma's shoulders. Gramma laid the guilty letters on the blue and white oilcloth cover of the kitchen table. She said:

"I come to previnta great sin, Mary."

Mary glanced quickly from Tawny to Gramma. Tawny stood silent, trembling, cheeks red as flame, sweat standing out in drops. Tawny could feel the sweat running down her sides from the armpits.

"I found thim letters hid away in your bureau drawer," Gramma continued, addressing Tawny. "The Eyetalian degenerate that wrote 'em ought to be shot."

"What Eyetalian? What are you talkin' about, Ma?"

"The Eyetalian Birdy is livin' with in sin. The Eyetalian that wrote them letters to Tawny. The Eyetalian—"

"He isn't an Italian," Tawny said.

Gramma fixed her with a baleful eye.

"You shut up. You arre goin' to meet no Eyetalians this night or any other night. So!"

Gramma drew a deep breath and added:

"I tilliphomed the noos to Birdy before I come."

She sank into a chair and said:

"I could shtand a drop of tay—shtrong, Mary."

Tawny thought the end of the world, no matter how cataclysmic and horrible, couldn't be worse than this.

Birdy and Tony were rolling north on the Bronx River Parkway. The wind was howling a gale in their ears. The speedometer was at 70.

"Stop it!" Tony yelled. "For Christ's sake. Are you crazy?"

The speedometer needle wobbled up to eighty. The hundred and twenty mechanical horses working beneath the hood roared and bellowed with power. The air trembled to their clamor. The rubber shrieked like lost souls as they made a slight turn. The needle climbed.

"Ninety!" Tony shrieked. "You're crazy. You're full of dope. You God damned lunatic. Stop it. You'll kill us."

He touched the wheel, afraid to touch it, yet impelled by an overwhelming fear, to try to do something. Birdy screamed:

"You'll never get Tawny—you bastard."

Another curve loomed ahead. The car shot from the parkway. It leaped in the air, and rolled over spilling out Birdy and Tony like two rag dolls. They hadn't time to be conscious of more than a great roaring, and crashing, and whirling. Birdy awakened in a red haze of pain. Tom Conley, a motorcycle policeman, had fished her from the Bronx River, but she didn't know it. Her left arm and left leg were broken, and her skull was fractured, but she didn't know it. Tony was dead, but she didn't know it. Dr. George Coombs poked a needle in her arm, but she didn't feel it. The doctor said:

"She's a hop-head and an alcoholic. Look at the scars on her thigh. You can smell her breath a mile."

"Will she live, doctor?" Conley asked.

"Looks like a healthy animal. If she hasn't bad internal injuries, and if there aren't

any complications, like ether pneumonia, she may pull through."

But Birdy didn't hear the words, although her eyes were open. All she heard was a shrill screaming piercing her ear drums—a shrill, monotonous screaming, which she didn't know came from her own lungs. The big shot of morphine sulphate had deadened her consciousness of agony, but unconsciously she was on the rack, encased in the iron virgin, being drawn and quartered, and burned at the stake. Conley said:

"Of course, she's under arrest. Manslaughter, drunken driving, speeding—"

"First thing's to get her to hospital," Dr. Coombs interrupted, lighting a cigarette. "A damn fine-lookin' female animal like that ought to be preserved."

Patrolman John Flynn hated these jobs. He enjoyed wading into a half-dozen of the Gas House Gang with swinging nightstick. He didn't mind diving into the East River to rescue drowning humans; he'd dived in for Micky Kelly's dog Christmas Day two years ago. Twice he'd shot it out with criminals—once in a basement in East Twentieth Street and once in the back room of Carrigan & Webber's Café. But he hated to break the news of death and accident and arrest to unsuspecting and innocent families. He dreaded such tasks but he faced them, as he faced all problems, with his close-cropped bullet-shaped blond head up, turquoise eyes steady, weather-beaten face an official mask, big chin set. Six feet two in his stockings, Patrolman Flynn, husband of Hannah—five feet ten, as broad as he and almost as deep in the chest—and the father of eight.

Aunt Mary opened the door of the flat. And she opened her eyes when she saw the blue uniform and brass buttons and shining silver shield, and she opened her mouth, too, and her left hand unconsciously went to her heart.

"Don't be frightened," Patrolman Flynn said, in a light tenor voice, which came surprisingly from one of his bulk. "Is this the home of the family of Birdy McKinley Lane—Mrs. Lane?"

"It is," Aunt Mary gasped. "I'm Birdy's sister. What is it, officer? Has anything happened to Birdy?"

"Take it aisy," advised Patrolman Flynn, removing his uniform cap and mopping his damp forehead, which was strikingly white in contrast to his face.

"What is it?" Gramma called from down the hall. "Who's there, Mary?"

"A policeman," Tawny breathed, catching a glimpse of blue and brass.

"What is it he wants of honest folk?" Gramma demanded, walking down the hall. "What are you doin' here in this house, officer?"

"It's about Birdy," Aunt Mary said.

"Birdy!" Gramma ejaculated. "An' what has that wan done now?"

"Mrs. Lane was in an automobile accident—"

"Kilt!" Aunt Mary wailed, and tossed gingham apron over her head.

"Alive, ma'am," Flynn said hastily. "Hurt bad, but alive and in the Bronx River Hospital."

"Will she live?" Gramma asked.

Aunt Mary was weeping. Tawny was sobbing. Only Gramma was grim. Cousin Joe came into the hall in his shirt sleeves as Flynn was saying:

"The doctors say there's a good chance for her."

"I want to see her," Tawny sobbed. "I'm going to the hospital."

"Shut up," Gramma snapped.

"Her husband—Tony Lane—was in the accident too," Flynn said.

Aunt Mary stopped weeping for an instant and Tawny ceased her sobs. In the momentary silence Flynn's indrawn breath sounded loud. He said:

"He was kilt instantly."

He twirled his cap in huge, red hands and coughed. Tawny began to sob again, harder, and Aunt Mary crossed herself. Joe asked:

"What happened? Is Birdy hurt?"

"Hurt in an accident," Gramma explained impatiently.

"Automobile," Flynn said, fastening his turquoise gaze on Joe in relief. "At three thirty-five P. M., goin' north at high speed, in Mercedes tourin' car, Mrs. Lane drivin', Mr. Lane sittin' beside her. Car left the parkway north of Bronxville and turned over three times. Car wrecked. Occupants thrown out. Woman—Mrs. Lane—landed in Bronx River, an' rescued by Motorcycle Officer Conley. Attended by Dr. Coombs, who happened to be passin' in another car. Removed to Bronx River Hospital. Sufferin' of fractures left arm and left leg, fracture of skull, and possible internal injuries. Condition serious, but doctors say if no complications set in patient has chance of recovery."

Flynn stowed away in an inner pocket the little red notebook from which he was reading. Aunt Mary's lips were moving in prayer. Tawny was weeping against Gramma's shoulder. Feet trampled on the stairs. Five men in battered felt hats, unpressed suits and unshined shoes came into view. Two carried cameras and tripods. Three chorused:

"Hello, Flynn. Ah, there, Mike. *Wie geht's?*"

"Hello, Boys," Flynn replied. "Newspaper reporters," he explained to the family.

"We don't want to see them," Gramma snapped. "Keep 'em out. Shut the door."

"Excuse me, ma'am," Flynn said, "but I know these boys. Their papers send 'em. They'd rather be playin' poker over in the shack at Bellevue. If you see 'em for a few minutes they'll be nice to you in the papers. They'll be afther wantin' pictures an'—"

"No," Gramma said. "Keep 'em out."

"The officer is right," Joe said determinedly. "The reporters have got to get a story and pictures. If you don't see 'em now they'll hang around the place all night pestering us to death. Come in, you fellows," he said to the newspaper men.

"They'll get no story and no pictures from me," Gramma announced.

The newspapermen walked in, three of them remembering to remove their hats. Two more men arrived, these two nattily dressed, a new gray felt hat, a blue suit and black shoes with gray spats; and a jaunty green felt hat, green suit, brown shoes and brown hat, eyeglasses shining under it—two staff reporters.

"Hello, Bill."

"Hello, Jack."

"Ah, there, Harry."

"*Wie geht's?*"

"Come on into the kitchen," Joe invited.

"The parlor is nicer," Aunt Mary suggested.

"Take us to the kitchen."

"There's some Bushmills whisky left," Joe said, leading the way.

"You're all right, fella."

"Lead us to it."

"Never mind the whisky. Let's get the story. Which of you is Mrs. McKinley?"

"The kid'll make a swell picture."

The kitchen filled with voices, cigarette and cigar smoke, aroma of Bushmills. Flashlight bulbs exploded, adding powder fumes to those of burning tobacco. Hands, unterrified by the death-dealing qualities of night air, opened the two windows wide.

The newspaper men made humorous remarks, flattering remarks, caustic remarks. They miraculously eased the tension. They were so polite to Gramma, so unctuous with Tawny, so friendly with Joe, so solicitous of Aunt Mary, so partial to Uncle Dan's Bushmills and Uncle Dan's cigars, that it was just as if they always had been there, almost as if they were friends or even friendly relations.

By silent agreement they let Brown-Hat Eye-Glasses ask the questions. There was a diplomat. There was a smooth worker. A slight negative motion of his head discouraged police reporters' notes. No pencils and paper were in sight. He didn't

seem to be asking questions. He just seemed to be friendly and casual and sympathetic and full of admiration for Birdy's beauty and talents; honest regret for her predicament; deep respect for Gramma's age and opinions and good regular fellowship with Cousin Joe. He dominated the scene without appearing to do so and was the focus of attention of his brother reporters more often than was the family.

He wheedled photographs of Birdy from Aunt Mary, while Gramma sniffed, and got a full history (carefully deleted) of Birdy, from Joe.

"This was Mrs. Lane's second marriage, then?" Brown Hat asked, looking at Tawny.

Tawny trembled. Gramma shut her lips tight. Aunt Mary trembled. Birdy had said nothing about a first marriage, they all knew, when she and Tony got their marriage license. She was a bigamist. That was what. Joe didn't bat an eye. He said:

"Say, fellows. We've been on the level with you, haven't we?"

"You sure have."

"You bet."

"And don't think we don't appreciate it."

"We'll treat you right, fella."

"All right, then," Joe said. "Give us a break, too, and don't go into the marriage question, will you? Just leave it that Birdy's husband was killed. Can you do it?"

"I don't know."

"Sure, we can."

"Our papers've got other men on this story."

"We'll do our best," Brown Hat said.

"My cousin is in trouble enough now, isn't she?" Joe asked.

"I'll say."

"Damn' tough luck."

"Have another drink," Joe said.

Cousin Joe had seen plenty of newspapermen at Harder & Harder's. He knew they were human. You didn't bribe them. You couldn't. If you tried, you got into trouble. But you could treat them like friends, like regular guys. Give 'em what they had to have as part of their jobs. Give 'em a drink and a cigar just like you would any friend. And they'd be your friends. Funny that. They were such hard guys in their sophisticated newspaper armor, but such soft guys personally—guys with amazing ideals, guys who kept their promises to total strangers; guys who'd steal a picture from a family album, but give a bum their last dollar. The picture was for the paper. The last dollar was theirs.

"Have another drink, fellows," Cousin Joe said. "Put some cigars in your

pockets."

He was echoing Gus Harder without realizing it. The newspaper reporters liked Joe, and he liked them.

Suddenly they were gone, leaving behind a tobacco, whisky, flashlight-powder tainted emptiness and silence, and a sense of loneliness. Gramma said:

"Well, Birdy did it."

"Did what?" Joe asked.

"She told me over the tillephome that she was goin' to make a sacrifice, an' to tell Tawny the sacrifice was for her."

They stared at each other. Joe whistled.

"Holy smokes!"

Cousin Joe never swore, any more than he smoked or drank.

"She was carryin' on," Gramma said, "an' I didn't pay much attention."

"Prob'ly she was drinking and didn't know what she was doing," Joe exclaimed. "Poor Birdy."

"And full of heroin," Tawny thought miserably.

When in doubt, take whisky and heroin. When in the dumps, take whisky and heroin. When bad news came, whisky and heroin. No, Birdy wouldn't even remember probably—if she lived.

Tawny began to weep again.

VI

Everyone in the hospital liked Birdy. The interns dropped into her room and smoked and flirted and laughed. The nurses gathered there. Even some of the staff spent leisure moments chatting with Birdy.

She was an exotic creature, a flower from the mystic land of Broadway, where hundred-dollar bills reposed under a pretty girl's dinner plate; where Park Avenue apartments and imported cars and diamonds were tossed around among pretty girls like confetti at a party.

As soon as she was conscious, and able, Birdy opened an envelope Mrs. Fielding, her day nurse, handed her. Out of it dropped five one-thousand-dollar bills. Four fell on the high hospital bed and one fluttered to the floor. Mrs. Fielding gasped, and picked it up, staring at it.

"Oh!" she said. "I never saw so much money at one time before in my life. I never saw a thousand-dollar bill before."

Birdy smiled her first smile and laughed her first laugh, and then gasped with pain. She said:

"That's like Tom Barty. He's a darlin'."

"Thomas L. Barty, the steel king? You know him?"

"Sure, I know him," Birdy said. "Tom's an old friend."

Mrs. Fielding held the five crisp treasury notes in her hands. She said:

"I never thought I'd ever hold so much money in my hands in my life."

Birdy smiled again and said:

"Tom spends more than that in a night many a time."

"It must be wonderful to be rich. But even if they're rich, men don't usually throw their money around."

"Tom does," Birdy said. "He says being able to afford to be a sucker gives him the biggest kick he gets out of life. There's lots of girls, and boys too, on Broadway, that Tom Barty has helped."

"It must've been Mr. Barty then that arranged for your room, and the nurses and doctors, and sends all the flowers."

Moisture gathered in Birdy's dark eyes for an instant. She nodded and swallowed, and quickly was smiling again.

"That's just like Tom," she said. "I did him a dirty trick, and this is the way he gets square. He helped out Edna Bays the same way—an'—Oh, hell! I'm no good.

I'm a hell of a slob. I'm—"

She began to weep. Mrs. Fielding quickly became a nurse.

"There, Mrs. Lane. You mustn't do that."

She wrung out a cloth in ice water and laid it on Birdy's forehead. She deftly mopped up Birdy's tears. She smiled and said:

"That'll make you feel better. You're still a little nervous—and no wonder, with the shock to your system."

Birdy's sobs ceased and her tears stopped. She said:

"You're awful good to me, Mrs. Fielding. I don't deserve it."

"Of course you do," Mrs. Fielding said. "There's nothing the matter with you except that you're sick. And we all have to be sick sooner or later. But soon you'll be well and laughing at all this."

"I hope so, Mrs. Fielding. I feel as if I'd never get well. How is Tony? Why doesn't he send me a note? Was he hurt worse than me? What happened? I don't remember."

"Tony is all right," Mrs. Fielding said. "Don't get yourself excited. It's about time for your hypo anyway."

"Gee! I'm glad to hear that," Birdy sighed.

She liked the sharp smell of alcohol as Mrs. Fielding rubbed the alcohol-saturated cotton on the back of her upper arm. She couldn't feel the needle, but there was a slight sting as the opiate oozed under the skin. Mrs. Fielding rubbed the puncture again with the cotton. Then she stirred up the pillows and settled Birdy more comfortably.

"Is that all right?" she asked.

"That's fine, thanks."

"You just lie quiet and don't talk and don't think, if you can help it, and I'll rub your head."

Birdy lay quiet and Mrs. Fielding rubbed her forehead softly. It was a beautiful white forehead, broad and low, and the honey-colored hair, in two thick braids now, grew into a widow's peak. Mrs. Fielding sighed.

Her hair was ordinary brown and thin. Her forehead was high and slightly wrinkled. Her eyes were an ordinary brown, with tired circles under them and crow's feet beginning to show at the corners. She wore a removable bridge, two false teeth on one side, and three on the other, in her upper jaw. She was more angular than curved, and her breasts were flaccid.

She had been bright in school and meticulous in her conduct. She had been considered the smartest nurse who had graduated from the Brightwood Hospital in

years. She had married Dr. Fielding, and been happy beyond her dreams. After four years Dr. Fielding died of pneumonia. Now she was a nurse, earning seven dollars a day and trying to look after two children, Ernest, eight, and Enid, six.

Mrs. Fielding sighed as she moved her useful but not pretty hand over Birdy's forehead. She wasn't angry. She wasn't jealous. She was truly sympathetic, but she was thinking without rancor of the big part luck played in life.

Here was a poor girl, born beautiful, a human butterfly. Her hair was lovely in color and texture; her skin was soft and delicate; her features were beautifully modeled; her breasts and body and arms and legs might have been sculptured by a Phidias or Praxiteles.

But she didn't realize what life was all about. She performed no service. If she had any rules of conduct, any code of morals, they were most rudimentary. If she had character it was nascent. Like a butterfly she blew before the breezes of the moment and alighted on the whim of the moment. She was an alcoholic and a drug addict.

And her daughter, Tawny—showing promise of being at least as lovely as her mother. What would happen to Birdy? What would happen to Tawny? Life was strange. Life was a puzzle. Life was such a battle for some—for nurses and doctors, for instance. And life was a dizzy game for others. Mrs. Fielding sighed. Birdy opened her eyes and murmured drowsily:

"You're simply swell, Mrs. Fielding. It must be wonderful to be like you."

Birdy sank into drugged sleep. Mrs. Fielding arose and, walking softly in her rubber-soled shoes, drew the shades noiselessly, arranged the screen around the foot of the bed and sank, with a little sigh, into an armchair. Her legs ached. Her head ached. She was dizzy with fatigue. She had ironed the children's clothes last night. She leaned back and closed her eyes for a moment, but only for a moment. She sat up determinedly and reached for her sewing. Enid's dress had to be finished. She sewed with tiny, beautiful stitches, her forehead wrinkled, concentrated on her task. Ernest and Enid must always be well dressed. They must have their fair chance in the world.

Charlie Fairfield, District Attorney of Westchester County, didn't even ask for an indictment against Birdy. What was the use? She had been drunk. She had been full of heroin. She was beautiful. And there was power behind her somewhere, power to wield political influence, money to employ Jack Cadman as her counsel. To try her would offend persons in influential places. To try her would cost the county a huge sum of money. To have her acquitted wouldn't help the Fairfield record, wouldn't further the Fairfield political ambition. Convictions did that, not acquittals. It was

easy to get convictions where defendants were poor and obscure and not professional criminals with defense funds and clever mouthpieces acting for them. Better lay off this Birdy Lane. But Charlie Fairfield insisted on one point that Birdy should go to a sanitarium from the Bronx River Hospital to be cured of alcohol and drugs. Thus Charlie Fairfield did himself good instead of harm and being really a pleasant man—when he wasn't calling for a term of years in the penitentiary or for a visit to the electric chair—nobody criticized him adversely. The newspaper men said he was smart.

Tom Barty's name never appeared in connection with politics. But Tom Barty's money was in many politicians' pockets and bank accounts. It swelled campaign funds and eased mortgages, furnished bail bonds, prevented bankruptcies and paid for gay parties which it was a rare privilege to attend.

Tom Barty's name never appeared in connection with Birdy. But all those on the inside looking out knew. They never mentioned to each other the name of Tom Barty, although each knew the other knew. One might say:

"She's a friend of the Big Fellow."

And that was all. It was enough.

Birdy was all packed to leave for the Hilltop Sanitarium. She walked with a little limp, using a crutch under her right shoulder, but that would pass. Tawny was going to ride to Hilltop with Birdy. Birdy asked to be left alone a moment with Mrs. Fielding.

Tawny and two interns and Miss McCafferty, the superintendent, stepped into the hall. Before Birdy could move or speak, Mrs. Fielding kissed Birdy on the cheek. She didn't know just why she did it, unless it was that there was something childish and appealing and kissable about Birdy, bad as she was. Birdy said:

"You've been swell to me, Mrs. Fielding. You're a good egg, if there ever was one. Here."

And she handed Mrs. Fielding a brand-new one-thousand-dollar bill, crisp and yellow and crackling a little. Mrs. Fielding trembled. It meant so much. It was a fortune. Her voice shook as she said:

"I can't take it, Mrs. Lane. It's awfully good and thoughtful and generous of you, but I can't take so much from you."

"Don't be a sap," Birdy retorted gruffly. "Don't be dumb. There's plenty more where that came from; and as long as there're men I don't have to worry."

"Don't talk like that, please," Mrs. Fielding said. "It hurts me somehow when you talk like that. You're really so sweet and good inside, with a heart of gold. Why don't you be the sweet woman you were planned by God to be?"

"Can that stuff, Mrs. Fielding. I'm the way I am, and I like it. I love every minute of it."

Birdy pushed away Mrs. Fielding's trembling hand. Birdy said:

"I on'y wish to God it was more. I on'y wish I could give every damn' nurse in the whole damn' hospital a handful of those grands. You've been swell to me—the whole damn' bunch. Here. This is for Miss Carroll. Slip it to her with my compliments."

Birdy handed over another thousand-dollar bill. Mrs. Fielding began to weep. Tears ran down her cheeks. She knew she looked homelier than ever when she cried but she couldn't help it. She said:

"But you shouldn't do it. It's too much."

She knew she was going to keep her bill, however. And she knew Miss Carroll would accept hers. Miss Carroll had a brother studying to be a doctor. What a godsend this would be to Miss Carroll!

"Don't go bawling on me now," Birdy warned, "or I'll start bawling myself in a minute. God damn it, I haven't done anything except get tight and all hopped up and kill a no-good louse."

"I can't ever thank you," Mrs. Fielding said.

"Don't thank me," Birdy said. "I've lost more than that on one race down at Belmont and Pimlico for that matter, and Saratoga. I'm a bum and you're a regular guy. Goodbye, pal."

Tawny rode beside her mother on the rear seat of the limousine. One nurse sat on the left-hand drop seat, where she wouldn't interfere with Birdy's comfort, and another rode in front with the chauffeur. Tawny never loved her mother more or admired her so much. Birdy was thinner, which gave her a spiritual quality. Birdy was paler, which made her look like an angel. Birdy was quieter, which made her seem lady-like. Birdy asked:

"What did you say your name was, nurse?"

"Miss Adkins."

"What's the other one's name?"

"Miss Brophy."

"Adkins and Brophy. Don't be mad if I forget 'em a half-dozen times. I'm rotten on names but I always remember faces. That's funny. What kind of a dump is this where I'm going?"

"It's a lovely place, Mrs. Lane."

"Don't call me Lane any more. Call me Bohun—Mrs. Bohun."

"All right, Mrs. Bohun."

Doctors and nurses at Hilltop would call you Queen Elizabeth if you but made the request.

"Do I have a padded cell?"

Birdy laughed, but there was a nervous, apprehensive quality in the laugh which wasn't mirthful. Miss Adkins said:

"Oh, no, Mrs. Bohun. You have a lovely room with southern exposure. And there are lovely grounds and a golf course and tennis courts and riding horses and a lovely gymnasium."

Tawny thought Miss Adkins rather overdid the word lovely.

"It is a lovely place," Miss Adkins said.

Miss Adkins had red hair, and green eyes, and a turned-up nose and freckles. She was only about five feet tall, but plump and sturdy and capable-looking. What was most noticeable about her, however, was her air of quiet, watchful repose. This same air was a common quality of all the doctors and nurses at Hilltop. They had to be emotionally balanced to a hair to handle successfully the wildly unbalanced mortals who came into their care.

Hilltop was surrounded by a spiked iron fence. It was beautifully laid out with lawns and flower beds, and the buildings were of brick with white wooden Doric columns in the colonial style. Miss Adkins said:

"I'd suggest you say goodbye to your daughter here. You will meet Dr. Moses first, and then be settled in your room. You should be quiet for the first day. Your daughter may come any day after this."

"Do I get a hypo?" Birdy asked, coughing the spasmodic cough of an addict who has gone past the time for a shot. "I'm sweating like a pig."

"You'll get a hypo the instant you're in bed—and you should be in bed in ten minutes."

"You ain't kidding me? You don't take it away from me all at once?"

"Most certainly not, Mrs. Bohun. It would be barbarous. They don't do that even with criminals. And this is a sanitarium for private patients. You are paying a large sum for comfort and skillful care. I promise you'll be getting your hypos regularly for a few days."

Birdy sighed and coughed again.

"Somehow, I believe you, nurse," she said. "I can't get to bed quick enough."

She turned to Tawny and they kissed awkwardly and sketchily. Birdy said:

"Goodbye, kid, and remember the sacrifice your mother made for you. And keep away from men and booze—or else . . ."

Tawny rode back to New York on the Putnam division. She was thinking of the

sacrifice her mother talked about. And yet her mother couldn't even remember going to ride with Tony in the first place. She had had to be told about it. She had been so stuffed with whisky and heroin she didn't know what she was doing. A grand sacrifice, Tawny thought, and wondered what Birdy would do if she knew about Curly (Sling) Edwards down in the Gas House district.

Curly (*Sling*) Edwards's real name was Kyrle Edwards, his mother having possessed one of the thousands of feminine hearts which skipped a beat even at the mention of the name of that fascinating romantic actor and matinée idol, Kyrle Bellew.

But everybody thought his name was spelled C-U-R-L-Y. That is, most residents of the Gas House thought so, if they thought at all. He earned the nickname *Sling* because of his remarkable skill with a slingshot while still a mere boy.

At the age of twenty he already was playing what was called center field in the purlieus of gangdom in New York. That is, having become as adept with a revolver as he had been with a slingshot, he shot and killed Kid Moli in Burk's Speakeasy in Hester Street, and he shot and killed Puggy Pianni in a gun battle at Coney Island, and after that he didn't have to shoot anybody because he was recognized far and wide as one of the really hard guys of New York's underworld, and the boss of the Young Gas House Gang. He could be playing center field, that is, looking at a boxing match, or shooting pool with plenty of witnesses, when an enemy was bumped off. This occupation with other and innocent activities while murder was being done was called playing center field.

The police knew that Curly had killed Kid Moli and Puggy Pianni, but knowledge isn't evidence; and Curly had Jack Cadman for a mouthpiece, and Jack, at this time, was riding high and handsome in the hot spots of Broadway and in the Criminal Courts, trampling down the quivering body of Blind Justice, turning the guilty loose with acquittals and hung juries, and giving learned Judges sleepless nights and hectic days.

Tawny was only fourteen, but she was tall and well developed for her age, and might easily pass for eighteen. She was as graceful as a willow, and so surcharged with love of music and rhythm that her eyes filled with tears of sheer joy when a good orchestra went to town.

Dancing was a passion also with Curly Edwards. He was about five feet ten, with blond hair brushed straight back, blue eyes, nice features, except that his lips were a trifle on the thin side, and his jaw, if one looked carefully, was prognathous to a degree. And his blue eyes were very light blue, like ice on a mountain lake, the eyes of a killer.

His body was young and straight and muscular, always fit from exercise—handball, boxing, wrestling, basketball, baseball, as well as dancing. His voice was soft and pleasant and he never swore or told dirty stories or allowed anyone to tell dirty stories or use bawdy words around him.

"Go out to the lavatory if you've got to talk that way," he used to say.

Curly was acting up to his own ideas of being a gentleman. Uptown, around Broadway, he made a great hit with the females from Park Avenue in the high-class speakeasies. But as soon as he met Tawny in Rosedream, a dance hall in Third Avenue, near Twenty-third, Curly was sunk. He danced every dance with her and took her to the Twenty-third Street flat in a limousine. Curly wasn't the kind to paw a lady. He didn't have to. Besides that, Curly respected what he called *ladies* with a deep and unreasoning respect, just as he hated prostitutes. According to his code, a guy was supposed to fight if anyone cast the slightest slur on the sacred name of motherhood, or kill if any other guy made a bad pass at a sister or a girl friend. When Tawny got out of the car, Curly got out with her, and a thin man with a black felt hat, and a blue suit, and a bulge under his left breast jacket pocket, which wasn't made by a handkerchief, got out, too, and stood idly on the sidewalk, looking around. Tawny asked:

"Who's that?"

"A fellow I know."

"You didn't introduce me."

"You don't want to know fellows like him, Tawny."

Newspaper reporters probably would have called Black Felt Hat Curly's torpedo. Black Felt Hat was Harry (*Hoppy*) Horowitz. He was addicted to the sniffing of coke and in a gun battle he always hopped around like a Mexican Jumping Bean. Whether the nickname *Hoppy* was derived from the fact that he was a hophead or the fact that he took on the ways of a grasshopper when bullets were flying was an unsettled problem.

To many persons, Hoppy Horowitz was a menace, deadly and uncertain as a rattlesnake. But to Curly he was just a punk to push around. If everyone who knew Hoppy feared Hoppy, all their fears piled into one mountain of fear didn't sum up the fear Hoppy held for Curly Edwards.

Curly was a natural actor, perhaps inherited from his mother, hopeless admirer of Kyrle Bellew. She always had wanted to be a star on the stage, but had starred on the maternal couch instead. Mrs. Edwards had produced fifteen children, of whom ten had survived and of whom Curly was the last and most spoiled. He had been born when his mother was forty-nine, and his father had died when he was five. This

instinct for acting, or imitation, which Curly possessed, made it natural for him to pick up quickly and easily the manners of the socially elect. He said "How do you do?" when introduced to a lady, and not "Pleased to meetcha," and he raised his hat to all in skirts, and removed his hat not only in the house, but in restaurants and cafés, which alone was sufficient to set him apart.

