



## "She went on like that..."

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She went on like that, chatty, walking the girl up the stairs and I still think it was innocent, that she didn't mean her any harm. She may even have forgotten Joe in there wiping his face every five minutes. And she certainly couldn't have thought what might happen if he looked up from his handkerchief and saw the girl and the picture both. And it's hard to say what made her do it. The men on the rooftops? Somebody had hauled a bass up there. Must have, because you could hear the strut it gave to brass, how it changed the horns, spaced them out, and you could hear the young men laughing in between. That and the far away sound of the M 11, and Packards unwilling to toot their horns on a day that pure, that steady, that kind. Violet invited her in, and the girl, Marie, went, smiling, eager even, to see the photograph of the girl she was so much prettier than.

Violet and Joe lived 2J. Two bedrooms, a big dining room, but situated as it was in the middle of the hall the windows gave no view. The bathroom has the best light, since it jutted out past the kitchen and caught the afternoon light anyway. Still it was one of the nicest in the building. Cozy. And the two of them had arranged their things in a way that might not have reminded anybody of those color pictures in [tk] magazine, but it suited the habits of the body, the way a person walked from one room to another, and what he wanted to do when he sat down. You know how some people put a chair or a table in a corner where it looks nice but nobody in the world is ever going to go over to it, let alone sit down there? Violet didn't do that in her apartment. Every thing was



put where a person would like to have it, would use or need it. So the dining room didn't have a dining table. It had a couch and big deep down chairs and a card table by the window covered with jade and doctor plants until the times they had card games or played tonk between themselves. Her front room, or parlour was not a wasted room, waiting for a funeral or a wedding to be worthy of. It had bird cages and mirrors for the birds to look at themselves in, but now, of course, there were no birds, Violet having let them all out on the day she went to Dorcus' funeral with a knife. Now there were just empty cages, the lonely mirrors glancing back at them. As for the rest, it looked like a schoolroom with wooden chairs with small tables in front of them so you could put your coffee cup or a dish of ice cream down in front of you, or if you wanted to read the Amsterdam News and find out what [tktk] or General Garvey was up to, you could do it easy without tearing the paper up. The mantle over the fireplace used to have shells and pretty colored stones, but all of that was gone now and only the picture of Dorcus Manfred sat there in a silver frame. Joe, of course, couldn't stay out of that room. He'd sit there in a wooden chair, his elbows on a tiny table and cry. There's a name for that. Crying without stopping. I've heard it said it can go on for years, as long as the tear ducts hold out, and they can keep going for a long long time. Lucky for Joe, in a way, Violet did bring the girl in. It sure stopped him crying. Sure did.