Curly's favorite diversion was acting girl roles in the Neighborhood Athletic Club plays. His mother had kept him in kilts until he was twelve, much to his shame. When he was fifteen, he had dressed in the clothes of his sister, Agnes, five years older, and was admiring himself in front of the mirror when Agnes entered her room. She clapped her hands and said:

"Why, Curly! You make the prettiest girl. If you had a wig we could go out together."

Curly got a blond wig, and he and Agnes went to see Charlie Chaplin at the Twenty-third Street Theatre, and a man next to Curly leaned against him and touched his thigh. Curly's impulse was to punch, but with presence of mind he merely reached out his left hand, gathered together as much skin and flesh as he could on the man's thigh, and pinched. The man yelled "Ow!" and leaped to his feet and fled.

Heads turned; an usher hurried up and asked:

"What's the trouble here? Did that guy annoy you?"

Curly shook his head gently and replied in a high voice:

"Oh, no, sir."

Agnes whispered:

"What happened?"

"He tried to feel me."

"I wished you'd punched him good. Now you know what girls have to put up with."

"I wish I could've killed him, but I couldn't take any chances. They'd send me to the island for masquerading if they knew I'm not a girl."

Curly loved to dress in feminine underwear—pink silk undershirts, silk step-ins, and to wear silk stockings and feminine shoes. He had pneumatic breasts.

But Curly was normal sexually. He was what is scientifically termed a transvestite, or cross-dresser. He derived an emotional, but not a sexual, thrill from wearing the garb of the opposite sex.

He enjoyed the soft fabrics and bright colors and their softening and beautifying effect on his white skin, blue eyes and pink cheeks. He made an exceptionally charming girl.

Now, he bowed to Tawny and raised his hat.

"I'll see you tomorrow night at eight," he said. "Good night, Louise."

Tawny was thrilled by this interest of Curly Edwards. She naturally knew all about him. Everybody did. His name had been in the newspapers and on the lips of the dwellers around the Gas House. She was thrilled and pleasantly scared. But she wasn't in love. She felt she could only really be in love with a man like her father, a real, adult, grown-up *man*, with a streak of gray over the temples maybe, and brains and experience and knowledge of life, and *understanding* of character—like Dr. George Coombs.

Dr. Coombs was a handsome man in his late thirties, with dark brown hair and hazel eyes and an attractive, tanned face. He had an easy yet authoritative way with him and an inspiring personality. The nurses at the Bronx River Hospital all loved him and said so.

Once in a while Dr. Coombs appeared with spectacles with tinted lenses, his breath smelling oddly aromatic. Then the nurses said:

"He was on a party last night, and drank too much. He thinks he's fooling everybody by wearing dark glasses and chewing breath scents."

Tawny loved Dr. Coombs, too, and plotted how she might be able to see him again. He always treated her like a child—the poor fish.

Tawny danced almost every night with Curly, and thought of Dr. Coombs. No one else could dance with her. No one else dared, whether they were in Washington Heights or Harlem or in Sixth Avenue parallel with the roaring forties, or downtown in Third Avenue near Twenty-third.

"We'll get married when you finish school," Curly said.

He kissed her then and her senses thrilled. Her senses always were ready to sway her. Curly was a handsome boy and they had so much in common—hatred of obscenity and profanity, passion for dancing.

Pressed against Curly, her body trembled, the blood pounded in her temples, her nerves sang. She lay against him, limp. Curly drew away. He whispered:

"I love you, Louise. Gee!"

"I love you, too," Tawny said.

The door opened and Mr. Stong stepped into the vestibule.

"Good evening, Mr. Stong."

Mr. Stong grunted. Curly said in a chill voice:

"The lady spoke to you, fellow. Take off your hat."

Tawny, who had just pressed the button, was frightened. She laid her hand on Curly's forearm and said:

“It doesn’t matter. Please don’t bother.”

“Take off your hat!”

Mr. Stong hesitated a second, scowling, peering with rheumy, wicked old eyes at Curly. His eyes dropped before the pale blue hate in Curly’s gaze, and he took off his hat. Curly said:

“It’ll be just too bad if you don’t treat this lady nice.”

For the first time in his life, Mr. Stong had nothing to say, at least not till he got downstairs where Mrs. Stong was ironing by electric light. Then he snarled:

“You’re a hell of a wife—fat and greasy like a pig. Why don’t you have some pride?”

Mrs. Stong didn’t answer. The varicose veins in her huge, swollen legs were hurting her, and she had another half-hour of ironing to do before she went to bed. If her husband had been pleasant to her she might have fainted. His customary slurs helped keep her going, perhaps. Her husband was always chasing little girls. She wondered vaguely, and unbelievingly, if some day he might get into trouble over little girls.

She had spoken to him only once about it, long ago, and had got a black eye and a bleeding nose for her pains. Mr. Stong liked to stick pins and needles into her, and into himself for that matter. And he threw cats into the furnace and once, a dog. She shuddered as she remembered how the dog shrieked, so like a human being in agony. He was a little Boston Bull who belonged to Miss Cutler, the old maid on the third floor front, left. Miss Cutler had been so frantic about it, so mystified. Mr. Stong said:

“Wait till I get a holt of that Bohun mongrel. I’ll show ’em.”

Mrs. Stong went steadily on with her ironing. She didn’t want to be thrust into the furnace herself, so she kept her mouth shut.

VII

Birdy ran a circus at the Hilltop Sanitarium. She suffered not a little during the month of drug withdrawal, and howled, and broke a few toilet accessories. But after that she was the life of the place.

They were most lenient with patients at the Hilltop, and very obliging. When Birdy suddenly decided at three o'clock one morning that she wanted a Victrola right away, she telephoned to Dr. Moses and said:

"I want a Victrola, Doctor."

"I'll get you one in the morning, Mrs. Bohun."

"I want it right now."

"I'll see what I can do."

"That's no answer, doctor. I want a Victrola, and I want it now."

"All right, Mrs. Bohun. We'll get you a Victrola."

In fifteen minutes, two men lugged in a Victrola, and Dr. Moses, sleep still in his eyes, followed them in. Dr. Moses was not any taller than Birdy, but he was extraordinarily broad in the shoulder and deep in the chest, and his abdomen was quite noticeable.

He had thick brown hair parted in the middle, a low but wide forehead, brown eyes, a Roman nose, a full-lipped mouth, partly concealed by a mustache, and if he had a chin he kept it concealed from the world by a thick Vandyck beard.

His brown eyes stared straight into the eyes of anyone with whom he was speaking, unwavering and fixed. They were myopic eyes and appeared smaller than they really were because of the thick corrective lenses in tortoise-shell frames through which they peered.

If all the professional residents of his sanitarium had an air of repose and of watchful waiting, Dr. Moses was the model. He had a scar on his left cheek where a patient had scratched him, and a scar on his left ear where a patient had bitten him.

It was known through the sanitarium that Dr. Moses was utterly without fear. No matter how violent the man patient or how raving mad the woman patient, Dr. Moses always entered the rooms alone and unprotected.

Restraint of patients with strait-jackets, belts and handcuffs and such gadgets was never allowed at Hilltop. A patient was given a wet or dry pack or a prolonged bath in water at body temperature to calm him or her down. But he was never handcuffed or tied.

Eight male nurses might be required to dress a male homicidal maniac who was feeling a bit lively, but the male homicidal maniac got dressed, and if anyone bore scars or bruises as souvenirs of the occasion, it was the nurses, not the patient.

Birdy was pacing up and down her room like a caged lioness when the Victrola and Dr. Moses arrived. Dr. Moses' voice was low and deep and vibrant. He loved beyond all things to sing bass solos and add his bass harmonies to the efforts of the choir in the chapel on Sundays. His enunciation was slow. The effect of him was calm and soothing and peaceful. He smiled at Birdy while the men were placing the Victrola and said:

"I was lucky to get your Victrola so quickly."

"I'm so nervous I could scream," Birdy said. "I'm sick of this God-damned dump. I'm sick of the nuts. I'm sick of the doctors. I'm sick of you. I want to get out."

"We'll see," Dr. Moses said, stroking his beard. "It would be better, don't you think, for you to be a little less nervous when you go."

"Oh, hell!" Birdy cried, "I've always been like that. I've always been nervous. I've always had to have excitement. Even when I was a kid, I'd get out of bed and sneak out. I can't stand monotony."

"No, I guess you can't," Dr. Moses nodded.

"Well, when are you going to let me out, doctor? I'm sick of Cleopatras and nymphomaniacs and hopheads and Lesbians and old dames with plans for making the world perfect. I'm sick of quiet. I'm sick of you. And for God's sake, stop staring at me."

The phonograph whirred and Caruso's voice filled the room. Birdy said:

"Take it off. I don't want opera. I want jazz. Put on a dance number."

"Put on a dance number," Dr. Moses directed.

An orchestra began to syncopate. Birdy swayed her body and hummed. She held out her arms and said:

"Come on and dance."

"Mr. Swenson is a good dancer," Dr. Moses said. "Dance with Mrs. Bohun, Mr. Swenson."

Mr. Swenson was a Swede, who had charge of athletics for the men. He said he was the son of a count but had got into difficulties from high living at home and had come to the United States in a hurry.

He was six feet two and young and very blond, with blond hair burned paler by the sun, and blue eyes and a ruddy complexion and nice teeth. He played golf and tennis with rhythm and grace, but not so well as he thought he did. As a matter of

fact, he was on the verge of being a patient himself, and in taking this humble situation at the sanitarium really was gratifying an escape neurosis and running away from the conflict of life. This was a pleasant, safe haven where he could be out of the battle and gratify his harmless ego by surpassing older and invalid men at sports. He was a big shot in Hilltop, and he could dance.

While he and Birdy danced, Dr. Moses sat in a gayly upholstered easy chair and watched, smiling faintly in his beard. He knew Birdy better than Birdy knew herself, and he knew Carl Swenson better than Carl knew himself.

Carl looked down at Birdy and smiled and Birdy, suddenly peaceful and content, smiled back up at Carl. After the dance Dr. Moses shooed away his satellites and said good night to Birdy.

"You're feeling a lot better," he said.

"When can I go, doctor? Honest, I'm sick of this."

"In a few days."

"What day?"

"How would Saturday suit you?"

Birdy kissed the doctor before he knew what was happening. He smiled and blushed. Even Dr. Moses didn't find it unpleasant being kissed by Birdy. It was a lot different from being bitten by an old virago or having an ear chewed off by a wild-eyed male maniac. He said:

"Really, Mrs. Bohun, I'm not used to being kissed by my patients."

"You're the first boy with whiskers I ever kissed," Birdy replied. "I think they'd make me itch if I let it grow into a habit."

"Do you think you'll go to sleep now, Mrs. Bohun?"

"Oh, yes, doctor. I'm feeling swell."

Birdy felt good because she had stirred up Dr. Moses early in the morning and got her Victrola and had a dance and kissed the doctor—if chastely—and learned she could get away with something in this place on her own initiative and she was going away soon.

Tawny was fourteen in her ninth school year, which was spent in Junior High School, newly established, and she was fifteen when she went into Wadleigh High School. Despite her dancing, and dancing lessons, and hours spent with Curly, and other hours spent with other boys who had cases on her, she was a leader in her studies, away ahead of her contemporaries, and planning to get her diploma at the end of her second year when she would be sixteen. She studied hard in the study periods and took five ballet lessons a week with Madame Katzia.

Madame Katzia had black hair and thick black eyebrows and snapping black eyes, and was short and fat and dumpy and walked with a limp, favoring her right leg. No one looking at her would have guessed she once had been the greatest dancer of her day and not only had appeared in command performances before kings and queens and dukes and princesses, but also had an affair with international complications with a king. Now she had a mustache and a quick temper, and at frequent intervals smacked her pupils smartly with her stick.

They paid five dollars a lesson for the privilege of being instructed by this famous relic, and considered it an honor to be smacked by her and scolded by her. No pupil was supposed to do ballroom dancing unless with a student of dancing or a professional. But Tawny danced with Curly. If he wasn't actually a professional, he might easily have been one.

Tawny was carrying to the high school office the attendance record which she kept when she met Miss Turner on the stairs. Miss Turner taught English and had gray hair and blue eyes and a pink and white complexion. She was in her forties, but she was handsome and dainty, with small wrists and ankles. Tawny said:

"How nice you look, Miss Turner!"

Miss Turner put her arm around Tawny's waist and hugged her.

"You're a beautiful girl," she said.

She kissed Tawny and hugged her harder, and Tawny kissed Miss Turner back. Miss Turner kissed Tawny as warmly as Curly ever did, or any other boy, or as Tony had, but there was a subtle and vast difference. Instead of passion, there was something indescribably sweet and companionable in these caresses, a quality hard to define, but certainly not sexual so far as Tawny was concerned.

The stairs and corridors were concrete. It was easy to hear anyone coming. No one was coming. Miss Turner whispered:

"You're so sweet."

Daily, after that, Miss Turner waited for Tawny at the top of the stairs, and they hugged and kissed each other. It was a strange experience, and thrilling, partly because of its oddity and partly because of its secrecy, and a great deal because Miss Turner really was in love with Tawny and because Tawny felt a deep affection and admiration for Miss Turner.

They both were handsome creatures, with soft skins and no rough beards and harsh ways. Their caresses were soft and harmonious, and beautiful, they thought, with no vulgarity—none of the crudities that accompanied the endearments of male and female.

"You're so beautiful, I could eat you."

"You're so sweet I could love you to death. Oh!"

"Darling!"

It was a strange, breathless, somewhat weird interlude, just lasting a few precious seconds on the bare landing every school morning. But they were memorable moments, never to be forgotten by either participant—intervals to be looked back upon and puzzled over. Without knowing it they were making mysterious, poignant memories for themselves.

Miss Turner would have liked to invite Tawny to her flat but she was afraid. Tawny would have liked to see Miss Turner outside of school hours, but she stood in too much awe of her to suggest it.

In the class room and everywhere and on all occasions, except for those flitting moments at the head of the stairs, Miss Turner's attitude toward Tawny was exactly the same as it was toward all the other girls, kindly, gentle and considerate.

Tawny didn't know that Miss Turner's pillow often was wet with tears at night. She always had taught school. She had so little of love, and she was really a quivering bundle of emotions and affections, repressed and warped. The only boy she ever had loved she couldn't marry because he was not making enough money to care for her and her mother. She was naturally dainty in body and mind, and as she grew older she became more fastidious and exacting in her tastes. And while she had had many proposals, no man came up to her ideals. They had rough skins, and rough beards, or smelled of tobacco or cocktails or beer, or they hadn't nice teeth, or their hands were coarse, or their voices were loud, or their manners left much to be desired, or they weren't sufficiently intellectual.

Harper Chase, the boy she had loved, had married Arline Cook, Miss Turner's best friend. Harper was bald now, and had a paunch and a couple of million dollars. And Arline would have had a paunch if she hadn't worn a corset. She had six children, and played bridge, and served tea at the Yellowhammer Country Club.

Miss Turner was a welcome week-end guest in their big rambling white clapboard and green-blind colonial home in White Plains. She wondered if she could have stood Harper after he had lost his youthful good looks and his youthful fire. All he could talk about at dinner was his golf. He seemed to spend a deal of his time in bunkers and in the rough. His chief ambition seemed to be to get into the eighties, whatever the eighties were, and his chief despair appeared to be that he continued in the hundreds, whatever the hundreds might be.

It was a beautiful home, but so stupid, Miss Turner thought. She liked to talk about Russia and politics and the latest books and poetry and of the opera and Eugene O'Neill's plays. Secretly she tried to write, but never got anywhere with it

because she was seeking perfection in writing as in life. She was chasing the bluebird that no human ever may trap. She dwelled in the tower of ivory which is an old romanticist's daydream.

She loved Tawny and Tawny loved her, but not sufficiently to prevent Tawny from having cases on other teachers and kissing a boy goodnight in the vestibule backed up against the pushbuttons. Boys got eager and adventurous, and panted and pawed. But Tawny could handle boys. Boys were all right, but they, giggled and were silly and clumsy, and they talked about girls who were easy. Men were different. Men had brains and poise, and didn't talk and were safe.

Tawny loved older men—like her father. She wondered what she would do if Dr. Coombs made love to her. Dr. Coombs wouldn't have such a hard time, she thought. She liked brilliance in a man—brains, worthwhile conversation. All the boys had on their minds and tongues when they weren't making awkward love was baseball, football, basketball and silly jokes.

Prohibition was in and the boys were beginning to carry bottles, mostly of bathtub gin. Tawny liked the gin and went to bed dizzy.

Uncle Dan had been arrested twice in raids, but he always was bailed out promptly and nothing more came of it. The boss was paying for protection. Policemen and Prohibition agents drank in the place. But you never could tell when policemen on special duty, or a raiding squad of agents from another state even, might crash the doors.

But the boss had a lever in his office. Pull the lever, and the bottles crashed from their niche beneath the bar into the cellar and smashed. And there went the evidence.

Besides that, he had a cunningly concealed false cellar, extending under the cellar of the tenement house next door. There he concealed a store of contraband whisky and gin and raw alcohol.

Prohibition was in, and the boys and girls were getting drunk. And the Prohibition agents and the policemen were getting drunk and wearing diamonds—or many of them were. And the underworld was growing out of its swaddling clothes and instead of talking in dollars was speaking carelessly of millions. Thousand-dollar bills were fluttering around night clubs and speakeasies like waste paper.

Mr. Stong delivered gin and Scotch and Rye to the tenants, just as janitors all over New York City were doing. Mr. Cella was making wine in quantities and selling it as fast as he made it. He made really good wine.

And Harlem was turning blacker and blacker until suddenly June, 1921, rolled around. Tawny went into the principal's office and got a diploma. She was sixteen and blooming. Miss Trowbridge, the principal, liked Tawny, as did all the teachers.

She asked:

"What are you going to do now, Louise?"

"I don't know—go on the stage, I hope."

"It's too bad if you don't go to college. You have a fine mind."

"I don't want to go to college, Miss Trowbridge. First, I want to go and live with my mother. She promised me I could live with her as soon as I finished high school."

"That will be nice," Miss Trowbridge agreed. "Perhaps your mother may persuade you to continue with your studies."

"Perhaps," Tawny replied.

She was thinking that Miss Trowbridge didn't know about Birdy. Birdy wasn't any story-book mother. She wasn't like a mother at all. She was like an older girl friend. So Tawny walked out of school for the last time, with the good wishes of her teachers warming her heart. For a moment her eyes filled with tears. She had had a good time in school. Studies had been easy. She had been popular. And she had always been the center of attraction in the school plays. But the tears quickly were over and done with. She was going to live with Birdy at last. Her heart quickened and the blood throbbed in her temples. That always had been her first, and greatest, ambition—to live with Birdy.

Birdy opened the door of the first floor, five room, two bedrooms, living room, dining room and kitchen flat in Brooklyn Heights. Her head was covered with a close-bound face towel, from which peeped tendrils of honey-colored hair. Her face was without make-up, and shiny with cold cream. She was wearing a green bungalow apron, with a design in red. In her right hand was a broom, in her left a smouldering cigarette. She smiled at her daughter, and said:

"Hello, kid. Come on in."

Tawny stooped and picked up her suitcase. Birdy's eyes widened at first sight of the suitcase. Hand holding cigarette paused inches from her lips.

"What's the idea of the suitcase?"

"I'm through school, and I've come to live with you," Tawny said happily. "My trunk'll be here later.

"That's a hot one," Birdy said. "Where did you get that bright idea?"

Tawny felt cold and miserable. This was the biggest blow of her life. She said weakly, trying to smile: "Why, you always said I'd come to live with you as soon as I was through school."

"I was just kiddin'," Birdy said equably. "What the hell do you think—I want you living with me and my husband? I may be nutty, but I'm not that nutty."

Tawny's eyes were moist with tears. All her life she had looked forward to living with her wonderful mother. This was the end of her youth and soft innocence. It was like being told for the first time there isn't a Santa Claus—multiplied by a million. She didn't realize how pitiful she looked. Birdy added:

"You poor kid. Don't feel bad. Come on in and spend the night."

She stood aside and Tawny lugged the suitcase into a green-carpeted, white-walled hall, which opened into a dainty living room and extended past dining room and two bedroom doors to kitchen and tiled bath.

"Let me take your suitcase, Tawny."

"I can carry it all right."

"Bring it in here," Birdy directed, opening a bedroom door.

The bed and dressing table and chest of drawers were white. The rugs were mixed colors, green predominating. The chairs were covered with bright chintz in a pattern containing blue and red and green and yellow, but mostly green. Green drapes were at two large windows, and immaculate curtains tidily draped were white. It was a restful, pleasant, bright room, and looked as if it and everything in it was fresh from the laundry.

That's the way Birdy always looked—fresh from soap and water. And that's the way her home looked—bright and clean and fresh. It made Tawny prouder than ever of her mother. She knew, without looking, that there wasn't any dust under the bed or along the baseboard or behind the gilt radiator.

Birdy gave her the hasty, customary peck which passed for a maternal kiss. Birdy was strictly Oriental about kisses. They were confined to passion. A kiss was a prelude to, and a part of, the classic way of a man and a woman with each other in love, or what passed for love. Tawny asked:

"Can I help?"

"No, thanks. I'm all through now. I'm going to take a shower and get dressed."

Birdy poured a drink of whisky in the kitchen, held it under the cold water tap, and took a long drink. Tawny hadn't seen this husband, this latest matrimonial whim of her mother's. She wondered what he could be like to cause Birdy to give up temporarily her gay life and go prettily domestic, doing her own housework and cooking. Birdy blew out cigarette smoke and said:

"Don't say anything about me drinking in the morning, Tawny. He's fussy that way. A cocktail before dinner, and a little wine is all right, he says. But nobody except a bum drinks in the morning."

She laughed, and Tawny laughed with her. And Birdy added:

"Remember, if I ever catch you drinking at all, I'll kill you."

While Birdy was in the shower, Tawny stole a drink out of the bottle. It didn't taste good and she made a face, but it warmed her stomach and slightly assuaged the ache of her heart.

Sam Davenant came home at six o'clock. He was tall and slim, with close-cropped yellow-red hair, dark blue eyes, high-colored cheeks and a humorous mouth. He wore a stiff, white straw hat, a blue jacket and trousers, brown silk socks and tan shoes. His shirt was white with soft collar attached and his tie was a light blue knitted four-in-hand. This was Sam's summer uniform. He said to Tawny:

"My long-missing daughter."

And he kissed her pleasantly, genially and appreciatively. He said:

"I didn't realize my daughter was so darned pretty." Tawny glanced at Birdy and observed that Birdy looked exactly as she did before she began to throw things.

Tawny liked Sam and could understand why Birdy had given up the fleshpots and the excitement, at least, temporarily, for him. Tawny liked Sam as a brother, but he wasn't old enough for her. She had a curious, excited feeling, however, that Sam liked to kiss her. He must be a few years younger than Birdy, although Birdy hadn't a line in her face and appeared to be in the twenties herself. Tawny said:

"I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Davenant."

"Sam to you, daughter," Sam rejoined, grinning. "And now I'll make us all a little cocktail."

"None for Tawny," Birdy cried sharply, her voice taking on a coarse timbre, as it did when she was angry or upset. "She doesn't drink."

"Oh," Sam remarked, "isn't that sweet!"

His merry blue eyes rested for a moment on Tawny and he continued:

"I thought all the boys and girls drank now that it's Prohibition."

"Not Tawny," Birdy said.

"Excuse me, darling," Sam said. "I should've known your daughter wouldn't drink. We wouldn't stand for it. Would we?"

He grinned engagingly again and Tawny knew, somehow, that he hadn't been drinking and that he had smelled whisky on her breath when he kissed her.

"There's no need of being sarcastic," Birdy exclaimed.

"Oh, for goodness sake! You sweet little pigeon. Give me a kiss. Give me another. I wouldn't be sarcastic to you for a million. Well, I might for a million, and then make it up to you afterward."

Sam hugged Birdy and kissed Birdy and whispered in her ear and his voice sounded earnest and contrite, but he grinned at Tawny over Birdy's shoulder and winked a gay blue eye.

Tawny was in a conflict of emotions. She not only shared with her new step-father her secret that she drank, but also his secret that he enjoyed kidding her mother—her mother who always kidded men, and had got fur coats and diamonds and automobiles out of them as easily as picking up pennies from a news-stand when the news dealer wasn't around.

Sam and Birdy drank two cocktails, and Sam held her against him and kissed her, and smoothed back her hair. Birdy had *au gratin* potatoes in the oven. She said:

"They should be in just forty minutes. They've been in thirty. I'll get the chops under the broiler."

"Let the chops go, Little Pigeon," Sam said. "I want to speak to you a minute."

"No."

"Never say *no* to your husband, Sweetness."

He led Birdy into their bedroom, and closed the door, Birdy calling back:

"Take out the potatoes in ten minutes, Tawny."

Birdy boiled the hypodermic on the gas stove—barrel and plunger and needle separated because of the different degrees of expansion from heat. She picked out the pieces with tweezers and fitted them together, her hands trembling with eagerness. That is, she fitted the needle over the barrel, dropped a tiny pellet into the barrel, and inserted the plunger. Then she dipped the needle in the boiled water and, gently pulling back the plunger, mixed water with the pellet.

She sat down in a chair and bared the white roundness of her thigh. There was the acrid odor of alcohol dampening cotton, the quick thrust of the needle, steady pressure on the plunger, and a sigh from Birdy. She said:

"Sam would leave me if he knew about the dope. He hates hopheads. But it's so dull when he's away, and he's always away, except to come home at one or two or three in the morning, or at daylight, and he sleeps and drinks orange juice and coffee, and goes to the office again. And he gets out-of-town assignments and is gone for days. I couldn't stand it."

Somehow Tawny didn't mind her mother taking dope. Somehow she didn't mind her mother living with men. Somehow she didn't mind her mother not wanting to have her live there with her and Sam. Birdy was the way she was because she couldn't help it. And she had qualities that no other girl's mother had. She looked like a girl herself. She was beautiful in face and figure. And she was clean and beautifully dressed and smelled, as always, of gardenias. Far from criticizing Birdy adversely, Tawny loved her mother more than anyone else in the world, and admired

her. Birdy and Tawny sang in bed:

The band played Annie Laurie, and the horses wore high hats.

Tawny thought of the horses that used to drag the Twenty-third Street cross-town cars when she was little, twitching ears sticking up through floppy hats. She knew now those weren't the horses of the song. She knew a lot more now. The Gas House district wasn't considered romantic and beautiful. It was considered poor and sordid. The smell of the Gas House wasn't regarded as a sort of incense out of Paradise. It was looked upon as a noxious stink. But she was thinking back upon the Gas House as one thinks of Fairyland when she went to sleep.

VIII

Benjamin Gay was glad to see Tawny back. Gramma said:

"So she didn't want you around after all. 'Tis better so."

Gramma hadn't sent the trunk. She'd known all along. But Aunt Mary was settled there. The Twenty-third Street railroad flat was abandoned and, since Dave never slept in the apartment any more, Aunt Mary had moved in.

Cousin Joe was making money now. He was the youngest trader on the floor—an office boy who had made good. He had taken a bedroom and living room in the Hotel Edwin, on Riverside Drive. He liked to go to theatres with Ida, and she liked to go with him.

Joe didn't drink or smoke, and Ida didn't drink or smoke. Joe was always afraid of what the neighbors might say. And so was Ida. They were born to conform to the social pattern in which they lived. They liked each other. Ida was not bright in school and was three years older than Tawny, but she was pleasant and even-tempered and decorous. One knew at a glance she was what is called a good girl.

"You stay away from Curly Edwards," Joe warned. "He's a tough. He's a gangster. He'll get you into trouble."

"Why do you go with such a terrible man?" Ida asked. "It's all I can do to be polite to him."

"I wish you wouldn't go to those cheap dance halls," Joe said. "First thing you know you'll be in a scandal."

Tawny got her first job dancing for the Bronx Woman's Club. She danced in prologues to pictures, and got fifty dollars for twelve performances. She was on her way up. She had begun her career. She was independent now, earning her own money.

Gramma was sick, and took to her bed, protesting she was all right.

"It's just a touch of indigestion—something I ate," Gramma said.

But it wasn't her stomach at all. It was her heart; and everyone except Gramma knew that Gramma wouldn't live very long and that, until she died, she wouldn't leave the house.

Gramma had a radio in her room and Joe gave her a parrot. She always had wanted a parrot and never had had one. Aunt Mary had brought with her the tom-cat, half Persian, which never had been out-of-doors. He was called Tom and used a box filled with sawdust in the bathroom.

Ben Gay barked and chased Tom. Ben Gay growled and shook Tom. Tom yowled and scratched Ben Gay, and Ben Gay yelped. The parrot, whose name was Polly, screamed discordantly and fluttered his wings, and the radio brayed, while Gramma lay dozing in bed, the pale wraith of a woman. Aunt Mary exclaimed:

"The Saints preserve us. What a racket!"

She turned off the radio, and Gramma opened her eyes and said:

"Don't turn it off."

Aunt Mary shushed the animals. Gramma said:

"Leave 'em be."

Gramma lay there through political speeches and soap-sales talks and jazz and opera and mystery stories, while the dog barked and the cat miaoued and the parrot squawked. Aunt Mary exclaimed:

"How she can stand it I don't know. It's driving me crazy."

But Gramma always had been peculiar. Apparently her idea of the proper approach to Purgatory was through Bedlam.

Tawny came in with Benjamin Gay from St. Nicholas Park, and found a group of tenants gathered in the hall. Mr. Stong was there, and Mrs. Stong stood apart, untidy hair falling over red face, arms and hands red from the washtubs.

"Mr. Mandel has sold out to a Nigger."

"I wouldn't stay here another day."

"Perhaps it isn't true."

"Someone ought to see Mr. Mandel."

"Breaking up our homes like that."

"It's a damn' shame."

"We'll appoint a committee to see Mr. Mandel."

Mr. Mandel was short and stout, with a bullet head covered with close-cropped iron-gray hair, dark eyes swimming behind gold spectacles, a kindly, tired smile and a deprecating manner. He shrugged his shoulders and raised his hands in a helpless gesture:

"What can I do?" he asked. "The whole neighborhood is going to the colored people. I didn't want to sell. I liked the house. I liked to keep it high class. But if I didn't sell first at a fair price now I would've had to let it go at a sacrifice later. I am sorry."

Everyone was sorry. Within a month, six white families had moved out and six colored families had moved in. Tawny said:

"I'm not going to live here any more."

"Gramma can't leave," Aunt Mary pointed out. "She's too sick to move."

"But I'm not too sick," Tawny said.

"Where will you live? You shouldn't be living alone at sixteen."

"I'll be all right," Tawny replied. "This isn't the Middle Ages, Aunt Mary. I've got my work to do, and I don't want to be coming home to a house full of Niggers."

Gramma didn't care. A living skeleton, she lay in bed, while the radio talked, syncopated, preached, prayed, told bedtime stories, and brayed, while Benjamin Gay barked and Tom spit and miaoued and Polly laughed harshly:

"Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Tawny thought that Gramma, while still close to them physically, was far, far away actually. Gramma was as a mountain climber who, having reached the peak after a weary climb, had lain down to rest and observe the world spread out below —so far below that human beings looked like silly little insects bustling about silly little tasks—while waiting for a final ascent beyond the mysterious stars.

Tawny took a suitcase and trunk and moved down to West Sixteenth Street near Seventh Avenue, where she got a room for six dollars a week. She left Benjamin Gay because Aunt Mary said she felt safer with a watchdog in the flat.

The beautiful church of St. Charles Borromeo went black, its wealthy white worshipers and its white priests swept away before the resistless colored tide. The handsome brownstone St. Luke's Episcopal Church, with its parish house which once was the home of Alexander Hamilton, stayed white. The St. Nicholas Avenue Presbyterian Church was black. The Harlem Hospital was in transition from white to colored.

The colored tide was spreading rapidly over, and settling in, the district it now occupies—the entire area from One Hundred and Sixteenth Street to One Hundred and Fifty-fifth Street, between Harlem River and Convent Avenue. And from One Hundred and Tenth Street to One Hundred and Sixteenth Street, the population is Spanish, Porto Rican and colored.

Tawny saw this peaceful conquest with her own young eyes; felt that she had been driven from her home as effectively as by an armed invasion. Yet, so vast is New York, so complex is the metropolis in its structure of cities within a city, villages within the cities and neighborhoods within the cities, that millions of New York residents were not really conscious of this immigration of a race, of this resistless tidal wave of color, which swept over a section of one of the great population centers of the world, wrested it from its white masters, and transformed it into the most densely inhabited colored city in the world.

People, without realizing the change, had begun to say:

"Let's go up to Harlem tonight."

Drivers of taxicabs began to recommend Harlem hot spots to visitors in search of thrills.

Negro orchestras syncopated in Harlem and were sought for Broadway revues. Colored choruses danced and sang their way to fame in Harlem and rode to success in fast-moving, rhythmic Broadway musicals.

Colored policemen directed traffic in Harlem. Colored postmen delivered mail. Neatly clad Negro children laughed and played in the streets and parks.

And the Harlem Easter parade became a sight worth going far to see—the women in their bright colors and the men in cerise hats and mauve suits and multi-hued footgear.

At night one could see a strip of white, about neck-high moving in the darkness. This would be a man, whose dark face and clothes mingled with the night, but whose white collar shone out like a beacon to reveal his presence.

Within six months only three white families remained as tenants in the Bradhurst Avenue apartment. Tawny never took her friends there any more, but went alone to visit Gramma and Aunt Mary.

Tawny was fresh and young and handsome and vital. She had legs and ankles which attracted attention even on Broadway, firm curves where curves should be. And she could dance. She was in the front row of the chorus in *Champagne Cup*, which became the hit revue of the season.

Tom Barty gave a supper party at the *Celador*, and invited Tawny and Elissa Rose, a show girl from *Champagne Cup*. There were ten other girls, and eleven other men—bankers, steel kings and railroad princes. Elissa lifted her service plate, and disclosed a one-hundred-dollar bill, crisp and yellow. Tawny found she had one too. Each of the ladies had a hundred-dollar bill—just a favor from Tom Barty.

Tawny drank champagne and became the life of the party. She sang:

Up in a balloon, boys.
Up in a balloon.
Sailing around the little stars. . .

She sang:

Take these to my brother,
For I have no other.
They are the shamrocks
From his dear old mother's grave.

She drank more champagne, and said:

“I was born in the Gas House district, ladies and gentlemen. Now, with your kind permission, I will render a Gas House version of a Hawaiian native dance.”

She pulled off her green dinner dress and swayed and shook and quivered in yellow silk bloomers and yellow brassiere.

“You’ll be a star in a year, baby.”

“You’ve got what it takes.”

“You don’t have to work in a chorus.”

Harrison Wayland, son of Thomaston Wayland, the railroad overlord, and J. Morris Ham, the automobile manufacturer from Chicago, argued with Tawny and each other for the privilege of taking her home. Tawny said:

“I’m going home alone.”

She began to weep silently finally, and Tom Barty’s cool voice penetrated the fog which enveloped her. He said:

“Tawny’s the daughter of an old friend of mine. I’ll see that she gets home.”

“I can get home alone,” Tawny protested.

“She’ll go home with me,” Elissa said.

Tawny awakened in a strange white bedroom at ten o’clock next day and moaned. She started to raise her head, and let it sink back to the pillow, moaning again. Elissa said:

“You certainly were sick, darling.”

“I feel terrible.”

“Drink this.”

“What is it?”

“It’s an eggnog, with brandy and whisky and Benedictine. Drink it and you’ll feel better.”

“Take it away. It makes me sick to even think of it.”

Elissa argued and pleaded. Tawny said:

“I couldn’t keep it down.”

“Try it, darling. You’ll be surprised.”

Tawny sat up, leaning on her elbow, and sipped the iced liquid.

“It isn’t so bad, is it?” Elissa asked.

Tawny swallowed more and replied:

“Why, it tastes good.”

“Wait till it’s been down a few minutes, darling. You’ll be a new woman. You may even do another Gas House version of the Hawaiian National Dance.”

Tawny groaned.

“Did I make a darned fool of myself?”

“You were the hit of the party,” Elissa asserted. “You took your hair down and did your stuff. The big shots were fighting over you.”

“I drank too much.”

Elissa laughed and lighted an Egyptian cigarette. Her blond hair was bobbed. Her deep blue eyes looked as innocent as a babe’s. Her mouth pouted in a crimson bow. Her lithe and vigorous young figure was clad in a blue kimono, piped with gold. She was eighteen—a year ago a little country girl in Hardtack, Pennsylvania, and now, by grace of beauty and form, a toast of Broadway, with this charming six-room apartment, a butler and two maids, on West Fifty-fifth Street. Rex Bondell, the broker playboy, paid the bills.

Fifteen minutes later Tawny was laughing under the shower. Elissa said:

“You’ve got a kind of golden skin, darling, and golden eyes.”

“I’d rather be white like you,” Tawny said, “white as milk.”

“People always have admired my skin,” Elissa admitted. “My mother never would let me play in the sun. I don’t go swimming, except in tanks, or early in the morning or late at night.”

They told each other how nice they were, and how pretty they were, and Elissa got a tape measure, and they measured each other’s ankles, and thighs, and waists, and chests, and necks. Elissa said:

“You certainly put up a fight against being seduced last night. Are you a virgin or something?”

“I’m a virgin,” Tawny replied. “I would only go with a man if I was fond of him.”

“It’s easier for me to love a man if he has money than to love a man that’s poor,” Elissa asserted. “It comes natural to me to like a nice apartment and servants and a car. There were eight of us at home, and my mother did all the work. Just the thought of washing out diapers for eight kids makes me sick, without thinking of cooking and washing and ironing and sewing and mending and worrying whether or not your husband is spending his wages on gin at Mike’s Place on payday.”

“I’m going to marry a rich man,” Tawny said.

“I’d rather let someone else do the marrying,” Elissa said. “I’d rather be a man’s Idle Moment than his wife.”

Tawny was joyful over the discovery that she didn’t have to suffer the morning after a party. All she had to do was take a drink.

“The hair of the dog that bit you,” Elissa called it. “And you should never take it straight, but in black coffee, or better with egg and milk. Then you’ve got nourishment as well as a pick-me-up.”

Elissa didn’t call attention to the fact that she never drank enough to require

pick-me-ups in the morning. She was an expert at dumping drinks on the floor and into jardinieres and other persons' goblets and glasses. Elissa might look sweet and innocent and demure and childish, but the baby stare in her sweet, dark blue eyes concealed a calculating brain and a ruthless ambition to achieve a material success.

Elissa wasn't a quarter as bright mentally as Tawny, but she was ten times better balanced emotionally. What brains she had were always in control of her actions. She entertained the private idea that drinking too much and taking pick-me-ups in the morning would end disastrously for the devotee, but she never gave advice on such matters. She was delighted to keep her own counsel, and serve pick-me-ups to Rex Bondell and Tawny and any other acquaintances who wanted them.

If Rex hit the skids, there were other men just as nice or nicer, and just as rich or richer, and just as generous, or more generous. If Tawny hit the skids, it would be too bad, but it couldn't be helped. If a girl didn't know enough to look out for number one in this world it was too bad. As Rex said:

"Live and let live—that's my motto."

Live and let live—live and let go to heaven or hell. It was a grand idea for anyone who wanted to get ahead on Broadway.

Tawny was dancing with Curly Edwards in Poppyland. Curly said:

"They tell me you're drinking too much, Louise. You'd better stop. No good ever came to anybody from liquor."

"I don't drink too much," Tawny said. "But I like a good time. Besides, it's my business what I do. I'm not married to you."

"No, now you're not," Curly assented. "But you will be as soon as I retire from this business I'm in."

"If you don't retire pretty soon it'll be too late," Tawny said. "Everybody says so."

Curly laughed pleasantly. He was becoming more proper and genteel with passing time. He dressed in the manner of Park Avenue and Bond Street instead of in the mode of Broadway or Hollywood. His dislike of slang, off-color stories, profanity and obscenity had increased, if anything. He didn't like nicknames, and no longer called Tawny, Tawny. She was Louise. He asked:

"Who says so?"

"Oh, everybody."

"But who?"

"My family says so, for some."

"Your mother and your cousin Joe, I suppose, and Ida."

“Yes—and everybody. Everybody says crime doesn’t pay, Curly. Why don’t you go into a regular business?”

“I’m in a regular business now, and the best people in town are my clients,” Curly said.

“It may be a business, but they can send you to jail for it if they catch you.”

“I’ll put over one big deal and then I’ll retire,” Curly said. “Then you and I’ll get married.”

“I’ll never marry you.”

“Oh, yes, you will. And you’d better be careful about these bankers and brokers,” Curly warned. “Or they had better be careful. They’re just so many headaches to me—and I get rid of headaches when they get too bothersome.”

“There isn’t anybody,” Tawny said, thinking of Dr. Coombs. “I’m not in love with anybody.”

“Yes, there is. There’s me. You’re in love with me, but you don’t know it.”

Tawny laughed, but shivered a little at the same time. It was hard to realize that Curly, who spoke so gently and smiled so kindly and who had such nice, wavy blond hair and such clear blue eyes and fresh high-colored cheeks really had killed men. Why, he was nothing but a nice boy who could dance beautifully and who didn’t chew or drink or swear, but who did smoke cigarettes.

Curly smiled benignly. He was thinking of the Brooklyn Heights Branch of the United National Bank. He hadn’t had any excitement for a long time, and tomorrow they’d be putting up big payrolls—payrolls for the Console Coffee Company, Inc., the Brighton Cotton Corporation and Wenderby Brothers Shipyards.

“I like excitement,” Curly said.

IX

It was a cold, windy day in the middle of March, and the seventh successive day the sun hadn't shone through gray and gloomy clouds. Curly felt he had to go somewhere where the sun was shining, or do something. He needed a change, excitement. He had a sensitive nature. His spirits bloomed in the warm sun and withered and dried up in chill cloudiness.

He arose at seven o'clock and glanced out of the window. It looked as if the weather gods, uncertain whether to make it rain or snow for the day, had set the stage for either while they argued the matter out before a log fire in the club.

He went into the bathroom and lathered his pink cheeks and ran a safety razor over them quickly. Curly had only a few light blond sprays of fuzz on cheeks and chin, but he shaved daily because he was a man and a man shaved. Then he took a shower and dressed in a blue suit, darker blue knitted tie, black silk socks and black shoes.

His mother and Agnes already were in the dining room of the seven-room apartment on Second Avenue. Mrs. Rosamund Edwards was nearly seventy, with a soft voice, white hair which once had been blond, and faded blue eyes. In repose her face was sad and a little wistful, but when she smiled, sweetness shone out.

She attributed goodness and beautiful thoughts to human beings in general and to members of her own family in particular. She didn't believe whisperings she had heard about Curly. He was a good boy, with no bad habits, always kind and thoughtful to his mother and his sister. People might try to gossip away his reputation, but she knew. She was his mother. She never read newspapers.

Agnes was the only other unmarried child, and the only one who was really friendly with Curly. The others were polite to him when they visited their mother, but their attitude was disapproving. His oldest sister, Mrs. Horace Grove, said:

"It would be such a relief if Curly would catch something and die in bed. He's a disgrace to the family."

Agnes was nearly thirty and still unmarried. She was secretary to Judson L. McIntosh, treasurer of the Old Pete Oil Company, with offices in lower Broadway. She and Mr. McIntosh were in love with each other, but Mr. McIntosh had a wife and three children, which was why Agnes had never married. No one knew about her secret life.

She was an excellent secretary, with a low, pleasant voice and an appealing

blond comeliness. The office boys adored her and liked to look at her legs, which were worth looking at.

Agnes looked pure and sweet and good, but she wasn't. There was a hidden flaw in her character, as there was in Curly's. She liked Curly better than any other member of the family and felt that she alone understood him. She wouldn't have changed the double life she led for anything, and was a source of bewildered astonishment to Judson McIntosh. He was slightly shocked at first by her abandonment when they were alone, but she became a habit that was as necessary to him as air or food.

If Judson had asked Agnes to help him steal company funds and fly to Shanghai or Singapore or the South Seas, she would have loved it. She still went to church with her mother because she was kind to dogs and cats and old people by instinct, but she had no more religion in her than Curly—and that was none at all.

Mrs. Edwards asked a blessing, and Curly and Agnes looked at each other understandingly across the breakfast table. They were two outlaws who loved the outward show of respectability.

Curly and Harry (*Hoppy*) Horowitz drove across the old Brooklyn Bridge in a stolen sedan of a cheap and popular make. Hoppy's pupils were pinpoints, his face was drawn and his voice sounded tired. Curly said:

"You shouldn't have taken so much, Harry. If there's any shooting, leave it to me."

"Aw! I'm all right."

"You heard what I said."

"O. K., boss."

They reached the bank, which was on a busy corner, with street cars, automobiles and pedestrian traffic streaming by. They parked around the corner from the bank, leaving the engine running.

A dozen men and women patrons were in the bank. Curly walked to a window, pointed a forty-five calibre revolver at Jerome T. Manly, a paying-teller, and said:

"Raise your hands high. This is a hold-up."

Mr. Manly, who had been with the bank for twenty years, and had a wife and three children, and taught a class of boys in Sunday School, and had old-fashioned ideas about loyalty, reached for the revolver in his drawer. Curly shot him between the eyes, killing him instantly.

Hoppy was telling the patrons to shut up. A woman screamed. Patrick Hogan, the bank guard, a retired policeman, reached toward his hip pocket, and Curly sent

a leaden pellet through his temple.

A split second later, his revolver roared again, and Everett L. Tilly, cashier of the bank, also fell dead. Mr. Tilly had reached for an alarm button, but he didn't live to touch it.

The three shots were fired almost simultaneously. Hogan's body lay on the tile floor. The mortal tenements of the souls of Mr. Manly and Mr. Tilly were equally inert and lifeless but lay out of sight of the terrified patrons behind the screens.

Curly stepped over a mahogany partition and went back into the cages. Mr. Clement Oberwager, a grocer, started to enter the bank door from outside, saw what he saw, and started back again. Hoppy's voice broke as he said:

"You come in."

Mr. Oberwager came in.

"Get over there, and don't move."

A woman sobbed. Hoppy snarled:

"Shut up."

He was shaking, but that didn't make those who looked into the muzzle of his gun feel any better. It made them feel worse, if that were possible. The muzzle looked like the Hoosac tunnel to those fascinated, horrified eyes, and Hoppy's finger trembled on the trigger.

Curly shoveled bills into two canvas bags, while other employes of the bank stood with hands raised. There were three dead men as silent evidence of what might happen to any one of them if he failed to obey orders.

Curly joined Hoppy and they backed toward the door. Holmes Hopkins, a vice-president, ducked beneath the counter and pressed the alarm, grabbed a telephone.

The alarm bell began to clatter. Patrons began to scream. Bert Jones, a teller, ran into the street, shouting:

"Police! Murder! Help! There they go."

Detective Bill Ellis, attached to the headquarters squad, was eating in the Heights Café. He ran to the sidewalk, drawing his revolver. Seeing Curly and Hoppy running toward the car, he raised his weapon, but held fire because so many innocent persons were in his line of fire. Curly turned, and sent a bullet into his right shoulder, and Bill Ellis, checked with the shock of the big slug, fell. He got up again as Curly fed gas to the motor and the sedan lurched from the curb. Ellis fired five shots in the air with his left hand, and blew his police whistle as he ran after the disappearing sedan, trying to get the license number.

Curly drove to the North Scots Public Links on the outskirts of Mineola. There he and Hoppy abandoned the sedan and got into a green touring car parked there

by Hoppy. They left two cheap raincoats in the sedan. The raincoats had been stolen for the occasion. They donned two dark cloth overcoats from the trunk of the touring car.

In a cornfield on the outskirts of Westbury they buried the two canvas bags and the revolvers. It began to rain, a cold drizzle. Curly said:

"Just what the doctor ordered."

Hoppy dusted powder on the fleshy eminence between the base of his thumb and the base of his forefinger, and sniffed deep.

"Jeez!" he exclaimed. "T'ree guys bumped off and a bull clipped. Will th' bull croak too?"

"Don't swear," Curly said. "I only shot to cripple the detective."

"Oh, yeah," Hoppy said. "Only cripple him, hunh? Oh, yeah!"

Hoppy prepared another sniff. Curly struck his hand, and the package of cocaine spilled. Hoppy was motionless an instant, and then, his face distorted, he reached as if for a gun. They both were supposed to carry extra guns. Curly made a quick movement, and shot from the hip. Hoppy stood for an instant, staring wildly at Curly. His mouth opened, but no sound came. He collapsed like a rag doll. His hands were empty, no gun in them. Curly felt in his pockets. Hoppy had no gun at all.

Curly took a train into the city from Great Neck. He bought an *Evening Planet* which told of the hold-up of the bank, the murder of three bank officers and the wounding of a detective. Descriptions of the robbers were vague. There was a tall one, with a slouch hat and a yellow raincoat, and a short one with a slouch hat and a yellow raincoat. Some eyewitnesses said the tall one was blond and the short one was dark, but other eyewitnesses said it was the other way around, or that both of them were blond or both of them were dark.

Mrs. Joseph T. Murphy was thankful her baby, who was in his carriage outside the bank during the robbery and shooting, hadn't been hurt. The baby, Michael Murphy, had slept through it all, hadn't even blinked an eye. What a baby!

After reading the story, Curly tossed the paper in a refuse can. He was always neat and never cluttered up the streets.

It would have been all right, except for Hoppy. He wasn't fooling himself about that. When Hoppy's body was discovered, the police would question him first. They'd also reason that the shooting in and outside of the bank had been superlative. The police might be dumb, as some people said, but they weren't so dumb after all. They would suspect a good shot like Curly naturally, and as part of their system, they would have him looked over by all who had been in the bank and by any other

witnesses in the street.

He was sorry about Hoppy. He wouldn't have shot Hoppy if he had known Hoppy was unarmed. Curly had a rigid code. He never shot anybody who didn't have a chance. He'd given those men in the bank a chance. Anyone but a fool would put up his hands if a man with a gun told him to. They chose death instead of life. That was their affair. But Hoppy didn't have a chance. The killing of Hoppy was murder. It depressed Curly strangely. He shook his head mournfully. He'd have to disappear.

The predilection of Curly for women's attire was supposed to be a secret, but police knew about it. Curly's attachment for Tawny also was known.

Three nights later, a young girl, neatly dressed in a white shirtwaist, a blue skirt, and black shoes and patent leather pumps, called on Tawny in her room in Sixteenth Street. She wore a little blue toque over dark brown hair and looked strangely familiar. While Tawny stared at her, she said:

"Now don't scream, Louise. It's only Curly."

Curly pulled off toque and wig, and Detectives Tommy Whalen, Fred Yoerg, and Bill Ellis with his right arm in a sling, burst into the room. The hall outside filled with detectives, and detectives swarmed in the street.

Tawny raised her right hand to her mouth and sank her teeth in the flesh. Tommy Whelan poked Curly hard with a forefinger in the stomach, so that Curly gasped for breath.

"Lookit the fairy," he said. "Nothin' but a God-damned fairy."

Tommy Whelan cocked a bunched fist and said softly:

"Wait till I get you downtown, you bastard."

"There's a lady present," Curly said.

"Lay off, Tommy," Fred Yoerg said. "No rough stuff in this pinch, and remember it."

"Aw—"

"You'd better remember it—all of you," a stern voice said from the doorway.

Captain Obadiah Ford, of the Homicide Squad, and Inspector Dunstan, both in plain clothes, were in the doorway. The detectives saluted. Captain Ford continued:

"Curly (Sling) Edwards, you are arrested on suspicion of murder of Harry (Hoppy) Horowitz. Anything you say now may be used as evidence against you."

Tawny gasped and cried:

"He didn't do it. Tell them you didn't do it, Curly."

Curly looked straight at Captain Ford. He said quietly:

"You're the first policeman I ever heard of that even pretended to give a prisoner

his legal warning and protection. I killed Harry and I'm sorry I did. He went for his gun first and I went for mine. I shot him—and then I found out he didn't have a gun."

"Yes?" Captain Ford said expectantly.

"And we did the bank job, too," Curly said. "I did all the shooting. I'll make a full confession. I can't get to the chair fast enough."

"You dirty, murdering fairy," Whelan growled.

"You shut up, Whelan," Captain Ford exclaimed.

"I'm not a murderer," Curly asserted. "Nobody ever died in front of my gun without a chance—except Harry, and I thought he had a gun."

More detectives were in the hall. Captain Ford said:

"That's all now. Everybody out."

Inspector Dunstan stood, slim and tall and silent, impeccably clad in black derby hat, black overcoat with velvet collar and gray suit recently pressed. Curly was handcuffed.

Tawny was numb with fright and shock. She stared at Curly and at the police. It couldn't be true. She couldn't be in this. Fred Yoerg asked:

"We're taking the girl along, aren't we, captain?"

Tawny shivered and caught her breath. Curly exclaimed:

"You can't do that, captain. She doesn't know anything about me. Don't drag an innocent girl into this. I tell you I'm coming clean. I'm going to tell everything."

"Shut up," Whelan growled.

"That's enough out of you, Whelan," Captain Ford said. "You get back on your job. Report to Cosden first."

"But, Captain—"

"On your way."

Whelan gulped and left the room, the inspector and captain standing aside to let him pass. Captain Ford asked:

"Where's the money, Curly?"

"I buried it in a field. It's all there with the revolvers. I can show you the place. Don't make a farce of this now, captain. I want to go to the electric chair. I'll tell everything of my own free will, make a conviction easy."

Captain Ford glanced at the inspector and murmured:

"Your office?"

The inspector nodded. The Captain said:

"You, Ellis, and you, Yoerg, take the prisoner downtown—the inspector's office. Don't say anything to the newspapers until we get there."

A voice in the hall said:

"There's two reporters trying to get in now."

"Tell 'em to wait for me," Captain Ford said.

Curly shook hands with Tawny and petted her shoulder. She only realized it dimly, as dimly she was conscious that Yoerg had put a cigarette in Curly's mouth and held a lighted match for him.

An explosion, and a flare of light, and a burst of men's voices, angry and threatening. Newspaper photographers were on the job. There was no secret about Curly's arrest now.

She was in the room with the captain and inspector. Captain Ford turned to the inspector, who said:

"I'll talk to her, captain. You'd better go down and see the newspaper boys. Keep the girl out of it. See?"

"Yes, inspector. Right."

The captain went out and closed the door. Inspector Dunstan took off his hat, revealing gray hair. His long, keen face was weatherbeaten and furrowed. He had hard gray eyes, shining beneath thick, bushy, black brows. His Roman nose was a network of blue veins in a red field. He said to Tawny:

"You'd better sit down, Miss."

She sat down on a studio couch, and he spread his legs apart and looked down at her. He said:

"A nice mess you've got into."

"Yes, sir."

"You wouldn't like to be arrested or held as a material witness, would you?"

"Oh, no. Please don't. I didn't do anything."

Tawny choked a sob.

"Well, you won't be, as it turns out," Inspector Dunstan continued. "We have a dictograph in here—back of your bureau. We know you haven't had anything to do with this case except be foolish enough to associate with a criminal."

Tawny remained silent, staring up at the inspector. She was flooded with warmth. The police weren't going to take her. Then she wondered what they had heard over the dictograph—all the intimate sounds in her room. She was embarrassed and felt hot. The blood burned in her cheeks. The inspector said:

"I have a granddaughter about your age. I'd take a horsewhip to her if she associated with criminals. I hope this experience will be a lesson for you."

"I didn't know."

"Yes, you did. You knew. Your family tried to tell you, but you wouldn't listen. You're one of those modern girls that knows it all."

The police knew everything. They'd been talking with the family—Joe probably. She didn't think of Patrolman John Flynn, who knew everybody on his beat and a great deal more about their private affairs than those on his beat realized. It wasn't for nothing that Flynn chatted with janitors and shopkeepers and old residents. He knew what was going on.

"There's nothing to hold you for since the prisoner has confessed and will make a statement. But you are lucky not to be held as a matter of ordinary police routine. We'll try to keep your name out of this."

"Thank you, sir. Oh, I hope you can."

"Don't thank me, Miss. Let me thank you for serving as the bait that helped trap a vicious and cowardly murderer."

The bait! Tawny hated that. She shuddered. The inspector turned toward the door, put his hand on the knob, said:

"You may not know it, but you have some pretty influential friends who seem to know about everything that's going on."

Influential friends, Tawny thought. Who were influential friends? Mr. Barty—Tom Barty! He was the only influential friend she knew. The inspector was watching her face. He exclaimed:

"That's it. But don't mention any names. There'll be a man in to take away the microphone."

He opened the door. Mrs. Grossland, the landlady, was standing in the hall. Mrs. Grossland was about five feet two, with thick black hair piled on top of a big head, a vast red face, with brown pop eyes, pendulous cheeks, two chins, a huge bust and hips. She was shaking with excitement, her voice shrill. She shook her finger at Tawny.

"You—you—you get out of my house. This is a respectable house."

Inspector Dunstan took her arm and drew her into the room.

"I'm Chief Inspector Dunstan," he said. "Calm down, madam. The girl hasn't done anything except be foolish. She—"

"Police in my house. A murderer in my house. The scandal. My God!"

The inspector's voice was stern.

"Pull yourself together, madam. The girl will sleep here tonight and leave in the morning. Now, leave her alone. Come on."

The inspector shepherded Mrs. Grossland through the door and closed it on his, "Goodnight."

Tawny was alone, sobbing a little with excitement. Curly was a murderer. He was going to be electrocuted. The police had caught him by watching her. She was

the bait.

She realized she was drinking gin. It warmed her and calmed her and deadened her fears. Her nerves were soothed. She took another drink of gin. She looked at herself in the mirror and laughed a trifle hysterically. Then, strangely, tears flowed down her cheeks. She watched them dispassionately.

She was thinking of Tony. Tony wrote her letters—and Tony was dead. Curly came to call on her—and Curly was going to die.

She couldn't understand Curly—never had. He killed three men who worked in a bank, all of them married, with children, and said he had given them a chance.

"He must be crazy," Tawny said aloud, finishing the gin.

A knock sounded on the door. The door opened, and a man in a brown hat, with brown hair and brown eyes and brown overcoat and suit and shoes, entered. Without taking off the hat, he said:

"Sergeant Vliet—getting some stuff out of here."

He was moving the bureau, when another man came in—a tall, thin man, with very light, thin brown hair, blue eyes, long face dominated by a huge nose twisted to the right, a long, thin neck, with a prominent Adam's apple, sloping shoulders and knock-knees. He grinned at Tawny and said in a deep bass voice: "He's not crazy. He's got a criminal mind. He'll burn."

Tawny opened her mouth, but no words came. They'd heard her words over the dictaphone. They must have been in the next room. Adam's Apple helped with the bureau, stooped behind it. His arms moved.

"That's right, Joe," the Sergeant said.

The sergeant went to the wall, where was a reproduction of Paul and Virginia fleeing before a storm, with a bed sheet they'd grabbed streaming behind them. The sergeant moved the picture, and began to disconnect another microphone.

This was new stuff—microphones.

When they were gone Tawny drank more gin. She couldn't remember going to bed.

X

Tawny moved nest day to Horatio Street, in Greenwich Village. The newspapers didn't mention her name. They all had big headlines on front pages and columns of type, with photographs of Curly in his girl's clothes.

Tawny telephoned to Ida from a public pay station in a drug store on Sixth Avenue. She told Ida what had happened and said:

"I feel terrible. I've got to see you."

"Joe knew about it," Ida said. "But there was nothing he could do. He's awfully upset."

"He could have told me."

"No, he couldn't, Tawny. Even if Joe hadn't wanted this awful murderer punished, which he did, he couldn't have told you. The police were watching everything. You know he told you—we all told you—not to have anything to do with Curly Edwards."

"But I didn't believe the stories about him. He was always nice to me. He was more polite to me than any man I ever met. But I have to see you. I'm coming up."

"All right, Tawny, I'll be here."

Tawny hung up the receiver and stepped out of the booth. Detective Yoerg grinned down at her. He said:

"That's a nice girl you were talking to. You better take her advice after this."

He walked away, Tawny staring after him. He'd heard her conversation with Ida. Probably she was shadowed. Well, she was glad the detective had listened. He'd know now for sure, if he hadn't known before, that she didn't know anything about Curly's crimes.

Curly was brought to trial on an indictment of murder in the first degree in the Supreme Court in Brooklyn, Justice Peter J. Horning presiding. Curly had no counsel. Justice Horning announced he must have counsel. Curly interrupted the Court, saying:

"That's a farce, your Honor. I'm guilty. I killed these men. I've confessed. Don't be silly about a lawyer."

The Court was in an uproar. Justice Horning couldn't punish Curly for contempt of court because he already was in jail and he was bound for the electric chair. But under the laws of the State of New York, a murderer couldn't plead guilty. His plea automatically was not guilty, and he had to be defended, because that was the law.

This law isn't as ridiculous as it might sound. Its purpose is to protect the innocent man, who for some motive might confess to a crime in which he actually had no part. But Curly made it seem ridiculous. He said:

"Why not get this rigamarole over with? Why make a joke of a serious matter? I killed the three men in the bank and I killed my friend, Harry Horowitz. I want to go to the electric chair as soon as possible. Why make all this fuss about it?"

The Court appointed Rufus L. Morrow defense counsel. Rufus Morrow was an able criminal lawyer, with a fine record. He had red hair, which went with his name of Rufus, and hazel eyes, and a face red from the enjoyment of golf and yachting in the summer and skating and skiing in the winter and vintage wines and choice viands during all seasons.

Rufus Morrow had an independent income and radical ideas. He would have made much more money in the practice of law if he hadn't spent so much time fighting for ideals. He was a philosophical anarchist, taught Sunday School in the Episcopal Church in Flatbush, played an excellent game of bridge and always asked clients:

"What are the moral and ethical aspects of this case?"

He'd never take a case unless he was satisfied with its moral and ethical aspects. He was a rare bird among lawyers. He was a sensitive, idealistic soul who considered himself practical and hardboiled. He was glad to take Curly's case because he believed that while Curly wasn't insane from a medical or a legal point of view, his mind was warped in some strange way.

He conferred with his strange client and got nowhere. Curly merely repeated:

"I'm guilty. What's the use?"

Mr. Morrow couldn't help but like Curly. There was an odd fascinating quality about him. He didn't regret any of his killings, except the killing of that worthless drug addict, Harry Horowitz. He wasn't dispirited or sad about this. He merely was displeased with himself because he had violated his curious, self-made code.

"I thought Harry was armed," he told reporters, "just like I was. I gave him the breaks and let him go for his gun first. But he didn't have any gun."

"But what about the men you killed in the bank?" Sam Davenant asked.

"I gave them a chance to put up their hands," Curly replied. "Anybody with brains would put up his hands."

"What about their widows and children?" Sam asked.

Curly looked at him quietly, pale blue eyes meeting darker blue eyes. He said:

"Why didn't they think of them—and put up their hands when I told them?"

"You know you're a murderer, don't you?" Sam asked. "You understand—"

A chorus of disapproving voices interrupted him, masculine and feminine.

"Don't call him names."

"Don't kick a man when he's down."

"You should be ashamed."

"He's been drinking."

Sam shrugged and spread out his hands hopelessly. He said:

"Well, I'll be damned."

Sob sisters from the newspapers wept over Curly and wrote human interest stories about him—how he not only didn't swear or tell dirty stories himself, but how he chided others for using bad language or telling off-color anecdotes.

They told of his gentlemanly manners and his soft voice and his courage. And old ladies with kind hearts fluttered around him and sighed over him. He was so handsome and polite.

Sally Blair, veteran newspaper writer, led the crusade for Curly. She fought with her editors on *The Planet*. She refused to discuss Curly with Sam after Sam called Curly a murderer.

"Well, what do you call the murderer?" Sam asked.

Sally turned away. She was a dumpy little woman with gray hairs showing in black, with a face like a bird's, from which shining brown eyes like a bird's looked out.

Curly refused to answer questions on the stand. He told his story of the murders, of planning them, of shooting the bank officers, of burying the money, of shooting Harry Horowitz, of his arrest and of his retracing the crime with the detectives and showing them where he had buried the money and the revolvers.

He was found guilty of murder in the first degree and sentenced to die in the electric chair. He said:

"That's what I want. Why all the farce about it? Why the delay?"

Sally Blair went to see the Governor. She and Mrs. DeLancy Potts and Mrs. Jessica Ordway Manning and Miss Jane Darnly and other wealthy social workers and clubwomen, with influence and money, visited Curly in his cell and the Governor in Albany. They wept over Curly and listened to him talk politely in his low, well modulated voice, and fell in love with him.

They put themselves in his place and shuddered over the torture of the electric chair. They shrieked against the barbarity of capital punishment, of the savagery of the State's becoming a murderer, the iniquity of a so-called civilized society murdering anyone—let alone such a charming, polite, darling, handsome boy as Curly Edwards—for revenge.

They fought for commutation to life. They argued that Curly's environment was responsible for the murders, and not Curly. They employed a noted psychiatrist to examine Curly.

But above all, they took Curly cigarettes and delicacies and wrote him sweet *billets-doux* and he wrote them nice notes.

Curly's mother was a pathetic figure. She was dazed by events. Her head shook with a faint palsy. Her hands trembled. Her face was sad. She spent a great deal of time praying. She said:

"My baby. My own baby boy."

Agnes was the only one of her children who was a real comfort to her. Agnes said nothing, but rubbed her head nights and gave her tablets which made her sleep.

Agnes was sorry for her mother, but she was not broken-hearted over Curly's plight. She understood Curly. He had had a code. It wasn't a code which was understood by society, but it was entirely comprehensible to Curly—and to Agnes. He had violated the code when he shot Harry Horowitz. Curly was ready to die and didn't mind dying. Agnes even could understand that. Curly would rather be dead than live in a cage or live without freedom.

There was a screw loose in Agnes too. She had a great contempt for the laws and moralities of the world as she saw them. She believed that only the human worms, the human goats, paid any attention to these rules. The big people disregarded them. Tom Barty could give a champagne supper and the Mayor or the Governor or the Police Commissioner would be glad to be present. But Molly O'Grady could make a quart of bathtub gin, and get herself arrested for it.

If you were in society you could sleep with a man, and that was the end of it. But if you were a poor, ignorant streetwalker, or a call girl, the vice cops would arrest you and a magistrate would send you away to Bedford, maybe—unless you had money enough to buy off the vice cops.

It was a grand world, built for the strong, who framed the rules to keep the weak where they belonged. Curly had gone his own way without fear, and now he was going to his death without fear. Agnes loved Curly more than anyone else in the world but she didn't weep over him.

The ladies couldn't save Curly. He had to go to the chair. He said to Sally Blair, who had just finished writing his life story:

"Don't worry about me, Miss Blair. I'd rather have it this way."

"I hope this will end capital punishment," Miss Blair asserted, tears in her eyes. "If it does you will have been a martyr in a good fight."

Curly smiled, and lighted a cigarette. He said:

“I’m no martyr, Miss Blair. I killed my friend, who didn’t have a chance, and now I’m going to pay for it.”

Warden Henry Hobson visited Curly on the afternoon of the execution. He was a great humanitarian and prison reformer. Curly said:

“Don’t be crying about me, warden. I feel fine. I’ve ordered lobster and oysters and a steak with mushrooms and chocolate ice cream and strawberries for dinner. I can’t wait for dinner.”

Mr. Hobson wiped his eyes and said:

“That’s a terrible combination. It may give you a stomach ache.”

“Where I’m going a stomach ache won’t matter,” Curly said.

The warden hurried away and left the prison, leaving his secretary, young Wallace Eager, in charge of arrangements. Dr. Porter, the prison physician, visited Curly. Curly asked:

“Why are you wearing a black tie today, doctor? Put on a red one, will you? I’d like something cheerful to look at.”

Curly refused religious consolation. He said:

“I’ve gotten along without it all my life. I’d be a hypocrite if I changed at the last minute.”

His head was shaved on top, and his trouser legs were slit. He lighted a cigarette and walked from the death cell through the brown door into the execution chamber. His cheeks were pink, and his blue eyes were cheerful. He looked around and spied the principal keeper. The warden was supposed to be there, but he wasn’t. He said:

“Do you mind if I say a few words?”

“Go ahead.”

“All I wanted to say was that nobody—except one man—ever died in front of Curly Edwards’s gun without having a chance. Thank you, P.K.”

He inhaled deeply from his cigarette and tossed it to the cement floor, where it fell in a puddle of water. He stepped to the chair and sat down, carefully placing his legs near the electrodes. He looked up and saw Dr. Porter, and said in a low voice, inaudible to the reporters on the witness benches:

“I see you changed your tie. Thanks, Doctor.”

Two keepers were placing the helmet over his head when he looked up and said quickly:

“I would like to thank the warden, the doctor and all the keepers for the way they’ve treated me.”

The helmet concealed his face. He sat easily in the chair, breathing normally. Dr. Porter, watch in hand, studied his breathing. The little, bald-headed, pale

executioner, peering from his lever at the right of the condemned, and concealed from him by the wooden partition of the autopsy room, in front of which is the electric chair, watched the doctor. The doctor signalled with his arm. The executioner pulled the lever. The body leaped in the chair, straining against the straps, which creaked. After a few seconds, the doctor signalled again, and the executioner pushed the lever back. The body sagged in the chair.

The doctor bent over it, listening through his stethoscope. Saliva ran down, white and glistening from beneath the mask. A keeper mopped it up. The doctor stepped back, and signalled again. The body leaped again against the straps. . . .

A minute later, Curly's brain was being carved into neat, thin slices on the autopsy table, and doctors were watching his heart. It pulsated seventeen times.

In the warden's office, Sally Blair said:

"They've killed him."

"It was murder," said Mrs. DeLancy Potts.

Sam was dictating his story to a telegraph operator over one of the emergency lines set up in the prison. He talked in quick, brief sentences, impersonal, unhurried, but smooth and liquid. Teddy Greer, who was helping him, handed him a note. He glanced at it and continued, without change in voice, or speed of delivery:

"Parenthesis. Note to Editor: Why in hell do newspapers have to dramatize murders? Why don't we just print a paragraph that this guy was bumped off. Interrogation point. End parenthesis."

When she was told that Curly was officially dead, Mrs. Potts said to the other ladies:

"Paragraph. Quote It was murder unquote."

Sam's straightaway account of the electrocution ran two and one-half columns, beginning on the first page and continuing on the third. When Arthur Symms, the city editor, congratulated him, he said:

"I'd've been prouder if we'd run a paragraph. A flock of people forget all about the fact he's nothing but a lousy murderer."

Mr. Symms's smile vanished. His face became severe. He said:

"We won't discuss that, Sam."

Birdy was astonished that Sam could sleep right after seeing an execution. She said:

"You haven't any heart, I guess."

"For God's sake," Sam said and kissed her.

Sally Blair's signed story was headed:

"It Was Murder."

It was a disgrace to civilization that the State had slaughtered such a polite, well dressed, well mannered, brave boy.

Ida Bayer's family had moved to Fort Washington Avenue where, from the living room of their fifth floor rear apartment, they could look out over the Hudson River and the Palisades on the New Jersey shore and say:

"Isn't the view beautiful?"

They took deep breaths daily and said:

"Do you notice the difference in the air up here from downtown? It's as different as day and night."

"It's like living in the country."

Ida's father, Matthew, was an architect. He had black hair, brown eyes, red cheeks, a brown mustache, was careless about his clothes, usually smelled of gin or beer when he came home for dinner at night and never was seen without a cigar between his lips.

His favorite pastime was bowling with politicians and builders with whom he was associated in city contracts. As a rule, he made about seven or eight thousand dollars a year, but twice recently he had been able, through successful deals, to net substantial sums in addition.

Matt Bayer was a cheerful man, complaisant and easy-going and careless about money. He liked to eat, and insisted on having in the house the best food the market produced. The only time he showed a touch of displeasure was when the roast wasn't large enough for a family of ten, or there were only two Delmonico, or short steaks, on the table for dinner, instead of three.

He let his bills run until suits were threatened, or even actually brought against him, and then he paid. But he paid personally and joked about it, so that no creditors were bitter against him. They just said it was too bad that such a nice chap was so careless about his bills.

Alice Bayer was a slim little woman who had brown hair and blue eyes. She read a great deal, but her favorite pastime was cooking. She had been born in Revere, New Hampshire, and she persisted, even in the city, in putting up preserves and canning.

Her daughters, Ida, the eldest, and Naida, three years younger, were as even-tempered and pleasant as their parents. Both daughters better than knew their way around in a kitchen and could perform pleasant and kindly deeds with a chafing dish or an electric grid.

Mrs. Bayer and her daughters went to the Fort Washington Avenue Baptist Church on Sunday, leaving Matt Bayer in the living room with his cigar, the Sunday

newspapers, and no necessity for shaving until Sunday dinner, which was at one P. M.

If the weather was pleasant, Matt took them all for a ride in his three-year-old, modest-priced and not too well kept up sedan of a popular make. He used the car for business purposes during the week, but if Ida or Naida wanted to drive it for any special purpose, he always let her have it and cheerfully used other means of transportation himself.

In this home there always was bootleg gin in the pantry and bootleg beer in the electric ice box, but Matt was the only one who drank to any extent, and he never really overdid drinking. Once in a while, perhaps, he arrived home a little late and a trifle merrier than usual, but on such occasions he brought along a box of candy for his wife, who had kept his food warm in the oven. She and the girls never waited for him, and this suited everyone.

Cousin Joe enjoyed this family and the friendly atmosphere in it. Mrs. Bayer was somewhat dubious about Joe's being a Catholic at first, but Matt laughed, and pinched his wife's cheek and said:

"I've found out it isn't a fellow's religion that counts so much, as what kind of a fellow he is. Take my best friends. One is Moe Cohen. He's a Jew. Another is Mike O'Brien, and he's an Irish Catholic. They'd give me their shirts and I'd go to hell for them."

"Joe seems like a nice boy, with good habits," Alice Bayer said, "but if he and Ida got married I'm afraid he'd want the children brought up as Roman Catholics."

"They could be brought up a lot worse," Matt said. "But why worry about marrying now? I don't see any signs of it."

"You're a man," Alice asserted, as if that explained everything.

When Joe called, Alice had difficulty getting Matt out of the living room. In their bedroom he said:

"What's the matter with you, Alice? Gosh! I was having a nice talk with Joe about the stock market."

His wife sniffed.

"He didn't come up here to talk about the stock market with you."

"Oh, I see," Matt grinned. "The old matchmaker, huh?"

He kissed her with tobacco-scented lips. She said:

"I guess you've forgotten when you used to get mad because father sat up talking with you."

Matt looked sober. He said:

"I wonder if they're sitting on the sofa now like we used to?"

“I wouldn’t be surprised,” Alice said. “I wouldn’t be surprised if human nature hasn’t changed much since we were young.”

“We’re not old yet,” Matt replied.

“I feel old.”

“You look better to me than you ever did,” Matt said. “You grow prettier every day.”

“I don’t believe it, but I like to hear you say it.”

He kissed her again. They lived a humdrum life, but they were happy. Matt wasn’t bothered by dreams of being rich or famous or of leaving behind him a monument to his genius as an architect, and Alice wasn’t even touched with any social aspirations. They lived in a pleasant apartment where the air was good and the view was nice. They had a roof over their heads, three square meals a day and a comfortable bed to sleep in. They had friends with whom they played bridge and penny-ante poker—friends like themselves with no social axes to grind. When a man appeared in a new suit, they all commented on it, and the man’s wife had him stand up and turn around so that everybody could see how well it fitted and of what choice material it was made.

“Brown always did become John.”

“Lovely material.”

“It should wear like iron.”

“Will needs a new suit. The two he has are getting so the seats are transparent.”

(Laughter over nothing much at all.)

“That reminds me, I’ve got to go with Joe to buy him a pair of shoes. He’d never get them if I didn’t make him.”

When a woman wore a new article of clothing it was the same.

“A new dress.”

“My dear!”

“Stand up.”

“Turn around.”

“Where did you get it?”

“It’s lovely.”

“How much do you think I paid for it? Guess.”

“Thirty-five dollars.”

“Twenty-nine-fifty.”

“How much?”

“Twelve ninety-nine, at Bloom’s in Brooklyn. It’s a sample.”

“Bloom’s. I’ve heard of that place.”

"My dear! Twelve ninety-nine!"

"You certainly know how to find bargains."

They took up the rug in the living room and danced to records on the Victrola; and ate chop suey or welsh rarebits or wheat cakes and maple syrup or sandwiches, and drank beer, ginger ale, gin and coffee.

They read in the newspapers about Newport and Southampton, the Alps and Biarritz and the Pyramids just as they read that there were canals on the moon, and that the sun was ninety million, or ninety billion, or was it something trillion miles away from the earth.

They paid their rent and worked and ate and slept and played and read and went to the movies frequently and the theatre once in a while, quarreled now and then, made up and thought of no other life.

Only Joe was different. Joe sat among them, dreaming secretly of the great world. Joe had imagination, so he was unhappy, restless, ambitious. He wanted to be somebody. He wanted to see the world. He wanted power and money.

He looked at Ida and thought she was the only girl he'd ever met that suited his purposes. She knew how to hold her knife and fork. He'd copied her table manners. He stopped leaning his elbows on the table and touching the tines of his fork, or the blade of his knife, with his fingers. He sat up straight.

Ida was simple and direct, like a man. She wasn't as brilliant as Tawny, but she had a level head and an even temper and good health and got along with people, with men as well as women. Joe loved Ida as much with his head as with his heart; and Ida reciprocated this mixture of sentiment and intellect.

They were both what is called normal. They had the natural urges of the flesh, but they controlled these urges because it was the most sensible thing to do and because they had been taught in home and church that it was the right thing to do.

Joe said to Ida on the sofa:

"I love you, Ida. I've loved you for a long time."

Ida leaned against him and kissed him. He hugged her, their lips growing hot. After a long time and much murmuring, Ida sat up and straightened her hair. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes suffused. She looked beautiful to Joe. She asked:

"When do you want to be married, Joe?"

"Should I speak to your father? I was wondering."

Ida laughed. She said:

"I guess Pa and Ma know about it, Joe. I was wondering how long it was going to take you to ask me."

Joe found he was the embarrassed one. Ida was so perfectly natural. She said:

“I’ve been dying to show you my Hope Chest. Come on in and I’ll show you.”

Ida and Joe tiptoed into Ida’s bedroom. It was the first time he had been in there. Before she turned on the light, they moved toward each other and pressed against each other, kissing, while the blood throbbed in young arteries.

Joe was suitably impressed by the Hope Chest. It was stuffed with beautiful linen, hand-embroidered, and silk underthings, and from it came the faint scent of lavender. Joe not only was impressed, but having an imagination, he choked up a little. The hopes and dreams of love and life of a sweet girl person were in that chest, in those fine stitches.

Back in the living room, Ida said:

“I don’t believe in long engagements. It’s August tenth now. Would October be all right?”

“It can’t happen too soon to suit me.”

Ida regarded him frankly. She said:

“I suppose you’d like to be married by a Priest.”

Joe flushed and stammered a little.

“Er—uh.”

“I know,” Ida said. “I thought about it a lot. So far as I’m concerned, I just as soon be married by a Justice of the Peace or the clerk in the Marriage License Bureau. We’ll be married by a priest.”

Joe’s heart went out to Ida more than ever. Everything she said and did confirmed his judgment of her, and she stirred his senses too. Catholicism was ingrained in Joe, and the poetic and imaginative side of his nature loved the beautiful rituals, the chants, the incense, just as the religious side thrilled to the spiritual quality of the church. He said:

“I honestly would feel more as if we really were married, darling. But your family —your mother.”

“Oh, that’ll be all right. I believe when a girl marries a man—a fine man—she should go all the way with him. I’m old-fashioned, I guess.”

XI

Tawny was too tight to get to the theatre. Ray Torres, the producer, retained Dr. Albion Alcorn for his casts, and Dr. Alcorn always made a professional call on a girl who telephoned or sent a message that she was too ill to report for work.

Dr. Alcorn was a Broadway character. He resembled an old-fashioned country doctor in that he cared a deal more about curing ills than he did about collecting bills, but there the likeness ceased.

He was five feet four and one-half inches tall in his stocking feet, and five feet six and one-half inches tall in his shoes. He wore lifts in them.

Dr. Alcorn was slim and dark, with a high, Shakespearean forehead, aquiline nose and large, black, liquid eyes. His black hair had receded at the temples, accentuating the height of his brow. He dressed in the Broadway manner, was friendly with the great, the near-great and the poor and striving of Broadway. He gave parties in his apartment in Broadway Towers to the denizens of Broadway, and was a regular at first nights.

He was a clever doctor and Broadway swore by him. He could cure disease, all right. There was no question about that. He could cure sleeplessness and nervousness and pain, too. There also was no doubt about that. His nasal sprays contained cocaine. He chased hangovers with morphine sulphate and sleeplessness with hypnotics.

Tawny was in bed in Elissa Rose's apartment when Dr. Alcorn arrived. He telephoned to the theatre that Tawny was drunk, and then pumped out Tawny's stomach, gave her a hypodermic, and said:

"You'll feel all right in the morning."

"Will I lose my job, Doctor?"

"You knew that, darling," Dr. Alcorn replied pleasantly. "Little girls who drink so much they can't get to the theatre always lose their jobs."

Dr. Alcorn didn't give any advice and he didn't sympathize. He saw hundreds of these Broadway butterflies, these beautiful young girls who fluttered in from Oshkosh and Toronto, Florida and Colorado and Texas and West Virginia, not to mention the Bronx, Brooklyn and the Gas House. He saw them come and he saw them go, just like real butterflies.

One out of a flock went up to dizzy heights on stage or screen, or both. One of a flock married a wealthy man. A few were killed in motor accidents. A few died

pitifully young. Some stayed around until they were too old for the Broadway choruses, and went into burlesque. Some married and divorced playboys. Some became national and international courtesans. Some became good wives and mothers. One or two entered convents. Some became dramatic actresses. They came and went.

They became hostesses in night clubs and gyp joints, and hostesses in call-flats and middle-class homes, and hostesses in Mayfair. The fit and the lucky survived, and the unfit and the unlucky passed on. Always there were more butterflies fluttering toward the flame which is Broadway.

Tawny was in Elissa's apartment, which cost forty-five hundred a year, and looked it. She was young and good-looking. Dr. Alcorn wasn't worrying about her. A poor girl might get her job.

Tawny woke up early next morning feeling very low. She had no job and she had no money. Her father would give her money, but she wouldn't ask him. He'd wanted her to go to college, but she'd gone on the stage. She could earn her own way. She was too proud to admit defeat to Dave.

Joe would give her money, but Joe disapproved of her and would give her a lecture along with the money. And she didn't want Ida to know what had happened either. Marriage had broken the perfection of their beautiful, precious friendship. Ida would be just dumb enough to tell Joe.

Tawny went down to Cooper Union and posed in the altogether for a women's art class for fifty cents an hour. She had an opportunity to pose for a men's class. She said:

"Sure."

She told herself:

"Be nonchalant."

But the sweat began to run down her sides, thinking about it—about appearing naked before a lot of men. She told herself:

"They're studying art. They're used to seeing models without any clothes on. It's art with them and it's business with me. Be nonchalant."

She undressed and put on a kimono and walked into the studio where the artists, youths and graybeards, were waiting. She tried to walk carelessly and remove the kimono nonchalantly, but the sweat which had been running brooks now ran rivers. It was a ghastly experience.

She got two dollars an hour for posing for Alleyne Merriam, an artist of some repute. He was quite impersonal with her and she gained confidence. Before long she didn't mind walking around studios without clothes on. She didn't even mind

when an artist's friends came in, but posed as the artist directed.

"Get the golden yellow quality of the hair and skin and eyes."

"Go over and stand by the south window."

"See the effect of the sun on the skin, and how it brings out the yellows."

Tawny became familiar with the studios and with artists and sculptors, and did work for Jesse Miley, who referred to himself as an art photographer. He made nude studies of the butterflies of Broadway, and one he made of Tawny, called *Saturday Night*, had a brief, but enormous, vogue.

The idea for *Saturday Night* evolved from Tawny's telling Jesse Miley about Gramma and her washtub in the kitchen. So he photographed Tawny in a washtub, covering herself as best she could with a forearm and a hand, and staring, startled, as if surprised by an unexpected visitor.

Tawny stared in this startled manner from postcard racks and windows and walls and counters of shops, not only on Broadway and all over New York, but also throughout the country.

It was in December. Ida telephoned Tawny and invited her to lunch in a tea room in Madison Avenue. Tawny wore a green turban and a green cloth coat with a muskrat collar; and Ida wore a black tailored hat and a caracul coat with a silver fox collar.

When she removed her gloves a narrow platinum band and a two-carat diamond in a platinum hoop announced that she not only had been duly and respectably engaged, but also that she had been duly and respectably wed. But the rings weren't necessary to establish her status as a married woman well satisfied with her lot in life. She breathed domesticity and comfortable conformity from every pore. She was the embodiment of young matronhood.

She had been to Bermuda on her honeymoon, and now she and Joe had a five-room apartment on Riverside Drive, with everything new and unworn, including the latest of four maids. The female who worked for you in the kitchen no longer was referred to as the hired help or the help or the cook or the hired girl. She was the maid.

But whoever it was that said that no matter what you called garlic it gave off the same perfume was correct when it came to Ida's maids. Up to date they had been hired girls with a flair for cooking steaks to a tinder, and an idea that Ida's wedding eating paraphernalia was made of rubber instead of china and crystal.

When a few goblets failed to bounce off the floor or the sink, Ida bounced a maid.

She had a seventy-two inch dining-room table of mahogany, with a heavy felt

pad, which folded in sections, to cover it. And, being young and enthusiastic, she wanted the maid to put on and take off this felt pad for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

It gave Joe, late of the Gas House, and Ida, late of Washington Heights, a sense of elegance to sit in state at either end of the table, with its snowy cloth, its china and silver and crystal, and be waited on by the maid. But it gave the maid the pip.

All the maids Ida experimented with in her early days had bad legs or dragging-down pains in their gizzards, or weak backs or hot flashes. Bridget spoke out in meeting one noon, when Ida had her mother at lunch, and said:

"When you get as ould as your mother you won't be so fussy."

Ida discharged Bridget and got Ellen. Ellen neglected to put on salad forks and butter plates and knives for lunch, and when chided for this neglect, said:

"If you had to wash and polish all that silver you'd feel different about it."

So Ellen departed and Margaret arrived. Margaret was the wife of an elevator operator in the building, and her first dinner was to be constructed around a porterhouse steak, done rare. When she brought in a platter, Joe looked at the object on the platter and asked:

"What is this?"

"It's a steak, Mr. McKinley."

"How did you cook it, Margaret?"

"I boiled it for two hours and baked it for two more. It should be done by this time."

"Let's go out and eat, darling," Joe said. "As a reward, let Margaret eat her own cooking."

Margaret went into the kitchen and cried, and Joe and Ida went out and ate dinner.

Tawny was waiting for Ida at the tea room. They kissed and Tawny exclaimed:

"You look lovely, Ida. Marriage certainly agrees with you."

Ida thought Tawny looked a little thin, and a little threadbare and a little tired. Tawny had blue patches under her amber eyes, her shoes were a trifle scuffed, and she had a run in one stocking. She moistened her finger, as Ida noticed it, and touched the run with the damp finger. Ida said:

"You look kind of peaked, Tawny. Are you getting along all right?"

Tawny laughed and replied:

"I'm getting along fine, but I have to work pretty hard. I get a dancing engagement sometimes and I pose other times."

They were eating chicken salad and drinking tea. Ida said:

"Joe is upset about your posing. He thinks that picture, *Saturday Night*, is

disgraceful. He wanted me to speak to you about it and ask you if you really thought you were getting anywhere with your ambition to be an actress."

"That's just like Joe," Tawny said. "He always was so proper. So far as I'm concerned, I'd pose naked in the middle of Forty-second Street and Broadway if I thought it would help me get ahead on the stage."

"But is it helping you get ahead?" Ida asked.

"Now don't you be getting like Joe."

"Joe is darned nice," Ida asserted. "I don't mind getting to be like him at all."

"He was always so damned noble though," Tawny said. "I like people that have a few bad habits."

"Joe's all right just as he is so far as I'm concerned. Joe's really wonderful. He's going to be a big man some day. Joe says that if you'll stop this modeling and dancing in all kinds of places, he'll be glad to help you. He doesn't think you should live the way you are."

"That's nice of Joe," Tawny replied. "Thank him for me. But tell him when I walked out of the house I made up my mind to live my own life without help from anybody. And I'm going to do it."

"It sounds good—to live your own life, Tawny. But will it work out the way you are doing it?"

"I'll make it work out."

"But you have so much brains, Tawny. You're capable of doing so much. Why don't you keep on at school?"

Ida wanted to speak to Tawny about drinking, but she thought that was none of her business. She was fond of Tawny. Tawny said:

"Don't ever talk to me again about school. I'm through with schools forever."

Tawny didn't explain that the reason she had worked so hard in school was that her consuming ambition was to live with her wonderful mother; and that the greatest shock of her life was when her mother cheerfully told her that was a silly idea.

Ida, who'd known all of Tawny's secrets during their intimacy, had known about that. Ida said:

"Your father would be glad to help you, Tawny. It's foolish of you to insist on trying to earn your own living when you don't have to."

"Listen! There's no need of Joe or you worrying about me. The reason I'm earning my own living is because I want to be independent. Being a model is just as respectable a way to earn a living as any other kind of work. It's hard work. All Joe is interested in is money. I have other interests in life that are more important."

"No matter what you do, I love you," Ida said.

"I'll always love you, Ida."

Then they began to talk about old times. When they parted, Ida said:

"Of course, if you ever need any money, Tawny, I can let you have some without anybody knowing. Joe gives me an allowance, and I have—"

"That's sweet of you, Ida, but I don't need any money. I'm all right."

Dave was waiting in front of the Horatio Street rooming house when, one evening two weeks later, Tawny arrived home tired from the Beaux Arts Institute. His long lean face was tanned from exposure to Florida and Cuban sunshine. He wore his soft gray hat at a rakish angle. A blue-and-white striped collar showed above the soft material of his gray overcoat. He swung a straight, one-joint malacca stick with a strap on the handle. A group of children stood in the middle distance, staring at him. Women were watching him from windows. Dave was that sort of man.

"A sport, if there ever was one."

"Look at the tan."

"I could fall for him."

"Distinguished looking."

"Fast."

"Bet he's a gambler."

When he saw Tawny, Dave removed his hat and held out his gloved hands. They didn't kiss each other. Dave didn't believe in public exhibitions of emotion. He said:

"Hello, Tawny."

"Why, father! This is a surprise. Where've you been? Come on in."

"I just got back from Cuba," Dave said.

He had heard about Tawny. Broadway is a very small world, after all. In fact, it's nothing but a village where everybody knows everybody else and everybody else's business.

Inhabitants of Broadway, in a hurry, take taxicabs to travel two or three blocks, so that they won't be held up by friends and acquaintances.

"I've got a new show."

"Just bought an option for twenty grand on the World War Cyclorama."

"Larkspur in the third race."

"Lend me a grand."

"Can you spare a five?"

"Will you lend me a dollar? I'll pay as soon as I get back on my feet."

"Hello! Let's have a drink."

“Hello! Where’ve you been—just going to lunch. Come along?”

“How’re they rolling?”

“Did you hear about Ed? He’s in the dough now.”

“Did you hear about Mac? He’s on the bum—gone on a tramp steamer somewhere to try and sober up.”

“Jack? Didn’t you know he’s been on the water wagon two years and is knocking off two grand a week in Hollywood?”

“Suzette? She’s got the T.B., poor kid. She’s in Saranac.”

“I’ve got a proposition I want to talk over with you.”

“I haven’t eaten for two days, mister—just a cupa cawfee.”

“Scram!”

“Here’s a dollar.”

“There goes a good-lookin’ wren.”

“That’s Tawny Bohun.”

“Not Dave Bohun’s gal?”

“That’s the one—drinks like her mother.”

“Anything doing?”

“I wouldn’t know, but they say not.”

“Say, Dave. You oughta keep an eye on your kid. Nice kid. Seems to be having a tough time.”

Dave knew about Tawny. Broadway was in Florida, and Broadway was in Havana, and Broadway was in Saratoga. Broadway was, and is, not a place, but an idea, not a speck on the map of New York, but a dazzling hope, not a collection of haberdashery shops, orangeade stands, drug stores, cheap restaurants and auction sales rooms, but a dream of success.

The young can’t see the dreary failures of Broadway; they can see only names in electric lights over theatres. And those with the Broadway virus in their veins always are young and hopeful. Even when they are stars on the screen they dream of Broadway and a Broadway first night.

The studios out in Hollywood have a Broadway and a Forty-second Street crossing it. The stars and character actors and juveniles and ingenues and bit players and extras and students of voice and culture all talk Broadway:

“One chance in a show is all I ask.”

“A hit on Broadway and I’d be satisfied.”

“Pinto has promised me a good part in his new production.”

“Pinto is going to star me in his new show.”

“Pinto was saying. . .”

"Did you hear about Jeanne Busby—got such a swelled head he's out."

"Dick Ralph? Drunk all the time."

"Tawny Bohun? Yes. Pretty, nice shape, good hoofer, but drinks."

This world of Broadway is a hard world from necessity. In it are the hard workers, the leisurely workers, the drones and the parasites, the weak and the strong. The hard workers are busy night and day with their careers, sweating, swearing, working in a haze of desperation toward the heights. But they all talk about each other, from the highest to the lowest, and all know about each other—theatre business—entertainment—success—music—laughter—bright lights—tears—headaches—applause—harsh criticism—lavish praise—millions—poverty—caviare—crullers and coffee—applause—success—and—failure—that is Broadway, if you mix in a few gamblers, thieves, touts, men-about-town, night club proprietors, panhandlers, visitors from out-of-town, visitors from other parts of town, cabs, policemen, detectives, bookmakers, dope fiends, stenographers, bookkeepers, salesmen of motion pictures, salesmen of theatrical and motion picture supplies and hustling, cynical, downy-faced office boys among whom certainly are future producers, playwrights, actors, salesmen, clerks and panhandlers.

And don't forget the writers for the newspapers—reporters, commentators and critics—who, as they get older and more disillusioned, sometimes only see the physical aspect of Broadway by day, and describe it as a collection of ramshackle buildings holding cheap shops and popular-priced restaurants and soft-drink stands. Some—not all—of them forget that Broadway isn't a physical entity, but a state of mind. It's an electrically illuminated state of mind; and when the bulbs burn out in the mind, there's no Broadway left—only shabby orangeade stands, an auction jewelry shop or two and a strip of worn asphalt with car tracks in it and an odor of exhaust from taxicabs.

Dave sniffed the atmosphere in the Horatio Street hallway. Mrs. Petullo, the landlady, couldn't cook without garlic. And she was so busy cooking, and eating what she cooked, that dust gathered here and there and everywhere, except in her throat and digestive tract and frying pans.

Rheba Tellefer Holmes, who had a room on the second floor front which she called her studio, usually was making coffee when she wasn't trying to evolve a masterpiece with the help of the north light from the two dingy windows, or wasn't giving a studio party of spaghetti, bathtub gin and cellar-made red wine for a few of her friends.

Among these friends always was a young man, whom Rheba kept supplied with

gin and wine. The young men changed, but the system remained the same. When the system worked, the young man remained behind slightly fuddled after the other guests left. When the system didn't work the young man went away from there with the other guests and Rheba slept alone.

Rheba was forty-four and short and stout, with sparkling brown eyes and a high color in her cheeks. She knew she had an artistic nature and that it had to be fed on romance. As an artist she knew that youth is romance, so she blinded youth with gin and wine and enjoyed romance vicariously. Her heart and her emotions were youthful, even if her face and body showed signs of wear and tear. Dave said:

"You can breathe nourishment here, can't you, Tawny?"

"I only pay five dollars a week and the people are nice," Tawny replied. "Most of them would give you their last nickel."

Dave nodded, smiling slightly. He said:

"Persons like that always seem to be down to their last nickel."

Tawny had to wait to get into the bathroom, and then she washed while Dave smoked a cigarette in her room. His hair now was decidedly gray, but the grayness of the hair harmonized with the grayness of the eyes and failed to extinguish a certain youthful vitality and recklessness. Dave never mentioned Birdy nor his life, and he asked Tawny no questions.

He was that way. He looked around the shabby room with its brass bedstead, cheap bureau, worn morris chair and one straight-backed chair and the curtained recess in which Tawny's scant wardrobe hung on hooks, and made no comments.

Dave understood Tawny as well as any human being might understand another. She wanted independence with the fierce hunger of youth. If she received no financial help from anyone, then she felt she was responsible to no one.

Tawny steered Dave to Baglione's Café in Bleecker Street, where they ate antipasto, spaghetti, eggplant à la Parmesan, veal cutlets Marsala and Spumoni ice cream. They drank smuggled Chianti, harsh and warm to the palate but mingling properly with the highly-seasoned food, and finished with a sweet Italian liqueur.

Dave saw how eagerly and professionally Tawny drank, but did not voice his thought that her taste for alcohol might lead to difficulties. Life was full of difficulties, he thought, and a person had to live his own life. Giving advice was not only a thankless task but often reacted in an opposite manner from the way intended by the adviser.

He took her to see Anne Mabie in *The Discoverers*, and took her home in a cab. Outside of the rooming house on the sidewalk, he handed her a hundred-dollar bill. She hesitated about taking it. He said:

"I'm rather in funds at the moment, Tawny. Luck has been with me. You can have more if you want, but take that anyway, as a delayed Christmas present or something."

Tawny knew how it was with Dave. It was either a feast or a famine with him. He would have thousands of dollars one day and be down to his last few cents the next. He could win money at cards, but he could lose it on the horses or at dice. Dave would bet on anything, at any time. The gambling instinct ruled him. She said:

"Thank you, dad."

"If you want to go back to school, or go anywhere, or need money for anything, get in touch with me."

They parted with a handshake. Tawny wondered if there was such a marvelous man anywhere in the world as her father, so handsome and attractive and understanding. She wasn't pleasing him, but he didn't tell her. Now that she had cut loose from her family, her life was up to her. It would be what she made it. But he always would be glad to help her if she asked. She knew how to get in touch with Dave—through Jim McClay, the betting commissioner.

Tawny was having small affairs with young men but, somehow, young men didn't appeal to her. She thought her father was the grandest man in the world, and told herself she could really love only an older man like him.

These youths in her life did not stand out distinctly one from the other. Gordon Young, a twenty-year-old actor, pursued her indefatigably. He waited outside her rooming house in the rain until her light went out. He made love to her in the vestibule, backing her up against the push-buttons and pleading with her.

He wrote her desperate letters, and wept when she said she liked him but couldn't love him. Gordon was a handsome boy, with thick blond hair, worn long, ardent blue eyes, and pale cheeks. He was serious and intent about life and his career on the stage. He studied himself in front of the mirror and said:

"I guess I'm pretty selfish and self-centered, but I can't help it. The only person I've ever loved more than myself is you, and I probably would get over that. But I can't eat and I can't sleep."

Tawny thrilled physically to Gordon's caresses, and was nearer the point of surrender with Gordon than he guessed, or even she really comprehended.

But she was far from faithful to Gordon in kissings and huggings. There were other boys but no older men who appealed to her. And in this fact, really, lay her safety.

The boys didn't have money enough to purchase privacy in the great city. Tawny

couldn't invite them to her room. They could hire a cab for a ride in Central Park once in a while. Otherwise they sat on benches in Washington Square, or in Central Park, or stood in hallways.

Tawny liked Talbot Rand, an artist who painted posters and advertisements, and she enjoyed being in his studio more than any other studio.

Talbot was a genial, cheerful chap of fifty, big and broad and comfortably padded with flesh. He worked at his north window in overalls all day, turning out his articles of commerce like a human machine, while friends and acquaintances sat around the huge, untidy room, reading, gossiping, telling funny stories and drinking his gin.

Fellow artists, art managers, office boys from the offices of clients, college boys, bartenders in speakeasies, ne'er-do-wells, models temporarily idle, writers, a few bored men and women of society, an occasional actor, a doctor, or a lawyer, men who talked nothing but cock fighting, men who discussed nothing but shooting and fishing, men who could think of no subjects beyond football and baseball and bridge, men whose chief interest in life was dogs and horses, well-to-do men from whom Talbot borrowed money, down-and-outers to whom Talbot lent money regularly, all gathered there to drink Scotch when Scotch was available, gin when gin was on hand, and straight alcohol and water on occasion.

This studio was the center of a real Bohemia because no one who went there thought of the place as Bohemia or himself as a Bohemian. In fact, three-quarters of the regulars wouldn't have known the meaning of the words.

Talbot was a connoisseur of food, drink, horses, dogs, fighting cocks, paintings, etchings, books, men and women and life. He earned a big income, which went through his fingers as if it were liquid. He'd lose a thousand dollars on a cock fight, borrow a quarter from an office boy, buy an interest in a shooting box in New Brunswick and dine on a bottle of beer and a sandwich in the same twenty-four hours.

In the shooting seasons, ducks and geese lay around and ruffed grouse and pheasant and woodcock. Pointers and setters, Gordon, English, Irish, bull terriers bearing the scars of battle, and beagles and Pekinese and an occasional dachshund added to the confusion and noise.

"I'll give you three to five Yale beats Harvard."

"Her mouth is too large and her chin is too square."

"Eastern Shore next week."

"Going to play bridge tonight?"

"Hey, Irving. Run out and get some cigarettes."

“Got the limit in an hour.”

“There’s a club for you—cellar full of pre-war Bourbon and Rye.”

“I wouldn’t want to kill another moose—too damned magnificent.”

“Birds are nothing but flying lizards.”

“Good conformation.”

“Rod’s got an inferiority complex.”

“Sid’s drinking again—crazy when he drinks.”

“Champagne is the best all-around beverage in the world—champagne and pheasant.”

“Nothing’ll beat pressed duck and Burgundy.”

“Canvas Backs are the only ducks. . . .”

“Live on wild rice—you know.”

“There was a dog.”

“She’s got a swell shape. Show ’em your breasts, baby.”

“Where’s the alcohol, Tal?”

“Age of chivalry! Hah! Hah! Knights riveted into boiler plate, sweating on brewery horses, chopping up peasants with an ax. Nobody wanted to kill a knight. He was more valuable alive. But sometimes a knight smothered to death in his boiler before his foes could get busy with a can opener and give him air.”

“My ambition is to ride around in the country in my old age on dirt roads behind a hackney pony. To hell with progress.”

“Beat express train time to Boston.”

“From an ontological point of view, it’s all right to be unfaithful. But if you’ve got an inherited father-mother unconscious conscience, you’re likely to pay for it unconsciously.”

“It isn’t intellect that rules the world and forms opinions and motivates human actions. It’s emotion. You don’t like someone or something by instinct or feeling, and then you figure out why afterward.”

“I don’t think she’s so beautiful, Tal.”

“Well, it’s lucky everybody doesn’t like the same girl or the same pattern necktie or the same house to live in. It might cause confusion.”

“There’s no secret of success but work.”

“Nuts! You’ve got to get the breaks.”

“If that’s art, I’m crazy.”

“I was a bad bunny last night.”

“Goodness! This gin is awful.”

“That isn’t gin, Marian. That’s alcohol.”

“Girls prefer older men because they know instinctively older men don’t kiss and tell.”

“How about it, Tawny?”

“I don’t know.”

“Leave the kid alone, you old fossil.”

Talbot kissed Tawny casually twice when they were alone. He said:

“You’re damned cute, baby.”

But he was impersonal about it and went no further than that. Tawny didn’t know, but he was accustomed to having women make all the advances. This was just as well for Tawny. She liked Talbot Rand more than any man except her father and Dr. Coombs. She liked being in his studio better than being anywhere else, and listened to the conversation fascinated.

A half-dozen times when she drank too much home-made gin she woke up in the bedroom in the gallery at the east end of the studio.

Nobody gave her any advice in that place. If she wanted to drink herself into a coma, that was her business. They served her another drink to brace her up.

In the spring, she awoke sick one morning. Mrs. Petullo brought up a hot water bottle and a hot lemonade with whisky. Tawny couldn’t hold down the drink. Rheba Tellefer Holmes came in and said:

“You’ve got to have a doctor, darling. You’ve got a fever. Have you a doctor?”

“Dr. Coombs,” Tawny said. “Dr. George Coombs.”

XII

"How're you feeling, Tawny?" Dr. Coombs asked.

"Terrible, Doctor," Tawny replied. "My head aches, and I ache all over."

"She can't hold a thing on her stomach, doctor," Rheba said. "She's got two hot water bottles."

"We'll fix that," Dr. Coombs said genially. "It's a touch of the flu. There's quite a little epidemic right now."

Tawny was burning with fever and her head ached, but she was glad she was sick. She'd been wondering how she could meet Dr. Coombs again. She admired doctors more than other men; and she admired Dr. Coombs more than any other doctor. He was handsome and smiling and big and magnetic. It would be wonderful to be loved by a big, handsome, intelligent, genial, open-hearted doctor-man like George Coombs.

Doctors knew about things other men didn't know about. You could talk to a doctor frankly about matters you couldn't, or didn't, discuss with other men.

"Have your bowels moved?"

"Give me a specimen of your urine in this."

The doctor pried into your physical and psychological mysteries veiled from the rest of the world. But, of course, his was a strictly professional and non-human attitude. Or was it?

You sat in a chair, or lay in bed, or reclined on an examination table, naked as to soul as well as body for the medical man.

He might tell you you needed an enema. Remember that old story of the woman in the hospital for an operation, who, when someone knocked on her door, asked:

"Who goes there—friend or enema?"

If there weren't so many nice doctors not so many women would be sick, Tawny thought.

Tawny smiled at her own humor. She didn't have anything to fear about being looked over by doctors or anyone else. She had an exceptional body and she knew it and loved it more than anybody else ever would.

Rheba brought back powders, wrapped in little packets, and tablets. Shortly, Tawny began to sweat and feel dreamily comfortable. The fever passed, the headache went away and she dozed, floating hazily and restfully in a fog. There were worse events in life than flu when you had a nice doctor to come in and transform

your misery into comfort.

When Dr. Coombs came next day, he was wearing tinted spectacles. Rheba said:

"Will you have a drink, Doctor?"

"It might do me good," George Coombs admitted, smiling cheerfully. "I'm feeling a little low myself today."

Tawny and Rheba both understood that Dr. Coombs felt that he could shed subterfuge with them. They weren't of society, where you said not what you thought but what you thought others would approve. Tawny said:

"I've only got gin."

"I've got some good Scotch," Rheba said. "Which would you rather have, doctor?"

Rheba was smiling at the doctor; and Tawny and Dr. Coombs both knew that the doctor not only would have no difficulty persuading Rheba to be nice to him if he chose, but that also he would have great difficulty preventing Rheba from being nice to him if she ever could get him alone.

George Coombs grinned at Tawny and she smiled back, and both of them knew what the other was thinking about. And Rheba saw them grin and smile; and she laughed. She knew, too, and she didn't give a damn.

"I'd just as soon have the gin."

"But you'd rather have the Scotch. It'll only take a minute to get it."

Rheba went to her room, and Dr. Coombs asked:

"Do you mind if I smoke a cigarette, Tawny?"

Tawny didn't mind. The cigarette smoke reminded her of Birdy.

They all drank Scotch and water, and Rheba and the doctor smoked cigarettes. Finally, the doctor crushed out his second stub, fumbled in his waistcoat pocket, produced a flat metal box, selected a pastille, and popped it into his mouth.

"I've a lot of calls to make yet," he said, "and I can't go around blowing a booze breath at my patients."

This flattered Tawny and Rheba, too. They were friends, not merely patient and friend of a patient. The doctor was making them party to a secret of his—that is, a secret he thought was his, but which was understood by all his patients. He was like an ostrich. He hid his breath in pastilles and didn't know, apparently, that the odor of the pastilles and the tinted spectacles gave away the whole secret. Or did he know—and prefer to share this innocent subterfuge with his patients? It was a subterfuge which was delicately flattering.

Dr. Coombs pulled on his driving gloves and looked down at Tawny. He said:

"I won't have to come any more, Tawny. You'll be all right now. Take the powders every four hours three times more, and your sodium phosphate in the morning."

Tawny said:

"You'd better come tomorrow, doctor. I wish you would."

"All right," he said. "I'll drop in."

"You've heard that one about patients who feel better just to see the doctor come into the room," Rheba said, smiling. "Well, that's the way it is with Tawny."

Tawny was sitting up next day when Dr. Coombs called. When Rheba asked him to have a drink, he said:

"No, I've got a lot of work to do. It's very seldom I take a drink until night."

"I'm giving a studio party next Saturday night, doctor. I'd love to have you come," Rheba said. "There'll be some interesting people—artists and writers and Thor Swenson, the sculptor, is coming."

Unconsciously, Dr. Coombs turned his dark, handsome eyes to Tawny. He always had been spoiled by women and he liked women. He had begun getting into hot water over women in college, and he had been in the same sort of hot water ever since.

"Oh, can you come, Doctor?" Tawny asked. "It would be wonderful if you could."

Dr. Coombs grinned amiably. He said:

"It's been years since I've been at a studio party—haven't taken one in since I was an intern. I'll make it if I can."

"Don't say that *if*," Tawny insisted. "Say you'll come."

"All right, Tawny, I'll come."

Dr. Coombs was thinking that Tawny was a handsome girl, and that she evidently liked him a great deal. Tawny was thinking that she wouldn't be happy until Dr. Coombs had made love to her. He was her ideal man.

At two o'clock Sunday morning Tawny gazed up at Dr. Coombs with swimming, adoring eyes and whispered:

"Now—after this—do I still have to call you Dr. Coombs?"

Dr. Coombs put his head back and laughed and laughed. Then he kissed her and said:

"Why, darling, you can call me Porgie. You know—Georgie Porgie, Puddin' and Pie."

"Sweetie Pie," Tawny said.

And Dr. Coombs laughed again. He liked Tawny. She was a brave girl, and independent and apparently unconcerned by conventions. He thought she had brains, too—discreet, would never cause trouble. And she was young and untaught, except by him. He said:

"Call me Teacher, why don't you? I'll be a good one."

"I thought a doctor would be," Tawny said naïvely.

He laughed again, and Tawny asked:

"What are you laughing at?"

"I was thinking that when I thought I was the one who led you into this, I might be wrong, as is not uncommon in such matters, and that you were really the leader."

Tawny sighed and smiled contentedly. She said:

"When I first saw you when my mother was in the hospital that time, I hoped this would happen, but after I hadn't seen you for such a long time, I didn't know."

"Well, well."

"Do you like me?"

"You bet I do, darling. You're the sweetest girl I've ever met."

"How many others have you told that to?"

Dr. Coombs replied, eyes full of fun:

"Don't ever ask that kind of question, darling. Anyhow, I've always meant it when I've said it. And you are the sweetest."

"I guess there have been lots of girls, doct—Sweetie Pie, I mean."

"An innate streak of honesty forces me to admit that there have been others."

But Tawny didn't seem to mind that. She had the doctor for the present, and she was content. They both were so content that they went contentedly to sleep in her room, and didn't wake up until seven-thirty A. M. Dr. Coombs left hurriedly the next morning, whispering, as his last words, with his attractive grin:

"I'm sorry to have to sleep and run, darling."

Mrs. Petullo knocked two minutes later at Tawny's door and entered, her usually good-natured face set in stern lines. She said:

"Miss Bohun, I'll have to ask you for your room."

"Why, Mrs. Petullo!"

"There is nothin' to be said," Mrs. Petullo said. "I am a respectable woman, and I keep a respectable place. And I will have no women in my place who have men in their rooms all night."

"I'll get out right away."

"The sooner the better," Mrs. Petullo exclaimed "And to think I thought you was a lady."

Rheba Tellefer Holmes helped Tawny pack her wardrobe trunk and suitcase. She said:

"Don't mind, darling. It's just a front she has to put on. She has that Paul Pincus for a lover, hasn't she?"

"She never says anything about people staying with you," Tawny said.

"I have an apartment," Rheba said, laughing. "It's supposed when anyone stays with me the visitor sleeps in the studio and I sleep in the bedroom. Such is the slight difference between morality and immorality in Mrs. Petullo's mind."

"She makes me sick," Tawny said. "The old hypocrite!"

"She's like most human beings. With her, being found out—appearance—is all that matters."

Tawny moved to West Sixty-seventh Street, in which general neighborhood were many unattached, well-dressed, comely females, with plenty of make-up, who apparently had nothing much to do afternoons, except air a dog or visit speakeasies for cocktails.

This west-side district housed many honest and so-called respectable families, but also, running north to One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street, spots which sheltered women of extremely easy virtue, and men who dressed well but had no legitimate business.

Some of the old-fashioned brownstone fronts, with basement, once private homes, now were rooming and boarding houses, respectable ones cheap, and respectable ones more expensive; and ones that were either cheap or expensive, but not so respectable.

And there were apartment houses with small flats from some of which a single woman invited feminine friends to drop in and meet men friends.

It was a pleasant neighborhood, not far from Central Park, where one could air the dog or feed the pigeons and squirrels, and not far from subway or elevated, handy to surface cars; with its neighborhood shopping district of grocers, butchers, delicatessens, drug stores, and speakeasies; only a mile to two miles or so from Times Square and the theatrical district.

Tawny paid six dollars a week for a room in the third floor rear apartment of Pat Bracker. Pat Bracker was a chauffeur for Jasper Bloom, who at the moment was living on the fat of the land as a tipster on the races. He advertised his winning selections in certain newspapers and sold the list to thousands of patrons.

Pat Bracker lived with a woman who called herself Nellie Bracker. Nellie was a little blond woman who loved to talk, and who lost no time in telling Tawny her life story.

Nellie and Pat weren't married. They were sweethearts. Nellie had been married twice and had five children, four by her first husband, who had been a sergeant-major in the British army in India, and one by her second husband, to whom she still was legally joined in holy matrimony. This second husband was a vaudeville actor, usually out of a job. His name was Toots Moran, and he stood in front of the Palace Theatre and told other loafing actors what a good actor he was when he was working and how he wowed 'em in Tuscaloosa.

The five children were farmed out, one boy and two girls, all under eight, to a Mrs. Willebrandt, in Queens, Long Island; and two boys, ten and twelve, to a Mrs. Heidt, also in Queens. The city paid for the keep of all the children.

Pat Bracker's salary was fifty dollars a week, and Nellie rowed him continually because he didn't argue his boss into raising him to seventy-five dollars. She said:

"You haven't any ambition, Pat. Plenty of good chauffeurs get seventy-five dollars."

"For Christ's sake, shut up," Pat replied.

"Shut up yourself," Nellie said. "You're a bum. Why do I always have to pick up with bums?"

"I'm not the bum your husband is."

"Yeah. An' you ain't got the brains either."

"But you don't have to work cooking for kikes like you had to when you was with him."

"That's no reason you don't make Bloom give you a raise."

"If I got one you'd spend it on those God-damned kids of yours. Always worrying about the kids."

"They're a lot more important than you are."

Tawny was astonished at Pat and Nellie. Pat brought home imported cigarettes and cigars and Scotch and Rye and gin, all stolen from his boss. He, got a ten per cent commission from the garage and from all stores where Mrs. Bloom traded. Mrs. Bloom's butcher sent him chickens and double loin lamb chops and strawberries out of season.

"Eat with us," Nellie urged. "We've got more than we can eat. Have a drink. Take some cigarettes along with you."

Nellie was an amazingly good cook. She was born in England and had become a chorus girl at sixteen, joining a company which went to India. There she had met and married Sergeant-Major Ernest Hodges. When Hodges began to drink up his pay, Nellie went to work as cook.

She learned to make curries and pepper steaks in most marvelous style; and

then she and her husband had come to the United States. Here she had worked as cook for many families of various nationalities. She had learned German cooking from a German mistress and Jewish cooking from a Jewish mistress, and so on.

She was above the average of cooks in mentality, but was unstable emotionally. She had a hot temper and a quick tongue and a kind heart and an impractical disposition and a passionate nature and a conviction that the way to get along in the world was to be a little slyer than the next.

She swore she was destitute to get her children supported by charity, but she wrote to them almost daily and made Pat drive her down to see them on his day off. She told with pride how she had been operated on for nothing in hospitals, and treated in a hospital for weeks as a charity patient, swearing that her wages were thirty dollars a month when they really were ninety, with a kind mistress continuing her salary through illness and giving her an extra hundred dollars for the emergency.

Nellie and Pat always were fighting, snarling and wrangling over Pat's salary, over Pat staying out late, over the children, over the comparative merits of Nellie's two husbands and Pat. But they were as inseparable as two peas in a pod, taking a great pride in their petty deceptions, graftings, lies and thefts.

Pat was fat with good feeding, but Nellie remained thin. Nellie said:

"You're like a pig. You make me sick."

"You're a living skeleton—you oughta get a job in a side show."

Nellie grinned, her lean, pale, blond face wrinkling when Tawny talked about her ambition on the stage. Nellie said:

"All my family has been theatrical from away back. My great grandfather was Tod Bemish, the most famous clown in England. My great grandmother was the toast of London. I was going to be famous myself but now look at me. It's the men that dragged me down—the men and the kids. Have some more Scotch. There's plenty more where this came from."

Tawny puzzled over Nellie. She was such a pale, slight, dragged-out little thing, weighing not more than a hundred pounds, all dressed up and ready to call on her offspring. She didn't look as if she had animation enough to put one foot in front of the other or sex appeal enough to get a second glance from any man. But there were her two husbands and Pat, all big, full-blooded he-men. And Pat seemed, for all his wrangling, to be tied to Nellie's apron strings.

Contemplating Pat and Nellie, Tawny thought of the sweet romances of which she had read in novels and poems—of Launcelot and Elaine, and Aucassin and Nicolette, of Ivanhoe and Rowena, and even of "John Anderson, my Jo."

Here was a type of romance which might be a lot more common than the sort

immortalized in literature but an equal lot less appealing to most persons who read poetry and novels and who want life depicted as they think it should be lived, and not as it actually is lived.

Pat and Nellie had no morals, and yet they were faithful to each other. They stole and cheated and lied, but were generous and open-hearted. They fought savagely in public, but they must indulge in affectionate interludes in private. Nellie loved her children distractedly, jeopardizing her happiness with Pat to visit them and spend money for presents for them, and refusing to give them up to marry Pat. But at the same time she enjoyed the deceit by which they were supported by charity. She was always complaining to the Society that they weren't getting enough milk and eggs. She read and re-read the scrawled letters from the older ones. Tawny wondered exactly what was the difference between Nellie and her sister Diana Dare, a headliner in vaudeville in Europe and America.

Diana had fallen for no sergeant-majors, or indigent vaudeville actors, or chauffeurs, and she'd had no children that anyone knew about, and her delicate feminine machinery had not been thrown out of adjustment by child bearing and hard work as had Nellie's.

Nellie was in pain a deal of the time and couldn't sweep without turning pale and clutching her side. Tawny often wielded broom and carpet sweeper for Nellie. Nellie said:

"You take a lesson from me and love men if you want to, but don't have babies."

"Would you give up your babies now and go back to where you were?" Tawny asked.

"I wouldn't give 'em up for anything now I've got 'em," Nellie said. "But if I hadn't had 'em I might have got somewhere on the stage."

Tawny decided if she was going to have babies she'd have them married to a rich man. Nellie grinned when Tawny expressed this thought in words. Nellie's grin exposed teeth shining with gold, and a gap in the front upper jaw, where a tooth had been. You couldn't imagine she ever had been a dancer—a glamorous young creature gyrating gracefully behind the foot-lights—receiving mash notes from admirers and dreaming of success ahead. Nellie said:

"It's easy to figure out what to do but it's hard to do it."

Nellie was shocked when Tawny told her she posed in the nude for artists. She said:

"I'd rather die than undress like that. I wouldn't do it for a million dollars. Don't tell Pat. He's old-fashioned that way."

Tawny concealed her amusement. Nobody would give Nellie a dime to undress,

let alone a million dollars. Tawny felt superior. She suddenly had formed the private opinion that it was women without a beautiful figure who suffered from an excess of modesty.

The ones with something to show wanted to show it, she thought.

Tawny filled dancing and modeling engagements and managed to live without saving anything. She never expected to be sick, but vaguely she knew that Dave or Birdy or even Joe could be depended upon to come to the rescue if anything should happen that she needed help.

This thought wasn't entirely conscious. If anyone had told Tawny she harbored it, she would have been indignant. She was proud of her independence. But the truth was that whenever she got a job in a show, she drank too much and lost it. She couldn't imagine herself being grown up and taking a glamorous place in the world as her mother had—a world of lovely clothes and automobiles. Her mother was grown up, and she could never take her place.

Her father was a grown man, and she was a little girl. Dr. Coombs was a grown man, and she was a little girl. She regarded Dr. Coombs as a man like her father. In her unconscious, Dr. Coombs was a father substitute, and her relations with Dr. Coombs gave her a guilty conscience of which she was unaware, and she ran away from this unconscious feeling of guilt into an alcoholic world where there were no problems and no responsibilities.

And she lost valuables she prized. She lost a platinum wrist watch Dave had given her when she graduated from Wadleigh. She lost a coral necklace and an overcoat with a red fox collar and cuffs which Birdy had given her. She lost these prized articles as a form of self-punishment, but she didn't know that, just as she didn't realize that when she bumped into familiar articles of furniture in her room, bruising her legs and receiving lumps on her forehead, she was punishing herself. She knew the furniture was there, but her guilty unconscious made her collide with it. If anyone had told her that, she would have been annoyed, even a trifle angry. She would have said:

"Nonsense. It was an accident. Don't be silly."

She drank herself out of jobs in shows with a good future as a form of self-punishment. She rationalized her conduct as being all right. But this intellectual rationalization didn't touch the hidden depths of her emotional feeling for what was right and what was wrong.

Dr. Coombs met her once or twice a week. Their favorite rendezvous was King's, a speakeasy in upper Broadway, out of the path of Dr. Coombs's friends

and her friends. Their favorite love nest was in the Barabbas Hotel.

They never mentioned Dr. Coombs's wife or his two sons, but Dr. Coombs's wife and a friend, Mrs. Heston, and a private detective burst in upon them one night in their room in the Barabbas. The detective asked:

"Is that your husband, Mrs. Coombs?"

"It certainly is."

"That's Dr. Coombs," Mrs. Heston agreed.

"You both note the woman's clothing on the chairs and the woman in bed?" the detective asked.

"A peroxide blonde," Mrs. Heston said. "It's too disgusting for words."

Mrs. Coombs's face began to work. She was a comely woman, with light brown hair and blue eyes, a normally pleasant face with an artificial, social smile, good teeth, and a neat, not too plump, figure. She clenched her hands. The detective touched her arm firmly and said:

"That's all then. We have all the evidence."

He herded them out and closed the door. George Coombs laughed mirthlessly, got out of bed and shot the bolt. He said:

"That's just like Eleanore. She had to bring Dorothy Heston."

He poured Scotch into two glasses and added ice water. Tawny was trembling. She asked:

"Who's she?"

"She's only the wife of Standish Heston, the big shot at the hospital," George said. "This'll be the end of my usefulness around that place."

Tawny thought of Tony and Curly, and wondered if she was hard luck to any man who paid attention to her. She said:

"I'm sorry. I'm awfully sorry, Doctor."

He handed her a drink and laughed again. He said:

"Cheer up, darling. It's been coming for a long time, but I thought it could be arranged pleasantly—a trip to Reno or something. But I suppose Dorothy and my mother-in-law got the Madam all hopped up. Here's how, darling. I need a drink."

"I do, too," Tawny agreed.

After drinking, Tawny asked:

"What will you do?"

"There are other hospitals. Don't worry about me."

A week later the summons and complaint in Mrs. Coombs's divorce action were filed, and next day the stories were in the newspapers. Tawny's name wasn't mentioned, but she was described as a "blond chorus girl," and a "movie actress."

She telephoned Dr. Coombs at his office, but there was no answer. She telephoned the hospital and a voice said:

"Dr. Coombs is not connected with the hospital any more."

Then she read in the *Planet* that Dr. Coombs had resigned from the hospital and gone on a hunting trip to Nova Scotia. Tawny drank a bottle of Scotch and Nellie put her to bed.

XIII

Birdy boiled barrel and plunger of her syringe and needle separately over the gas range in the kitchen. With tweezers, she adjusted the needle to the barrel and dropped a pellet into it. She fitted the plunger carefully and drew into the barrel two cubic centimeters of boiled water. The pellet dissolved quickly.

Her hands trembled with eagerness and she coughed dryly. She laid a cigarette on the enameled sink, where it smoldered in a blue aromatic spiral. She wet a dab of cotton with alcohol, with its clean, pungent odor, sat down in a kitchen chair and bared her thigh.

She loved the smell of the alcohol and the quick stab of the needle and the prospect of the false comfort which would be hers in a few minutes. She just had pressed down the plunger when she heard a door close. Startled, she hastily withdrew the needle and dropped her skirt. But there was no time for concealment. Sam Davenant stood in the doorway. He said grimly:

"I caught you that time, Birdy."

She was in a rage at being discovered. She cried:

"Sneaking around on me. I can't stand a sneak."

"I wasn't sneaking. You were so damned busy with the dope you didn't think of anything else."

"Now give me hell. That's right. Raise a row, right when I'm trying to get calm. My God! Can't you leave me alone so I can get some peace?"

"I'll leave you alone, all right. I don't mind living with a drunk, but I draw the line at hopheads."

"You don't have to leave me. I'll leave you."

"Don't worry. I'll be only too glad to get out. I can stand for you getting plastered and busting furniture once in a while, but I'm not going to live with a dope fiend. I've told you."

"For Christ's sake, don't keep picking on me," Birdy shrieked. "Don't keep yelling at me. Whoo-ooo!"

She picked up a tumbler and smashed it on the floor.

"Who's screaming?" Sam asked.

"You're yelling at me," Birdy said in high-pitched tones. "You're always picking on me. You God-damned bum! You're driving me crazy."

"You're crazy, all right," Sam agreed. "Anybody that takes dope is crazy as

hell."

"Whoo-oo! Shut up, can't you? I can't stand it."

She raised the syringe as if to dash it to the floor after the tumbler, but paused and gently lowered her arm. She wouldn't have anything happen to the syringe. It was the most important single gadget in the world. With it she could have peace; without it she would suffer tortures.

Birdy ran out of the kitchen, carrying the syringe, slamming the door after her. She crossed the hall to her bedroom, banged the door and turned the key in the lock. She kept saying:

"Oh, God! I just want to be left alone."

She wanted to lie down and give the drug a chance to work. Results were so much better when she just lay still and relaxed. Physical exertion, even talking, helped kill the effects. Now she was all excited again. God damn it.

Sam tried the doorknob. He said:

"Open the door."

She didn't answer. He repeated:

"Open the door," adding, "if you don't I'll break it in."

He drew back and lunged against the door. Birdy yelled:

"That's right. Let all the neighbors know about it."

"To hell with the neighbors. Open the door."

Birdy picked up a mirror and threw it on the floor, smashing it. Sam bucked the door again. He said:

"I suppose this is some of your Gas House training."

"Why, you bastard!"

"That's right. Show your breeding."

Birdy suddenly and inexplicably changed her mind. She turned the key in the lock and, with a nail file in her clenched fist, faced Sam, glaring at him and panting.

"Don't come near me—you!"

"This has gone far enough. I'm getting out. I'm getting out tonight."

Birdy began to sob. Her arm drooped. She said:

"You don't have to go. I'll go."

"Why can't we talk this over like two rational human beings? Why can't we discuss the situation sensibly? Why can't we talk and act like adults instead of like two kids or two lunatics?"

"If you'd be nice to me, I'd cut it out. But I'm all upset: You don't understand. And now, getting me all excited like this, the shot I took won't do me any good."

Birdy seemed instantly transformed from a vicious drug addict into a poor,

helpless, lovely victim of circumstances. Sam had a big heart and an overmastering kindness for all living organisms. He couldn't kill even a mosquito without thinking he was taking a life. When he caught a fish he thwacked it over the back of the head to end its death struggles as quickly as possible. His disgust changed to pity. Who could blame Birdy? Who understood poor, confused Birdy? Why, she couldn't even understand herself.

She was really about eight years old. She was a healthy-bodied animal in a society which had progressed a few years beyond her comprehension. She was eight, and society was about thirteen.

Birdy wouldn't make herself miserable with alcohol and drugs if she were normal. The reason no normal person understood drug and alcohol addicts was the same reason that no normal person understands an insane person or a person with a neurosis.

Sam couldn't understand Birdy, but as a newspaper reporter he had come to realize that victims of habit suffered from obscure mental or emotional derangements, or instabilities, of which the habit was the symptom and not the cause. Persons with the crime habit were in the same category.

You couldn't understand a Curly Edwards. He really thought he had lived and died an admirable life because he had lived up to a code to the end. He had considered that he had done perfectly right in murdering husbands and fathers because they hadn't raised their hands when he told them to at the point of a gun. Ignorance of his code was no excuse for those who violated it. Ignorance of social behavior is no excuse for those who violate it. Ignorance of the law is no excuse. It was a puzzling world. He took Birdy in his arms and said:

"Listen, Sweetness. What do you say, we try to lick this thing together?"

"Why were you so mean to me?"

Sam sighed. Birdy said:

"You never tell me you love me any more."

Sam wondered if he did love Birdy, if he ever had loved her, or if, rather, he hadn't been influenced by her splendid physical charms, tinctured with a few drops of pity. He said:

"Sure, I love you, Birdy. Now lie down and see if you can't get some rest."

Sam was wondering how long he would have to stand the nervous strain of living with Birdy. Birdy was thinking she'd have to be more careful with the needle. She was dying for a drink, but she didn't want to mention it to Sam.

She closed her eyes, and after five minutes Sam went out quietly. She waited a few minutes, and then sneaked into the closet and got out a gin bottle. She drank

straight from the bottle, eagerly and choking a little, wiping the pungent fluid from her chin.

She put back the bottle, hiding it in a far corner. Then she concealed the syringe, placing it in the lining of a hat. She kept her drug supply in another hat. She always was afraid that some one, searching the apartment, would find these treasures. This was the greatest catastrophe she could imagine.

She was feeling much better, a little nervous and excited. Pictures ran riot in her mind. She studied her face in the mirror, and decided she was very beautiful and attractive. She touched her lips with a lipstick and rubbed a little rouge on her cheeks. Then she went into the living room where Sam was reading a book. She said:

"Always got your nose in a book. Why don't you pay attention to me once in a while?"

Sam winced inwardly and laid aside the book. He was going to do his damnedest for Birdy. Birdy said:

"I work hard at my housework, always cleaning. And I cook. But I never get any credit from anybody."

It was hard for Sam to stomach—this naive attitude of Birdy's that by giving the flat a lick with a broom and a swipe with a carpet sweeper and getting a breakfast of orange juice and toast and coffee and broiling an occasional steak or lamb chop, she was the only one who worked. She didn't see him work, so she didn't think of him as working. She only saw him at home, reading. So she took the attitude he just loafed around reading books.

"I wonder when you're going to start earning more money?" Birdy asked. "Why don't you get out of the newspaper business, anyway?"

Birdy wondered why she had gone through a marriage ceremony with Sam, when there were so many other men with money who would be only too glad to spend it on her. She thought it was because he had brains and could talk well. Birdy admired brains, but she loved the things money could buy. She said:

"I know plenty of men with money that I could go to and they'd be glad to see me. They wouldn't be sticking their noses in a book all the time either. I'd just have to telephone Tom Barty, and he'd send me a thousand dollars."

Sam wondered wearily how long he could stand this sort of thing. It seemed to him that he might have to bear up under the burden for years. If he only could talk to her as one adult to another—as one man to another.

It was only a week later that Birdy was operated on in Brooklyn Heights

Hospital. That is, the doctors opened her up, took a professional peep, and then sewed her up again. They said to Sam:

"She's too far gone to operate, Mr. Davenant. There's no need of telling her, but it's only a question of time."

Birdy got thinner and thinner, wasting away in bed in her private room in the hospital. But she was given brandy and hypodermics and suffered no pain. She said:

"Where is Dave? I'd like to see Dave."

Sam finally reached Dave on the telephone. Dave said:

"I wouldn't see her if it would make her well again."

Sam said to Birdy:

"Dave is in Paris."

"I hope he gets back before I die. I never was fair to Dave."

Some days Birdy was confident she was going to get well. Other days she thought she was going to die. She said:

"Bring me a mirror, Miss Bagg."

The nurse gave her a hand mirror, gold backed, unit of a gold set, with monogram, given to her long ago by Tom Barty. She said:

"I'm pretty. If I've got to die I'd rather die before I get old and wrinkled. Don't you think I'm pretty. Miss Bagg?"

Miss Bagg had been designed by nature for strictly utilitarian purposes so far as her exterior was concerned. But inside, she was an incurable romantic, cuddling in her secret heart many secret love affairs with doctors. She couldn't help but like Birdy and feel sorry for her. She was so beautiful and pathetic and child-like and she had to die. Miss Bagg blew her nose and replied:

"You're not pretty; you're beautiful, Mrs. Davenant."

"I love to hear you say that," Birdy sighed. "The world is a funny place for a pretty girl to be born in around the Gas House. I'd like to smell the Gas House. It has a sweet kind of smell that makes me homesick."

She said:

"I wonder what love is, Miss Bagg. I wonder did I ever love anybody except my own self."

Her voice grew dreamy.

"I guess I loved a rag doll I used to have when I was a little kid. It was an awful-looking doll, and dirty, but I loved it. Her name was Emmy."

Tom Barty called to see Birdy, and Birdy said:

"I didn't treat you very well, Tom."

"You treated me swell, Birdy," Tom said heartily, holding her hand. "You treated

me a lot better than most of the chickens. It's only yourself you gave a raw deal."

"You've been swell to me," Birdy insisted. "I don't know why I couldn't be nicer to you."

"You were just as nice to me as I was to you," Tom said hastily. "As long as you thought you liked me you stuck around, and as soon as you thought you liked someone else better you got out. There never was any kidding about you, Birdy. You were a grand little gold digger, but you always had to like a guy to take his presents."

"I wasn't so bad, was I, Tom?"

"You always were swell by me, Birdy."

"There never was a man like you, Tom. You never held a grudge, and always helped girls even after they two-timed you."

"I could afford it, Birdy. I haven't anything else to live for, except the girls and people I can give something to. I've got a lot of money and I can't take it with me where—"

Tom checked himself, embarrassed.

"Don't worry. I'm not afraid to die," Birdy said. "I always wondered how I'd feel about dying, but now I know it doesn't matter."

"You're not going to die," Tom assured her. "You'll live for a long time yet."

Tom had a talk with Sam. He said:

"Don't be foolish, son. I know what newspaper men make, and how much they save. I knew Birdy a long time before you did. That's no secret. Let me pay the bills."

"Thanks, but I prefer to pay them myself."

"That sounds noble, but it doesn't make sense," Tom asserted. "Let's be honest. I can afford to be honest. You're not even married legally to Birdy. She's still Dave Bohun's wife."

Sam always had wanted someone with whom he could discuss problems in an adult, fearless, honest, logical manner. But he found where his emotions were concerned that fearlessness, honesty and logic didn't count for so much. He'd feel like a heel to have Tom Barty pay the bills. But Tom finally had his way, and Sam, feeling like a very small boy who had been overawed by a very large grown man, went out and got drunk.

Tawny visited her mother every evening, making the long trip in the subway from Manhattan. Birdy said:

"If I ever hear of you getting mixed up with a man, or drinking, I'll kill you."

Then Birdy asked her to sing some of the old songs. She said:

"I used to love to lie in bed and smell the Gas House and listen to Ma sing those songs. Then Mary and I'd sing them, too. I'd like to see the Gas House redden the sky and hear the band play on the pier."

Tawny felt like weeping. It made her feel sad and homesick, too. She knew that many persons considered the Gas House district sordid and dirty, but she remembered it, like her mother, as a fairyland for a child. She sang:

The band played Annie Laurie, and the horses wore high hats.

Birdy sighed and said:

"I used to think those were the horses on the Twenty-third Street cross-town."

"So did I," Tawny said.

She felt closer than she ever had to Birdy. She'd never known Birdy; and here was Birdy, who'd been a girl just like herself. Tawny sang softly:

Dan and his girl got married—O,
Through love, you know, and so and so.

And:

Flying with feathery prow,
Bounding with slanting bow,
Swift on the summer sea,
Homeward bound was she. . . .

And:

When leaving dear old Ireland,
In the merry month of June
The birds were sweetly singing
And all nature seemed in tune—

Miss Gaunt, the night nurse, came in to prepare Birdy for the night. Birdy said:

"I guess I had the best times of my life when I was a kid, but I didn't have sense enough to know it."

Tawny wondered if that always was the way with life—that when you were having the best times you didn't know it.

Aunt Mary got down to see Birdy Sunday afternoons, when Tawny sat with Gramma, and Polly, Benjamin Gay now old and sedate, Tom, the cat, and the radio. Gramma wasn't told about Birdy's sickness. What was the use?

Gramma was a long way off now. Her body was lying, shriveled and old,

between the sheets, but what really constituted Gramma was on the wing already. Gramma started up in bed and said:

"Take me home. I want to die at home."

"This is home, Gramma. You're at home now."

Gramma looked around with dim eyes and shook her head. "This ain't home. Where is the green grass and the sun? You can't fool your old Gramma."

"But this is where you live, Gramma. Don't you remember—Bradhurst Avenue, in Washington Heights?"

"I can't smell the Gas House. Where am I? Take me home."

Gramma confused the Gas House with the green grass and mists of Ireland. Then she stirred and smiled and said:

"Gimme my teeth a minute."

Tawny didn't like to handle Gramma's false teeth, but she did. Gramma didn't like to wear them much while she was sick. They didn't fit very well. Gramma said:

"I guess I was batty for a little while. Sure, now I know where I am. Well, I won't be botherin' you long."

"You'll be all right, Gramma. Don't talk like that."

Gramma smiled pityingly. She felt she was much closer to Purgatory than she was to the earth, but she was ready. Michael would be waiting for her where she was going—a broth av a bhoy. She had come to America with Mike, and she'd go to Heaven with Mike.

Birdy lingered six weeks, sank into a coma for twenty-four hours, and died peacefully, looking fresh and beautiful in her casket, and peaceful. Sam telephoned Dave once again, and Dave said:

"I wouldn't go to her funeral if it would bring her back to life."

Dave never had mentioned Birdy's name from the day she left him.

Joe attended the funeral as a matter of family duty; and Ida accompanied Joe because it was her duty as Joe's wife and as Tawny's friend.

Gramma slipped into death a month later. Aunt Mary went to keep house for Uncle Dan; taking the parrot and cat. Tawny had Benjamin Gay. She hugged him tightly to her in bed, feeling sad and lonesome. And Benjamin Gay kissed her cheek with a damp tongue.

Benjamin Gay was a great comfort. He asked no questions and required no answers. He merely loved you whatever you did, and let it go at that. In some ways people weren't as nice as dogs, Tawny thought.

Dave had another woman. Tom Barty had many women. Sam would marry again. Birdy was only a memory—or did she continue to live in Tawny? Tawny wondered what she would do with her life. It looked pretty hopeless. Life was a fight, and one got tired of fighting. She wondered if other human beings were afflicted with her vague yearnings for fame and a place in the world and at the same time were beset by so many cross-currents of the senses. She thought:

"I guess I'll never get anywhere on the stage."

She was too plump and healthy for the movies. She wasn't going to drift all her life. She supposed she'd marry. She'd give up drinking, go on the water wagon, be good.

XIV

Tawny was in her twenty-second year in 1927, and she still was drifting, getting nowhere. Joe and Ida had two babies, Joe, Jr., and Mary, and lived in a Norman house in New Rochelle.

It was astonishing how Joe had picked up the ways of a gentleman. He wore correct clothes and played golf and discussed books and politics. He had made a half-dozen business trips to London and Paris, and had taken Ida abroad twice. She said easily:

"When I was in Paris, last. . . ."

"I like the Savoy better than any hotel I've been in in New York. They furnished our living room in such a home-like, comfortable way, with pillows for the sofa."

Ida looked up Tawny about once in two months when she visited New York to shop, or go to a matinée, or visit Alfred's Salon de Beauté. Ida took Tawny to lunch at Pierre's or the Ritz or the Colony or Robert's. She asked:

"Why don't you let Joe help you, Tawny? He'd love to, and he can afford it so easily."

"I don't want any help, thanks. I want to live my own life."

Tawny seemed almost like a stranger to Ida. Ida felt so solid and respectable, riding into town in her limousine with James, her chauffeur, in a neat gray tailored uniform. Ida seemed like a stranger to Tawny. Ida had changed, seemed older and mature. She had developed a sweet, social smile, which Tawny thought was artificial, and used a broad "a." She manipulated her fork always with her left hand, in the Continental manner. Ida said:

"You know, Tawny, there's never anyone will take your place with me. What I say is for your own best good. Do you honestly think you'll ever get anywhere on the stage? It's such a terrible life, and so uncertain."

Tawny was tired of visiting theatrical agencies. She'd had small parts in dramatic shows on Broadway and on the road. She'd been tested for motion pictures and had been advised to reduce and try again. She didn't want to reduce.

She was sick of resisting advances by booking agents. She was fed up with choruses and men pawing at her. Ida said:

"And the stage is so immoral."

"It's no more immoral than any other business," Tawny said.

She wouldn't ever admit to Ida that only the day before Lafe Newburg had

offered to make her a headliner if she'd live with him. Tawny hated Lafe Newburg, who was skinny and clammy in the same degree that he was talented and successful. Ida thought:

"Tawny must lead a dog's life."

"Ida must find it monotonous just being respectable," Tawny thought.

Ida wouldn't have told Tawny for anything that she was miserable because she couldn't get Joe and herself accepted by the Thomases, the Cuttings, the Bairds and that crowd. She and Joe moved on the fringe of society, but they didn't have the background to get in. It was harrowing.

Ida worried about James using the cars when she didn't know about it. She lay in bed and wondered if her nice new phaeton was being wrecked somewhere. She worried about her parties and her dresses and about her health.

Tawny had changed, Ida thought. She was hectic and flippant. When Ida gave her beauty operator a two-dollar tip, Tawny said:

"No matter how high a bird flies, she has to return to earth to lay eggs."

This bitter remark didn't please Ida, and it didn't please Tawny either.

Tawny visited Ida and Joe twice. The last time she said:

"How much do you pay your cook?"

"A hundred dollars a month."

"And her room and board," Tawny amended. "Why don't you offer me a job as cook?"

This embarrassed Ida and Joe as much as it embarrassed Tawny. She wouldn't have been cook for anyone and she didn't like to think she was jealous of Ida. But it did seem strange that so many people could live happy, sedate, comfortable, normal lives—policemen, firemen, Uncle Dan, Aunt Mary, and the Joes and Idas of life—while to her, life was an uncertain warfare, utterly unstable and changing, with no security anywhere in sight.

She went into Number 44 and drank Tom Collinses when she got back to New York. Most persons seemed to think food grew on tables and rent money grew in banks. Tawny often had been without money for food and had gone hungry to bed, and she had been a month behind with her room rent.

Tawny knew what it was to wash out underwear and stockings, so that she would have a clean change in the morning. She often sat in shoe repair establishments waiting for her one pair of Oxfords to be soled and heeled. And a great problem was keeping herself in stockings. It seemed as if a girl no sooner put on a pair of stockings now-a-days than a run started.

Tawny knew what it was to get a cup of coffee in the automat with her last five

cents, and two hours later be part of a party in Number 44, or some other speakeasy, where men were throwing money around as if it were waste paper.

Tawny could have had money and lived in comfort, if she had been willing to exchange her favors for presents or cash. But she never thought of such a contingency. It wasn't a question of conscious morality with her. It was a question of emotions.

Tom Barty would give her money. Dave would give her money. Cousin Joe would help her. Even Uncle Dan and Aunt Mary would have been glad to lend or give. But Tawny wanted desperately to be independent. She didn't want anyone in the position to ask:

"Where are you going?"

"What did you do last night?"

"What time did you come in?"

"Who is that man I saw you with?"

"What are you doing?"

"Why—where—what—when—how?"

She didn't want any of that. She wanted to be independent. But she often wondered if she was independent; if anyone really was independent. Even the King of England, the President of the United States, had to please other persons besides themselves. But she resented it.

Strangely enough, it was in Talbot Rand's studio, the very soul of Bohemia, because it is in Bohemia that all worlds rub elbows, that Tawny became a member of the regularly employed. Talbot asked:

"How're things, baby?"

"Rotten. I'd take a job if I knew where there was one."

"Would you work at a cigar counter in a hotel?"

"I'd do anything if the pay was regular and enough to live on."

"Wait a minute then. Reilly Smith at the Hotel Holloway was just telling me he needs a girl for his cigar stand. I'll telephone him."

Tawny went to work two days later at the cigar stand in the Hotel Holloway, salary twenty dollars a week. Men said:

"Hello, beautiful."

"Hello, handsome," Tawny rejoined.

"How about having dinner with me, kid?"

"How about going to a show with me, kid?"

"How about a party tonight, kid?"

"There's no need of a girl with your looks working for a living."

The Hotel Holloway was a commercial hotel and patronized by salesmen. Not a few of them asked:

"How about coming up and modeling some dresses for me?"

After Tawny had been working two months and had been raised to twenty-five dollars a week, she took up a modeling offer from Marcus Fleiter. Marcus Fleiter was a big man with iron-gray hair around an incipient bald spot, stylishly dressed, with a protruding abdomen. He showed Tawny photographs of his wife and children and seemed safe. He said:

"You have a nice figure and would save me looking for a model."

Tawny went up to Fleiter's sample room after her dinner, and walked up and down in various models. Fleiter gave her three dollars, and sold her a model dress for the wholesale price of $27.50.

Tawny ate in the dining room and bantered with the men guests who came to know her. Many of them bought a magazine at night and returned it to her in the morning to be sold again. Some bought candy and gave it to her. She sold the candy again. Others, after making purchases, said:

"Keep the change."

Tawny found herself making thirty dollars a week with tips and extras, but in reality much more than that, because she met some of the men outside of the hotel and went to shows and speakeasies with them. The Hotel Holloway was not far from Broadway, in the Forties, and so Dave found her at work. He took her to dinner and gave her a hundred-dollar bill. Tawny didn't want to take it, but Dave insisted. Tawny didn't know it was the last bill Dave had in the world. Dave was a strange man and wasn't worried. He was used to having thousands one day and nothing the next. His credit was good anywhere among the sporting fraternity.

Dave didn't care much about Tawny in a paternal way. She reminded him too much of Birdy and the one time a woman had succeeded in bamboozling him. It was impossible to forget Birdy, whether you mentioned her or not. She had been a personality, and when you had been loved by Birdy, you knew something had happened to you.

Dave wondered if he had been different and Birdy had been different, if the results might have been otherwise. But he shrugged his shoulders. If they had been different, they'd never have met and been drawn together so irresistibly. He wondered if Tawny was as hot-blooded as her mother and as irresponsible as himself. He said:

"Poor kid."

Then he forgot about her again. She was just an incident in life as he was himself.

Whatever was going to happen to him or to her was all chalked up by Fate long before. Fate was inexorable and Nature was cruel.

Some humans were born for the quiet fireside and the domestic scene, and some were born for the shock houses and gutters of the Bowery. Some people were impelled to seek the poles, and others were driven with equal motive power to spend their lives cleaning streets or poring over ledgers.

Birdy had been born for men and bright lights and excitement. But Aunt Mary had been born to keep house for others and seldom go out-of-doors except to go to mass or confession. Aunt Mary would have made a good nun, but then Gramma and Cousin Joe and Tawny and Uncle Dan wouldn't have known her gentle, ministering hand. Aunt Mary never complained. She was back now in the aroma of the Gas House, cooking and darning and sewing and cleaning for Uncle Dan. If Uncle Dan came home drunk she accepted it as perfectly natural. If he came home partly sober and early, sometimes she sang for him:

When I was a chicken
As big as a hen
Me mither, she hit me.
I hit her again.
Me father came out
To order me out.
I up wit' me fist
And gave him a clout.

"Sure, there's no songs like the old songs," Uncle Dan said.

Life became excitingly pleasant again for Tawny. She liked to exchange repartee with the men and go to dinner with them. She enjoyed being made love to. She made a new girl friend of Grace Bethman, who was night telephone operator in the hotel.

Grace had black hair and blue eyes and a clear complexion and a good figure, and lived with her mother on the fringe of Hell's Kitchen, over near Tenth Avenue. Hell's Kitchen was a new neighborhood for Tawny, and a tough one, tougher than the Gas House.

But Grace didn't mind it. She had been brought up there, and her mother had lived there all her life and didn't want to move. Grace was a quiet girl, with a quiet voice and quiet ways, and added quietly to her income by going to call-flats.

But no man could pick her up in the street, and no patron of the hotel could do more than flirt with her. Going to call-flats was a way of doing business in a

respectable way. There was nothing respectable in casual flirtations. It cheapened a girl.

Grace had one love affair after she and Tawny became friends. She loved Oswald Meier, who was as handsome and irresponsible a youth as one might find in all New York.

Oswald and his pal, Norman Leffer, shared a three-room flat in Tenth Street, in the Village. They had been to school together, and Oswald had been disowned by his father because he wouldn't go to college and be a lawyer. He wanted to be an artist, or said he did. Norman wanted to be a writer and was writing the Great American Novel, which already was four hundred thousand words in length.

This novel was realistic and dreary, dealing with the problems of a Polish servant girl. Norman had had two love affairs with Polish servant girls while in school, so he knew all about them.

Norman had red hair and brown eyes, and was full of dreams about being a great novelist, and Oswald had blond hair and blue eyes and, while planning to be a great artist some day, was working on a scheme to sell faked old masters to credulous folk with money.

Oswald had pawned his watch and his clothes, except for his tail coat and his tuxedo and the necessary accessories. He remained in bed all day, and ventured out only at night.

Being of good antecedents, young, handsome, an excellent conversationalist and a good dancer, he had few, if any, evenings when he wasn't invited out to dinner, to dances and to suppers.

Grace couldn't resist Oswald, and she persuaded Tawny to go with her to the boys' flat. Norman made love to Tawny, but to no purpose. Grace said:

"Tawny only likes old guys. If you had white whiskers, false teeth and the gout she might fall for you."

"There's some truth in that," Tawny said equably. "I don't like boys."

"To hell with it, let's have a drink," Norman said. "There are plenty of girls."

This love passage between Oswald and Grace lasted until Norman drank too much gin one night and turned on a phonograph which repeated, to Norman's great delight, words and sounds of Oswald and Grace making love. Grace listened a minute, and then arose and said:

"Come on, Tawny. Let's go."

Oswald said:

"Aw, don't go, Grace. It's only a joke."

"You'll have to do the laughing. I won't."

Grace was self-possessed and dignified. Oswald pleaded, but to no purpose. Norman went along to plead Oswald's case, and Grace, Tawny and Norman got tight on bad whisky in Morleys.

They all went in a taxi from Morleys to Bill Stephens' apartment. Bill kept the apartment, which was on the second floor of a court, only for parties. He was a dentist and lived uptown. But he was generous with its use.

Tawny woke up in the morning and heard Norman say:

"But you let me before we went to sleep."

"Well, that was last night when we both were drinking," Grace said with great dignity. "It'll never happen again."

Grace seemed to feel better about the broken romance after that. In a way, she was revenged on Oswald for his perfidy in conspiring to preserve on a phonograph the sweet intimacies, sighs and exclamations of love. And she had preserved her sense of what was proper.

Tawny liked Grace, and wished she could be more like her. Grace seldom drank too much and seemed to have no guilty conscience and no secrets from anyone, even her mother. Her mother took calls from the flats for Grace. When Mrs. Bethman heard about Oswald, she said:

"I am surprised. I thought he was a gentleman."

Tawny used to like to eat dinner with Grace and her mother, and sleep in Grace's bed. Grace and her mother lived such a serene, understanding and well ordered life. Their viewpoint and their morals might not be of the sort generally accepted, but they seemed to work well with Grace and her mother. They both enjoyed good health, good appetites and good humor, slept soundly of nights, had no secrets from each other, kept up insurance policies and had three savings accounts. Tawny was sorry for people who didn't understand how many different kinds of persons make a world and how perfectly charming were some of those at whom moralists might hold up horrified hands.

"I wouldn't marry anybody," Grace said.

"I should hope you wouldn't," Mrs. Bethman said, "I should think you could see enough of what married women go through all around you."

"I remember I used to think I hated men when I was a kid," Tawny said, laughing. "I thought I'd never marry. I'd seen plenty of men beating their wives when I was a kid; and getting drunk and spending their pay envelopes and letting the neighbors take care of their families."

"My father was a drunkard," Grace said. "I saw plenty right at home."

"Barny was a good man when he was sober," Mrs. Bethman asserted weakly.

“But he was never sober,” Grace said.

“I’ll never marry a man unless he’s older than I am and has plenty of money,” Tawny contributed.

“I wouldn’t marry a multi-millionaire, eighty years old,” Grace exclaimed. “He might fool me and live to be a hundred. I never saw a man you could trust, yet.”

“You’re cynical,” Tawny said.

“I’m not cynical, I’m truthful. I’ve seen plenty of men, and they’re all the same. There isn’t one of them who wouldn’t cheat if he had the chance with a good-looking girl and thought he could get away with it.”

“I don’t think my Cousin Joe would cheat,” Tawny said.

“Don’t bet on it,” Grace said. “If he ever comes around the hotel, introduce me.”

“You don’t know Joe.”

“I know men, darling.”

XV

Pitts Nash followed Tawny out of the Hotel Holloway. He was a stout young man of thirty, with reddish blond hair, and hot, somewhat bulging, blue eyes, a florid complexion and the beginning of a double chin. He wore a black-and-white checked suit, fitted tight, and while he didn't stagger, walked a little wide. Pitts was a traveling salesman for Conger & Black, Paper Manufacturers, and fulfilled his own ideals of being a regular fellow among men and a devil among the women.

Tawny hoped no one saw her running away from Pitts. He was waving a twenty-dollar bill and calling:

"Aw, come on and be a sport. Wait a minute, baby."

Tawny hoped Reilly Smith wouldn't see this embarrassing chase or hear about it from anyone. She was afraid of Reilly Smith and afraid of losing her job in the hotel. Men like Pitts Nash worried her. They lacked discretion and, instead of making cautious suggestions and veiled proposals, boldly offered her money. Pitts added a second twenty to the first, and waved them both, calling hoarsely:

"Look, kid. I'll give it to you now and double it after the show."

Tawny caromed off a man in her haste to get out of sight and hearing of Pitts, recognized the man as Arthur Mendez and, more panicky than ever, dived into a subway kiosk and ran down the stairs. Arthur Pedro Mendez was the star guest at the Hotel Holloway. He had been a contractor, but had done no contracting since he had discovered that he could make money much more easily on the stock market. Arthur made no secret of the fact that he was a millionaire now, and sitting pretty.

He was catered to by the staff of the hotel and was a close friend of Reilly Smith. His tips were lavish. He was not a handsome man, being dark and slightly bald, with a pitted face, but he had a kindly smile, and everyone said how big-hearted and generous he was. And though he wasn't an imposing-looking man—he was an inch or so shorter than Tawny—his million and his success on the stock market and his own self-approval lent him an air of importance.

He walked with his head up and his shoulders back, usually appearing as if fresh from the barber and the manicurist and the valet. He affected black or dark gray jackets and colored waistcoats and striped, trousers and black silk socks with white clocks, and always carried a stick.

He was growing a little bald, and smelled faintly of various brands of hair restorers. His teeth seemed unnaturally white and even, so that it popularly was

supposed that he had false teeth. But this suspicion lacked verification. The chamber maids, who should know, were pretty sure that whether the teeth were artificial or natural, Mr. Mendez slept with them in his mouth and not in a tumbler in the bathroom of his suite.

Mr. Mendez always bought his cigars from Tawny, and his newspapers as well. He never read magazines, his interest in fiction being confined to the stock market reports. He was the most liberal customer Tawny had.

On the morning after the Pitts Nash episode, Mr. Mendez approached the cigar stand and removed his black hat, which had a foreign look, and had, as a matter of fact, been manufactured in Vienna. Mr. Mendez gave the impression that he himself had been manufactured in various foreign countries.

His shoes were pointed, and looked as if they might have originated in Paris, and his clothes might have been proved to have evolved from Rome without causing much astonishment. Tawny wondered what Mr. Mendez thought of the chase by Pitts Nash, who was now known to be sleeping, fully clothed, on the floor of his bedroom, groaning and very sick. Mr. Mendez said:

"I beg your pardon, Tawny, but it is too bad for such a nice young lady to be annoyed by men."

Tawny relaxed in relief, exhaling air held in her lungs. She said:

"I couldn't help it, Mr. Mendez. He had been drinking."

"He is a pig," Mr. Mendez said.

He held his hat and stick in his left hand and wiped his forehead with a silk handkerchief with his right hand. Then he stepped closer and said:

"I am a bachelor, Tawny. Everybody here knows about me. I would like very much to take you to the theatre tonight."

The thought flashed in Tawny's mind that this strange Mr. Mendez with his million dollars was serious; intended matrimony. His wasn't the attitude, or the method, of the casual flirt. She replied:

"I don't make it a practice of going out with the guests of the hotel, Mr. Mendez."

He regarded her earnestly with kind brown eyes. She noticed for the first time there was a slight cast in the left eye. He said:

"You do not have to worry about me, Tawny. I spoke last night with Mr. Reilly Smith, and he said that what you did on your own time was no concern of the hotel."

"All right, I'll go with you, Mr. Mendez," Tawny said suddenly.

He smiled warmly, and bowed a little from the waist.

"You make me so happy," he asserted. "May I call for you at your apartment?"

"I haven't an apartment," Tawny said. "I've just got a room, and a dog. I can meet you wherever you say at seven o'clock or a few minutes after."

"Antoine's then," he agreed, "at seven. I will be waiting. Have you seen *The Wayfarers*?"

"No, but I'd love to."

"I will get good seats," he promised, adding, "I would prefer to have no secrecy, as my intentions are honorable, but there is no need of creating gossip around the hotel. I have found there is a great deal of gossip in a hotel."

"You're telling me!" Tawny exclaimed.

Grace and Tawny were drinking gin and ginger ale in Number 44.

"It's a relief to take my hair down and act natural," Tawny said.

"Are you going to marry the guy?" Grace asked.

"If he asks me I will," Tawny replied. "He's a nice man, and a gentleman."

"He'll ask you, all right. But he's old enough to be your father—and a wop at that."

"Spanish," Tawny said. "But if he was Italian it wouldn't make any difference. Some of the nicest men I've known were Italians."

"I don't believe in mixing the breeds myself," Grace said. "And you know how I am about men. To hell with 'em all."

She finished her drink and ordered two more. Tawny said:

"I don't like young men, and I wouldn't marry a poor man. I'm too smart. Mr. Mendez has got a million dollars, and he keeps making more every day. He's smart about stocks."

"So are all the taxi drivers and elevator operators and clerks," Grace said. "I've seen too many of those babies lose their shirts in the street and on the ponies. I get lots of tips on stocks but my money is still in savings banks, and it'll stay there."

"He's going to get out of Wall Street as soon as he has two million," Tawny said.

"That's what they all say—they're going to stop when they get more."

"Mr. Mendez is solid and smart," Tawny said. "He wants to retire and travel abroad just as soon as he's made his pile. He's no hog."

"A million dollars would be hoggish enough for me," Grace observed. "When it's two he'll want five. Do you know how I look at it?"

"No. How?"

"I'd rather have the eight thousand, three hundred and forty-two dollars and fifty-seven cents I have now in three savings banks than the million dollars Mr. Mendez has got in Wall Street."

"If everybody was like you there wouldn't be any Wall Street and any stocks.

And if big companies couldn't sell stocks, there wouldn't be any big companies, and then there wouldn't be any big business or any prosperity."

"We'd probably all eat just the same," Grace said. "I don't know much about business, but I've seen a lot of gambling; and if I had a husband I'd rather see him playing the ponies or shooting craps than bucking Wall Street."

"Nobody ever got rich shooting craps, but most everyone that is rich is in Wall Street."

"Too many think they're rich," Grace said. "It's getting to be the popular disease. Anyhow, let's drop it and have another drink. That's a pretty hat you've got. Where did you get that?"

Mr. Mendez and Tawny were dancing in the El Toro Club. The floor was small, and Mr. Mendez was no dancer. He stepped on Tawny's feet for the tenth time and said:

"Excuse me. I am very clumsy. I am sorry."

"You aren't clumsy," Tawny said. "You're a good dancer. It was my fault, and the floor is so crowded."

Mr. Mendez smiled, and petted Tawny's shoulder.

"You're so nice to me," he said. "It makes me feel good to hear you talk like that even if I know you are not telling the truth."

Tawny laughed and said:

"I don't mean you are such a good dancer you could make your living dancing, but I mean that you dance awfully well for—for—"

"An old man."

"I didn't mean that. I meant for anyone who isn't a professional dancer and has had something else more important to do than dance all their lives."

"That is very nice. But I know I am not so young as I was, and I am not getting any younger. But the doctors say I am in good health, and that my arteries are like a young man's. I was examined yesterday."

Mr. Mendez had his chauffeur drive around Central Park that night, or rather, early morning. It was May and quite warm. Tawny felt very secure and content on the soft upholstery, with the powerful purr of the engine in her ears. She wasn't surprised when Mr. Mendez took her hand, for the first time. He said:

"I guess you know what I think about you, Tawny?"

"You like me, and I like you."

"I had a reason for going to the doctors yesterday, besides knowing just if I was all right. I wanted to know if it was all right for me to get married and—"

His voice choked a little, and he continued:

"Have a family and settle down."

Tawny said nothing, but sat thinking. She didn't love Mr. Mendez. If she loved anyone it was Dr. Coombs. But Dr. Coombs was gone. She couldn't stand boys and youths. They were always pawing a girl. If one girl turned them down they flitted to another. It wasn't a member of the feminine sex that counted with a young man, it was the feminine sex. They were flighty and you never knew how they were going to turn out. Mr. Mendez already was turned out. He was a millionaire, kind and generous and deferential. Mr. Mendez said:

"You are a beautiful young girl, but you earn your own living. I am much older, but I do not think I am too old. I have plenty of money and I love you, Tawny. Will you marry me?"

"Yes," Tawny said. "I'll marry you, Mr. Mendez."

His arm tightened around her, and he kissed her hard on the lips. She could feel him trembling a little. His passion stirred a very faint response, nothing like the thrill she had felt in Dr. Coombs's arms.

But here was safety and the end of care. There was something else in life besides passion. There was security, solidity, position in the world, a family, travel, a beautiful home, lovely clothes, certainty about where the next meal was coming from, knowledge that when one died one would be buried decently, freedom from nickel worries. She respected Mr. Mendez and liked him immensely. She didn't know anyone she respected or liked more.

She wondered vaguely how life might have turned out if she could have been the wife of Dr. Coombs and had a big church wedding as so many girls did, and gone on a honeymoon to Hawaii or India or Paris and London or even just to the West Indies.

"I love you, Tawny," Mr. Mendez was saying. "Do you love the old man a little bit?"

"I love you—and don't call yourself old, Mr. Mendez."

"Call me Arthur."

"Arthur."

"I love you so much. You are so beautiful. You will have everything."

Tawny resigned next day from the cigar stand, and Mr. Mendez insisted on having her move into a suite at the Hotel Stevens, and on buying her trousseau. He said:

"There is no need for you to work if you are engaged to me."

Tawny couldn't resist telephoning to Ida. She hadn't seen Ida for months. Visits

to Ida's home were too painful. Tawny didn't have the wardrobe for week-ends with Cousin Joe and Ida. Her shoes looked shoddy and her stockings looked crude; the frocks which seemed all right on Broadway sank into bargain-sale insignificance; she couldn't play golf or tennis; or afford to play bridge; she couldn't tip the servants; she didn't ride; she didn't even speak the same language. She felt, despite herself, like a combination of poor relation and cat in the pond at Cousin Joe's.

And she had got tired of never being able to pay her share of the checks when she was out with Ida. Ida was glad to pay the checks, but Tawny couldn't afford four or five dollars for a light lunch, and she was embarrassed by not being able to keep her end up.

Tawny enjoyed seeing Ida's eyes widen at sight of her apartment in the Stevens, and her engagement ring. The stone was only two carats, but it was a gem, blue-white and without flaw. Tawny showed Ida her clothes, changing from one dress to another.

Ida was really as pleased as Tawny. She could have wished the bridegroom were younger, and that he was an American, but she was glad that Tawny was achieving respectability and money.

"We'll give you your silver," Ida said. "It's really up to us—Joe as your cousin and me as your best friend."

Tawny was honest with Mr. Mendez. She had told him about her childhood in the Gas House district and in Washington Heights, about Birdy and Dave. When she started to say:

"And there was a man—a doctor—"

Mr. Mendez said:

"I don't want to hear about any men, except myself. You are too good for me, anyway."

"But I'm not good. And I drink too much sometimes."

Mr. Mendez smiled tolerantly, and no matter how Tawny tried to be honest, insisted on keeping her on a pedestal. It was as if he insisted on seeing her, not as she was, but as he would like her to be.

Dave was in California and not present at the wedding. His present was a telegraphed money order for a thousand dollars. Dave dealt mostly in cash, even in thousands, and seldom wrote checks. His message was:

> "GOOD LUCK STOP SORRY I CAN'T BE THERE STOP LOVE DAVE."

The Rev. Charles P. Coffin, of the East Presbyterian Church performed the ceremony. Mr. Mendez said he didn't care who did it. Tawny decided it would be Presbyterian for some vague reason connected with Dave. He was a Presbyterian.

This didn't please Aunt Mary and Uncle Dan, but they attended the wedding, Aunt Mary in black bombazine which she wore at weddings and funerals, and Uncle Dan in a hired dress suit. When Mr. Coffin asked:

"Who gives away the bride?"

Uncle Dan replied, according to rehearsal:

"I do."

Tawny had expected to be able to smile inwardly at the service, because she was modern and not religious. The idea of Uncle Dan, who didn't possess her, and never had possessed her, giving her away, had amused her. She had thought that since marriages are dissolved so readily in the law courts, it wasn't sensible to look upon them as lasting a human lifetime, let alone through the life hereafter.

She also had thought the guests possessed in themselves an element of humor—Cousin Joe and Ida, and Grace and her mother, and Reilly Smith and employes of the Hotel Holloway.

But she didn't laugh. Instead, she had difficulty repressing her tears. The solemnity of it overwhelmed her. Suddenly, this seemed to be a serious and irrevocable step that she was taking.

But this feeling passed away within a few minutes. Tawny was laughing when the champagne was served.

They went to Atlantic City for two days, and then returned to the Stevens. Mr. Mendez surprised Tawny at once with his vigor and his delicacy. She liked him more now that she was married to him and realized that he was a sensitive soul who always had dreamed of a romance and a wife and children to carry on after him.

But he had suffered from a conscious feeling of inferiority, and hadn't gotten up the courage to propose to a pretty girl until he had money. Money, Mr. Mendez felt, made him able to look anyone in the eye.

However, Tawny understood vaguely that this false courage was not sufficiently strong to enable him to storm the barriers of social standing. He wanted a young and pretty wife to satisfy his vanity urge, as well as his normal physical impulses, but he had to stoop a bit to lift up this wife. He didn't want her stooping to lift him up. Tawny was just right for him.

George Coombs, practicing medicine, and successfully, with many of his old patients coming to him, in upper Broadway, read of the marriage in the newspapers. A cigar-stand girl couldn't marry a millionaire on Broadway without newspaper

notice. And there were pictures.

George was surprised that he felt a weakness in his stomach. He thought he'd gotten over that affair long ago. It was queer how a girl could get under a man's skin. He shook himself and lighted a cigarette and drank a second cup of coffee.

"I bet I could get her right now," he said to himself.

He thought of telephoning her, but he didn't. George was practicing self-control with alcohol and women. He wanted to amount to something before he died.

XVI

Grace was watching Tawny fuss with the dresses on the hangers in her wardrobe trunk. She said:

"I should have thought you would have waited till you got to Paris to buy evening gowns."

"I'll need them on the boat, and I can buy all I want in Paris anyway," Tawny said.

"It must be wonderful to be going to sail for Europe with plenty of money to spend," Grace said, sipping an Orange Blossom.

"I can hardly believe it myself, Grace. We've got everything packed, and the best suite on the boat with our own private balcony is waiting for us. There's a swimming pool and a sun deck. We go up the Adriatic to Trieste and then take a train to Paris. We're going to make our headquarters there for a while, and fly to London and Berlin."

Tawny glanced at a tiny platinum wrist watch, set with baguet diamonds. She exclaimed:

"It's queer I haven't heard from Mr. Mendez. It's two hours after his usual time for calling."

"Perhaps he's busier than usual getting everything straightened out. It's funny how you call him *Mister*."

"I know," Tawny laughed. "I can't seem to get used to calling him Arthur. I forget all the time and call him Mister Mendez, and he has to remind me to call him by his first name."

The telephone in Tawny's bedroom rang, and she picked up the receiver and said:

"Hello. Hello, Arthur."

She straightened, her face grew serious and her voice became strained.

"What is it, Arthur—a slump in stocks?"

There was a pause while Tawny listened, and Grace moved to her side, taking hold of Tawny's free hand and pressing it.

"A crash," Tawny repeated dully.

"What is it?" Grace asked.

"A crash in Wall Street," Tawny said. "Stocks have gone down."

Into the receiver she said:

"Of course, it was a shock to me, but I don't mind now. Just don't you worry. We didn't need so much anyway. . . . All right, Arthur. . . . I'll stick. . . . Don't worry. . . . I don't mind . . . No, of course not. I understand."

She replaced the receiver and stared at Grace. Grace said:

"I heard. It's Wall Street."

"It must be terrible," Tawny said. "He says people are ruined and men are committing suicide. He doesn't know how much he has lost, but hundreds of thousands. Nobody knows, he says, because the stocks went down so fast they couldn't keep track of anything. Customers were sold out."

"It may come back tomorrow," Grace said.

"That's what he says, but he sounds terrible. His voice is hoarse."

She stared at the trunk, brand new, with its big red letter M, and the smaller initials, A, P, for Arthur Pedro, all ready for the customs inspectors of the world. Then she laughed, a little hysterically.

"And I'm not going abroad," she cried. "He says he can't possibly sail the way things are. Well, goodby, Paris. Goodby, London. Hello, New York."

"It'll come out all right," Grace said.

"Like hell it will," Tawny exclaimed. "Like hell it'll come out all right. I'm bad luck. That's what I am. I'm a hoodoo. The nearest I'll ever get to a sea voyage is a trip to Staten Island on the ferry."

"It's tough, all right," Grace said, "but it may look better in the morning. Even if he lost half of what he's got, he'll have enough left for coffee and doughnuts—and shoes for the baby."

Tawny laughed again, harshly.

"It's funny you'd say that. I'm going to have a baby, and I hadn't told anybody yet. I'm going to have a baby in seven months. And this has to happen to me."

"Buck up," Grace said. "Other dames have babies."

"But you didn't hear him the way I did," Tawny said. "I guess it's worse than he said. He was trying to make it easy for me. He would."

"Have a shot of gin," Grace said, handing over a glass. "You need a drink."

"I need more drinks than there are," Tawny said. "Did I speak to him all right? Did I sound all right, do you think? I didn't sound like a quitter, did I?"

"No, of course not. You sounded fine. You sounded as if you'd gotten a bunch of bad news, but were being a good sport."

"A good sport! I'm sick of worries and being a good sport. God help me!"

"Take it easy, kid. Have another drink. Let me order something to eat."

"Eat? Ha! Ha! The last thing I could do is eat."

"Some hot soup?"

"To hell with the hot soup. There's no hot soup I know about that'll take the place of a trip abroad and a million dollars."

"But you don't know it's gone. That much money couldn't all go so fast. Listen, Tawny!"

Tawny sat down suddenly, stretched and relaxed. She achieved a smile, and said in a more natural voice:

"Don't worry about me, Grace. I'm all right. I can take it. As a matter of fact, I'm sorrier for him than I am for myself. Believe it or not. So help me God."

"I believe you," Grace said.

"I just hope he doesn't—do anything to himself."

"He won't. Don't worry."

"I'm a hoodoo. I'm a black cat in a graveyard. Look out for me, Grace."

Mr. Mendez sat around in a daze, helpless, while Tawny worked, pawning and selling clothes and jewelry, even her engagement ring. Everything was gone in the swirling cauldron of Wall Street.

Only Grace called on her. Only Grace offered her moral, physical and financial help. Grace said:

"I can lend you some money. The savings banks are still good."

"I don't want any money."

"But you can't live on air. Your father'll help you. Your cousin Joe."

"I'll bet he's having his troubles. I ought to call up Ida, but I'm not up to it. I don't want to see anybody, Grace."

Tawny didn't want to see anybody, and she didn't want to go looking for help from Dave or anyone. She wanted to crawl into a hole.

The hole she crawled into was in Washington Heights. Perhaps it was the same instinct that makes a dog drag himself home to die that caused Tawny to take her husband and go to the cheap, three-room apartment up above the black belt.

She had eight hundred dollars in cash, a few clothes, the baguet wrist watch and the gold-mounted toilet set her mother had left her. She didn't want to see anybody. She wanted to be left alone.

Dr. I. Kahn said that Mr. Mendez was suffering from a nervous breakdown.

"He is in a badly depressed state. He'd be better off in a sanitarium."

"We haven't any money. We couldn't afford a sanitarium."

"A State Hospital then?"

"Those are insane asylums, aren't they?"

"They used to call them that. They are hospitals for the treatment of mental and nervous diseases."

"I wouldn't put him in one of those places if he was a mad dog."

"You don't understand them, Mrs. Mendez. They really are remarkably fine institutions with excellent records for cures. They are so overcrowded that there's no danger of a patient being kept there longer than necessary. The doctors are so anxious to make a good record of cures that they hustle patients along to recovery as fast as is safe."

"No insane asylum for my husband. I'll look after him myself."

"You're taking a big responsibility, Mrs. Mendez. Your husband is extremely morbid, and in that state he might attempt his own life. This shock of losing his fortune was more than he could stand."

"I'll take the chance. I'll watch him."

Tawny hated to cook, but she cooked and tried to tempt her husband to eat. He pushed away the food and began to weep. He said:

"I'll die in the poorhouse. I can't stand it."

He sat in a chair in the tawdry living room and beat on the window sill with his cap, sobbing. He said:

"Don't have them take me. They're coming to bury me alive. They're after me."

He suffered terribly and grew thin and shrunken, so that his clothes hung on him, as on a pole. He never smiled, but sat and brooded.

One afternoon in January Tawny returned from shopping and found him sitting, with his wrists bleeding, in his chair in the living room. The safety razor blade which he had used was on the window sill. She started for him, exclaiming:

"My God! What have you done?"

He glared at her and yelled:

"You keep away and let me die. They're coming to bury me alive."

Tawny wasn't afraid, but she knew she couldn't handle him. She was afraid to leave him alone for a minute. There was no telephone. She opened the window and called to a boy:

"Run and get a policeman. Tell him to get an ambulance."

Mr. Mendez screamed then, and made a dash for the window, yelling.

"They won't get me. Let me die. They want to bore my eyes out and bury me alive."

Tawny had a blurred recollection of wrestling with him and trying to soothe him; of the arrival of a policeman, and then two more policemen and an ambulance. The policemen handcuffed Mr. Mendez, and then held him while the ambulance surgeon

dressed, stitched and bandaged the wrists. Then they took him away to Bellevue, leaving her alone in the flat.

Poor Mr. Mendez! Poor Tawny! Mr. Mendez had wanted to be a father all his life and to be rich and leave his children trust funds. And now he was a pauper and crazy, in an insane asylum. And he didn't even know his baby was growing large in Tawny.

As Tawny washed off the blood in the tub, she thought that it was just as well Mr. Mendez didn't know about the baby. She was glad she had saved up that news for a surprise. She heard herself laugh. Her voice rang out in the steamy confines of the bathroom:

"A hell of a surprise!"

After a week in Bellevue, Arthur Pedro Mendez was transferred to the State Hospital at Lotus Field, Long Island, and there herded with the so-called disturbed patients.

Tawny visited him twice, but he paid no rational attention to her. He talked in an excited voice, with eyes staring. He said:

"Hear that! They're getting ready to drill my eyes out."

"That's only the vacuum cleaner in the hall," Tawny said.

He gave her a cunning glance and said:

"They've got you fooled. They've got everybody fooled, but I know. They're going to bore out my eyes and bury me alive."

He screamed and yelled:

"Take them away!"

"There is no one here but friends," Tawny said. "The doctors are your friends and the attendants are your friends."

"Shh," he whispered, glancing around mysteriously. "Look under the bed."

She looked under the bed.

"What did you see?"

"Nothing. There's nothing there."

"They're clever. Oh, they're clever. They've gone in the closet because you're here. Oh, God. Don't let them torture me like this."

Dr. Kahn told Tawny she shouldn't visit her husband any more.

"You've got to think of yourself and the baby," he said.

Where was she going to have the baby? In Harlem Hospital.

"But that's colored now. There are only a few white patients. Even the student nurses are colored."

"I don't care. I can't afford to pay anything, and Harlem Hospital is in this

district."

That was right. Tawny wondered if she had come back here to Harlem to have her baby among colored babies. The colored wave had swept families out of their homes, had swept her out of her home, but it couldn't keep her baby from being born.

Finally she lay in the maternity ward in Harlem Hospital. She often had seen it from the outside, but never from within. She was the only white woman patient. The colored women were nice to her. They were clean and jolly and smiling.

The colored student nurses were nice to her. They handled her gently and bathed her and attended her, soothing her with soft, velvety voices and strong, capable hands. There were lots of fates, she decided, worse than being the only white mother in the colored charity ward of a public hospital.

Mrs. Brixton, the head nurse, was white, as were the trained nurses and doctors. And they all went out of their way to be pleasant to Tawny. She thought:

"It's like everything else I've been through. People that don't know would be sorry for a kid born around the Gas House. They wouldn't know what a grand time a kid can have there, playing on the roofs and in the backyards and on the piers, watching the ships come and go, and the people, and listening to the band while the Gas House flares up lighting the sky. Or blowing soap bubbles off the roof.

"And people are sorry for kids born in a big city, but I had a wonderful time when I was in school. I wonder what's happened to the Cellas and Annie Pettus. I suppose she's got babies with lice of their own."

She laughed then. Yes, it would be hard for anyone who hadn't tried it to imagine laughing in the charity ward of Harlem Hospital, when one was the only white patient there, and one's husband, and the father of one's baby, was in an insane asylum. But she laughed. It all seemed perfectly natural and ordained from the beginning.

It was a hell of an ending to the dreams of a young girl who had visualized herself as a famous dancer, as a great dramatic star, who had been for a short time the wife of a millionaire.

Most people that have dreams, Tawny thought, wind up something like this. Probably everybody hopes some day to be rich and famous, but very few ever get there. Instead of being unique as I used to think, maybe I'm just an ordinary mortal after all, brought into the world to sin a little, weep a little, laugh a little, suffer some, enjoy some, and die and be buried along with the millions. She thought of Keats "Whose name was writ in water."

But it wasn't. Millions and millions of others, however, had epitaphs written in

water, or epitaphs entirely unwritten. It was imagination which made you beat against the walls of your cage.

Peace was right here in this maternity ward, where no one had any hopes of fame, and no one had any money, and most were of the colored race. There was laughter here and warm comradeship and a sense of humanity.

Tawny's son was born early in the morning after six hours of labor. She already had named it David. She lay back weak and exhausted, resting. Suddenly, she started up, with an exclamation. Then she settled back again.

"What's the matter?" a nurse asked softly. "Are yo' all right?"

Tawny smiled and said:

"I just remembered that babies get mixed up sometimes in hospitals, and I started to ask you to be careful about mine. And then I remembered he can't get mixed here."

"Ha! Ha! Ho! Ho! He certainly can't get mixed here. That's a good one. Now don't you invent any more worry, Mrs. Mendez. You just go to sleep."

Tawny had been in hospital five days when she turned her head to see Dr. Coombs looking down at her. He raised his eyebrow's and asked:

"What're you doing here?"

"Having a baby for nothing, Doctor."

"But for goodness sake! You didn't have to do that. What's happened?"

"My husband lost his money in the crash, and now he's in Lotus Field and I'm here."

"But, Tawny! Why didn't you call me up? I'll get you a room now."

"Don't bother. I'm having the time of my life. Everybody is nice to me. There's more company in a ward."

"You could've knocked me over with a feather when I saw you. They told me there was a white woman here, but I wouldn't've dreamed it was you."

"You never know in this life," Tawny said, smiling.

"You look prettier than ever, anyway."

"That's the old blarney, Doctor. But it's nice to see you. How're you getting along?"

"Fine! I can't kick. But let's get back to you. Is there anything I can get you—some fruit or candy?"

"Gee! That's nice of you, Doctor. Some fruit would be nice."

He hesitated and took her hand, squeezing it. He said:

"It probably doesn't sound right, coming from me, but I've missed you a lot and thought of you often, Tawny. I'm sorry you've had such tough luck."

“Don’t worry about me, Doctor. I’ll be all right. I’ve got my health anyhow.”

“I’ve got to run along now, Tawny, but I’ll put in a word for you and see that you get special attention. And I’ll be back for a good visit. Good Lord! I can’t realize I’ve run into you yet.”

Tawny sighed when Dr. Coombs vanished. He was just as handsome as ever, but he wasn’t wearing tinted glasses, and while his manner was as easy and winning as always, it wasn’t so insolently careless. He looked just as pleasant and charming, but he also looked more determined.

Tawny sighed and her eyes grew moist. She dashed her knuckles across them.

“I mustn’t cry over spilled milk,” she said. “I had my good time, I guess. And now I’m paying for it.”

XVII

"You wish for the moon, and you get green cheese," Tawny said.

"What are you talking about," Dr. Coombs asked.

"Don't ask me what I'm talking about. Ask me what I'm thinking about."

"What're you thinking about then?"

"Life and you and me and everything. When you ask me to come and be a receptionist in your office, I think what my mother said before she died."

"What was that?"

"I wonder if I ever really loved anybody—except a rag doll I had once."

"What does that mean, for the love of Mike? What's that got to do with your working for me in the office?"

Tawny shook her head.

"I've always kidded myself about being honest, but I've never been honest. You know what would happen if I went to work for you?"

"Nothing would happen."

Tawny smiled. She was dull yellow like a lioness, her hair, unbobbed, her yellow eyes and her ivory skin. Her breasts were swollen with milk.

"Now you're kidding yourself. I've reached a point where I can afford to be honest, even with me, even with you. I'm the only white mother in the maternity ward of Harlem Hospital. I'm broke. I've got a charity baby, and a husband in an insane asylum. I've got nothing to lose by facing facts."

"What facts? You've got to live. You've got to have a job. I need a receptionist. I'd rather have you than anybody."

"Bosh! You want me for the same old reason, Doctor. And what I was saying about my mother wondering about love has something to do with us—with me, anyway. I've been lying here thinking. And what do you think I've been thinking about?"

"How you're going to support yourself and your baby?"

Tawny shook her head.

"Nope. I've been thinking the trouble with me—with most of us—is the same trouble my mother had. We don't let ourselves love someone else more than we love ourselves."

"That's a swell sentiment, Tawny. It sounds nice. But what does it mean?"

"It's a funny damn thing, Doctor—"

"Don't call me doctor while we're alone. Call me George."

"That's it," Tawny exclaimed. "You're thinking of your own self, and I've always been thinking of mine. It suddenly struck me while I've been lying here with the nurses taking care of me—the colored ones—that I haven't cared as much for people close to me as these nurses care for strangers of another race, or done as much for them. I've just been thinking about myself.

"How can I be famous? How can I have a good time? How'll I come out? And here's how I have come out, so far. I'd probably have been Tony's mistress if my mother hadn't gotten drunk and killed him."

"You don't know that. You're getting morbid. It's normal for anyone who is normal to think of getting ahead in the world."

"Maybe it is, but wait. I always knew I liked older men, like my father. I love my father. I was stuck on you. I guess you're the only man I ever was stuck on. But I didn't think about you. I—"

"Why should you? You were only a kid. You threw yourself at me. If you want to go into it, it was my own fault."

"No, it wasn't. I wasn't thinking of anything but the sensation of the moment. You were a thrill, but I didn't love you more than myself. I didn't even stop to think. Now I'm thinking I've got to be on the level with myself if I want to be happy. And the way I've figured it out, I've got a husband, even if he is nuts, and a baby to look after. And I'm going to do the job, on the level."

"But if you don't love your husband—and I don't think you ever did—and if he's hopelessly insane, which they say at the hospital he is, then you'd be silly to throw your life away on him. It's the law now in New York State that a divorce may be secured from a man or woman who's declared hopelessly insane after five years. And what has that got to do with working for me?"

"It's just that I'm never going to two-time anybody—myself included—any more. I married Mr. Mendez with my eyes open. I thought I was marrying a million, instead of a headache. But it's all the same. I'm going to see it through, and see it through on the square."

"But nothing you do will hurt him. He's just as much out of life as if he was dead."

"But it would hurt me, and I'm through hurting me."

Doctor Coombs squeezed Tawny's hand, and he looked into her eyes. He said:

"Listen, Tawny. You've got everything balled up. You cared for me, and I took advantage of you. I thought I could get along without you, but I can't. You come up and work in my office, and look after your husband if you want—I think that's

damned sporting of you—and let nature take its course. You're only a kid."

"If I didn't know what I was doing then I'm a worse fool than I thought," Tawny said. "I knew in a way, but I hadn't figured things out. I knew about women that could have affairs and turn out all right and marry for money and be fairly contented, but I've found out I can't. I want the whole hog or none."

"Listen, Tawny. I love you just as much as I ever did—more. There's nothing for either of us to worry about."

"Sure, you love me, Doctor—calling love what I used to call it. I work for you, and we both get an easy way out. You like me—"

"I more than like you, Tawny."

"You like me, and I like you, and I work for you, and we really live together. I —"

"I don't mean that. Honest."

"Don't be foolish. If you didn't want to, I would. I'm human. But there's something different, I guess, in people who really amount to something. They take on a job and they finish it. Well, I've got a job with Mr. Mendez and the baby, and I'm going to work it out."

Dr. Coombs argued, but it didn't do any good. He sent Tawny baskets of fruit and boxes of candy, and Tawny shared them around the ward. Dr. Coombs said:

"It's a tough job arguing with a woman. You've suddenly decided to be what's called good. You're going in heavy for self-sacrifice and nobility. You're losing sight of common sense. Did you ever stop to think that this spirit of nobility of yours is a bit far-fetched in this day and age, and won't please anyone—even yourself?"

"I'm doing what seems to me to be right."

"But why isn't it right to take a job with me and earn money to support yourself and your baby under fairly pleasant conditions?"

"You know why."

"No, I don't. I don't know any real, valid reason. All I know is that you've got this bug of being noble. It's probably because you're physically and mentally let down and are in bed."

"We'll see how I feel when I get up then. I'll be getting up tomorrow."

"Listen, Tawny. Put it this way. You'll work for me, and we'll get married as soon as you're free."

"You're just feeling sorry for me because I am down—down, and in bed."

"No, I'm stuck on you, Tawny. Honest. I've known lots of women, but I never met one who appeals to me as much as you do. A doctor sees plenty. And women who are as clean physically and as beautifully formed as you are are damned scarce.

There's always something the matter with 'em."

"Now you're talking about physical attraction," Tawny said, secretly delighted at this praise and loving the doctor more than ever.

"A woman has to be physically attractive for me to want to live with her," Dr. Coombs said. "I can't hug intellects or kiss sweet souls. I'm physical, and you're physical. My feeling for you isn't intellectual, but you've got a mind. You're far from dumb."

"Thanks."

"Well, you're not. You've got a lot of sense, Tawny, if you'd only use it. And after all, being a doctor's wife is no bed of roses."

"I'm married already."

"Tell me something."

"What?" she asked.

"If you'd had a choice between us, which one of us would you have married?"

"You know well enough."

"Me!"

"But you went away, and that ended that."

Tawny thought it would be heavenly to accept Dr. Coombs's offer—wonderful to go with him. But the more she ached for him, the more stubborn she became about refusing to go with him. It just didn't seem right. That was all.

She felt she was doing right. She'd said what she was going to do, and wild horses, plus the doctor, weren't going to stop her.

The doctor drove her and the baby home to the flat in Washington Heights. She couldn't prevent him from doing that, even if she'd wanted to, which she didn't. He said:

"You can't live here all alone. How much money have you got?"

She had two hundred and forty dollars. She said:

"I've got enough."

Benjamin Gay, who had gone to live with Aunt Mary and Uncle Dan when she was married, was dead, run over by an auto. She was glad he had been killed instantly. He had been so cute, going downstairs and airing himself, and returning, all by himself. He had been smart, catching balls tossed to him, and bringing them back. He had been so loving, sleeping under the bed clothes cold nights. Now, he was gone to dogs' heaven, and she had her baby son.

When Dr. Coombs called the following day, Tawny had gone from the flat, without leaving a forwarding address. Dr. Coombs went out and got drunk for the

first time in a year. He wasn't used to being baffled by women. From early youth he had been spoiled by the fair sex.

Tawny and the baby lived in a dark room in East Eighty-eighth Street, near the river. This was the Yorkville section of New York, a German city, just as Harlem was a Negro city. Tawny worked in the Prinz von Pilsen, a beer hall, as waitress, leaving little Dave in the care of Mrs. Freda Haas, her landlady.

Mrs. Haas had five children of her own. She said:

"The baby—he is no trouble. So."

Yorkville might have been a thousand miles from the Gas House, or Washington Heights, or Broadway, if it hadn't been for Prohibition. Prohibition had caused the beer- and food-loving Germans of Yorkville to open beer gardens, such as the Prinz von Pilsen, with yodeling waiters, and singing and dancing waitresses, dressed in German peasant costumes. And residents of all the little cities of different nationalities and different vocations and different walks in life, which, taken all together, make up the great metropolis of New York, went to Yorkville to spend an evening.

Tawny thought she was through with Broadway and Greenwich Village and the Gas House and Harlem and Washington Heights. She didn't want to see anyone she knew until her luck had turned. She didn't want to model any more. She was through with the stage. She was hiding in Yorkville, licking her hurts like a wounded animal. Nobody she knew would find her in Yorkville.

Sam Davenant called from a table:

"Tawny! My God! What're you doing in this place?"

"Earning a living."

"But I thought—you don't have—"

"Don't worry about me. I've got to get an order now."

"But I've got to talk with you."

"I'll be back."

Sam wanted to help her. Tawny said:

"There's a depression. Or perhaps you haven't heard about it."

"I've had a fifteen per cent cut in salary," Sam said. "And I'm lucky I've got a job."

"So'm I."

"But with your looks, Tawny, you—"

"Sure, with my looks I get plenty of chances—to go to bed with men."

"But I know people in show business. I might be able to help you. There's no need of waiting on tables in a place like this."

"I know show business too," Tawny said, "but I'd rather do this. I don't want to

see anybody I knew."

"Where's your husband?"

"Sick."

"Gee! That's tough. You know me. I never save anything, but I could let you have a few bucks every week."

"Thanks, Sam, but I don't need it."

Teddy Later came with a party for broiled pig's feet and deviled sauce and beer at midnight. He said:

"Excuse me for not getting up, deary, but for Christ's sake what are you slinging hash for in this dump?"

"Hello, Mr. Later. To earn a living."

"Birdy's daughter slinging hash. Oh, Gracious Heavens! Meet me at the Belfort Theatre tomorrow afternoon and I'll get you a job—not much—but a job in the chorus. Arnstein is putting on a new musical."

"I'm through with show business. I know those Arnsteins. They mix too much pleasure with their business."

Teddy laughed, holding his sides.

"You don't know Priscilla," he said.

"Priscilla who?"

"Priscilla Arnstein, deary. She wouldn't look at you."

"I thought you meant Robert Arnstein."

"We girls call her Priscilla," Teddy said.

He introduced her to two young men and a woman in his party. They all were nice to her. When they left, Teddy said:

"If you change your mind, darling, let me know."

After Talbot Rand appeared with a party, Tawny decided that the world passed through the Prinz von Pilsen and that it was no place for her.

Tawny had worked three months as cashier in the Sun Cafeteria in Brooklyn, when Mrs. Lowe, wife of the proprietor, said to her:

"You're a bright girl. What are going to do with yourself—get married?"

"I'm married already, but my husband is sick."

"That's too bad, Louise. Is it serious?"

"He's in a hospital."

"I've been puzzled about you," Mrs. Lowe said. "You're a good-looking girl, but you haven't any men hanging around, and you've got brains."

"I've been told I had brains," Tawny admitted, "but I've never showed much signs of having them."

"Do you like the restaurant business?"

"It's all right."

Mrs. Lowe was short and dark, with coarse black hair done in a bun on top of her head. She was fifty and gave the impression of having been handsome once. But now her skin had turned leathery, a faint mustache was visible on her upper lip, hairs sprouted from a mole on her chin. She oversaw the kitchen and watched the dining room and the cash register while her husband drank and played poker and bet on the horses with what money his wife allowed him. She wore big diamonds on stubby fingers.

Henry, whom everyone called Hank, had brown hair, thin on top, brown eyes surrounded by bloodshot whites and mounted on blue pouches of skin, purple cheeks, a hoarse voice and a round stomach. Hank regarded himself as the official greeter of the establishment, and always was telling stories to his male customers and taking them out for a drink.

Henry's father had owned two apartment hotels in New York, and it was said that his wife had married him for his money. But after Henry had spent most of his inheritance, Mrs. Lowe had gone into the cafeteria business, and had made a success of it. She kept Henry on an allowance. She said to Tawny:

"I've been thinking about you. There's no future for you working a cash register or waiting on tables. Why don't you learn the restaurant business?"

"I'd never thought of it."

"You ought to think of something. Of course, it wouldn't be easy. You'd have to go through the business—wash dishes, clean off the tables, work as assistant cook and cook, learn how to buy, and how to prepare menus. But if you've got the ambition to do it, and are willing to stand the gaff, you might be ready to take over in three or four years."

"That's darned nice of you, Mrs. Lowe."

"Don't thank me. Thank yourself. It's few good-looking young girls that have any brains, and it's fewer these days who are willing to work. I haven't any children or any relatives, and neither has Henry."

Tawny began as a bus girl, lugging trays of dirty dishes back to the kitchen. She wondered if there ever would be an end to this, and if it could be true that some day she'd get somewhere. It didn't seem as if other people had her problems—worrying about the rent and the baby's health.

She was an assistant cook in 1933, and settled in routine, when Willie Kraus, son of her landlord, ran into the restaurant. He said:

"Oh, Mrs. Mendez, the hospital called up and said your husband had eloped,

and you better watch out. There are two men from the hospital coming to the house. They think he may come there."

Eloped is the technical word for *escaped* at State Hospitals.

Tawny felt the blood leave her cheeks. Mr. Mendez knew he had a son now, and he had an obsession the son should be killed so that he wouldn't grow up to be poor or crazy or both.

"Thank you, Willie," Tawny said. "I'll be right over."

"What does eloped mean, Mrs. Mendez?" Willie asked. "Has he run off with another woman?"

XVIII

Mr. Mendez disappeared completely. He didn't show up at the Kraus's rooming house. The attendants remained on watch for three days and then left.

A month passed, when one Sunday afternoon in July, Mr. Mendez arrived. He was neatly dressed in a blue suit, and his face was tanned. He was quiet and self-possessed. He smiled at Willie Kraus, who was eating a slice of bread and butter and strawberry jam on the front stoop, and offered him a nickel.

Willie refused the nickel and said:

"I can't take money from strangers."

"Then you can take it from me," Mr. Mendez said. "I'm not a stranger. I'm a friend."

Willie didn't understand this, but he took the nickel. Mr. Mendez said:

"I'm from the hospital. I have a message for Mrs. Mendez about her husband. Is she in?"

Mr. Mendez had figured everything out. He was very cunning and satisfied with himself. He smiled quietly at Willie. Willie said:

"There've been policemen here looking for her husband. Did they find him?"

"They haven't found him yet, but I know where he is," Mr. Mendez said. "Is she in?"

"Yeah. She's in, upstairs in her room. She's getting ready to go out. Do you want me to tell her you're here? Gee! She's been scared her husband would come. He's crazy."

Mr. Mendez looked at Willie, and Willie exclaimed:

"Gee, Mister! Don't look at me like that. You scare me."

Mr. Mendez made a grimace, which passed for a smile, and said:

"They're all crazy. I'm God."

Willie stared after Mr. Mendez as he mounted the steps and opened the front door and vanished behind it. Then Willie said:

"Gee! I bet it's him."

He began to shiver with excitement and sneaked up the steps fearfully. He couldn't hear anything. He pushed open the door. Nothing happened. He pushed it open wider. Then he rushed to the back of the house and burst in upon his mother in the kitchen. He cried:

"Cheese it, ma! *He's* come. Hide!"

"Who's come?"

"The crazy man—Mr. Mendez."

Willie was crying.

"Come on and hide. He'll kill her."

Mrs. Kraus shook her son and demanded:

"How do you know this? When did he come? Who?"

"A man said he was from the hospital, and I believed him. He gave me"—Willie checked himself. His mother would whip him for taking the nickel. "He gave me a look, and his eyes stared at me. He's crazy, ma. He said he's God."

"It's prob'ly nothing at all," Mrs. Kraus said, "but you shouldn't let nobody in without you know who it is. How many times have I got to tell you?"

There was a noise like a door banging or an automobile backfire from upstairs. Mrs. Kraus clutched Willie's arm, exclaiming:

"Oh, my God!"

"He's killing her now, ma. Call the cops."

There was a scream from upstairs, and then the noise of splintering glass, a moaning sound, and a crash outside. Mrs. Kraus ran shrieking through the hall and into the street. She yelled:

"Help! Murder! Police!"

Windows went up and heads popped out. Willie was howling shrilly:

"Police! He's killed her!"

Tawny was getting David, three years old, ready to take out for a walk, when there was a knock on the door. She said:

"Come in."

Mr. Mendez opened the door, stepped in, and closed it. Tawny stood beside the bed, one hand still on little David's shoulder, staring at him. She breathed:

"Mr. Mendez."

He stood looking at her and David. At first his face looked peaceful. Then he rolled his eyes and straightened his shoulders and pushed out his jaw with a grating of teeth and exclaimed:

"I am God. I am a merciful God."

He dipped his right hand in his coat pocket and drew it out holding a cheap, nickel-plated revolver. He said:

"Oh, God! Help me to put him out of his misery."

Tawny, frozen with fright and astonishment, recovered enough presence of mind to exclaim:

"If you're God, how can you pray to yourself?"

A flash almost of humor passed through Mr. Mendez's wild eyes. Then he braced himself and fired, just as Tawny grabbed the boy in her arms and threw her body in front of him. The revolver flashed and roared. The pellet struck Tawny, knocking her over David, who was weeping. She screamed once.

Mr. Mendez pulled the trigger, but only a click came. He pulled it rapidly, and a series of clicks resulted. He stared at the revolver and at Tawny, crouched, with crimson-stained waist, over the baby.

Suddenly he sobbed and yelled:

"I can't stand it, I tell you. They're after me!"

He leaped at the window, taking sash and all, and disappeared. A moaning noise from his lips came back to her, and then a thud as the body struck the ground.

Patrolman Riker and Ralph Collins, a shipping clerk, who lived in the third floor rear, found Tawny unconscious, lying on the baby, who was screaming with terror.

"Don't touch her," Riker said. "You go telephone for an ambulance."

Riker pulled off the waist, and exposed two blue holes, front and back, where the bullet had gone through her. He said to pale, startled faces in the doorway:

"Get some cotton and some iodine—or alcohol or gin. Quick!"

"Is she dead?"

"Is the baby hurt?"

"Will she live?"

"She's alive," Riker said. "I dunno how bad she's hurt. Keep back there. Keep back. That's right. Look after the baby—you."

He made wads of cotton, and plugged the holes. A voice rose from below:

"He's dead."

"His neck is broke."

An ambulance, siren wailing, pulled up at the door, and an ambulance surgeon ran upstairs. A police patrol arrived.

They carried Tawny, still unconscious, to the ambulance on a stretcher.

When Tawny recovered consciousness, George Coombs was sitting by her bed. She whispered:

"The baby!"

"Not even scratched," Dr. Coombs said. "Now don't try to sit up."

"Honest—is he all right?"

"Honest. And Mendez is mercifully dead. Now lie back and rest. You're going to be all right, too."

Tears gathered in Tawny's eyes. She said:

"It has been awful. I shouldn't say I'm thankful, I suppose, but I am."

"Why shouldn't you be thankful?" Dr. Coombs asked. "It's turned out damned lucky for all of us."

She opened her lips to speak, and he said:

"Don't talk any more. I want you to get well enough by tomorrow to be able to go through a marriage ceremony with me. I've stood all the fooling I'm going to."

"But—"

"No more buts. Go to sleep."

He leaned over and kissed her. She sighed and closed her eyes.

Cousin Joe said:

"Give me some more corned beef and a little cabbage, Aunt Mary."

"I never knew you liked corned beef and cabbage so much, Joe," Ida exclaimed.

"I'd forgotten a lot of things—and people—I liked," Joe said. "Before the depression came along I'd forgotten it was so pleasant to ride in subways and street cars, and I hadn't realized what a headache a chauffeur and car can be."

"Joe always liked corned beef and cabbage," Aunt Mary said. "It's good, healthy food."

"And I love the smell of the Gas House," Tawny said. "We aren't as near it as we were when I was a kid, but it's still in the air."

Dr. Coombs grinned. He said:

"Well, I've got to be getting back to the office. Coming with me?"

"I'll go over to the restaurant for an hour."

"I wanta stay with Aunt Mary," David said. "Please."

"I do, too."

"So do I."

Joe and Ida's kids wanted to stay, too.

"All right," Aunt Mary said. "If your mothers are willing, I can put a tick on the ironing board, and we'll make out."

Tawny said to Dr. Coombs in bed that night. "I know what's happening downtown with the children."

"What?"

"They're lying in the dark, making Aunt Mary sing to them."

"Sing what?"

So Tawny began to sing:

The band played Annie Laurie,
And the horses wore high hats.

You could still have a good time, even if you weren't rich, or famous—only commonplace.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

[The end of *Tawny* by Donald Henderson Clarke]