



## Violet Revised

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Violet Revised

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### Violet Revised

That woman lives on Lenox Avenue. Her husband is a quiet man--works in a warehouse--who cries a lot. The woman doesn't know what to do about it, but she does know why he does it: he fell in love with an eighteen year old girl with a love that made him so sad and happy he killed just to keep the feeling going. The woman, her name is Violet, is furious with him because he could forget her and love anybody else that much. She went to the funeral to see the girl and to cut her dead face, but they threw her to the floor and out of the church. She ran, then, through all that snow, back to her apartment on Lenox Avenue where she let the birds out of their cages and out the windows, including her favorite, the parrot that said, "I love you." But the snow she ran through was so heavy she left no footprints in it, so for a time nobody knew she lived on Lenox Avenue. But they knew who she was, who she had to be, because they knew who did it--killed the girl. Her husband, Joe Trace. There is no one to prosecute him because nobody actually saw him kill her and the dead girl's aunt doesn't want to throw money to helpless lawyers or laughing cops when she knows the expense wouldn't improve anything. She wasn't too keen on a generous funeral, being of the "don't put insurance money in the ground" school, and kept most of the \$184.00 for herself. Besides, she probably knows that the man who killed her neice cries all day and for him and for Violet that is as bad as jail.

She's awfully skinny, Violet, but still good looking and only about forty or so. That must be why she thought she could punish joe by getting herself a boyfriend and letting him visit in her own house while her husband cried in the parlour. She thought it would shake the tears off and give her some satisfaction as well. It could have worked, I suppose, but the children of suicides are hard to please and quick to believe no one loves them because they are not really here. Whether she sent the boyfriend away or whether he came to feel that Violet's rewards were too poor measured against his sympathy for the heaving man in the next room, I can't say. But Violet's next plan--to fall in love with her husband--exhausted her before it got on a good footing. So she decided to love--well, find out about--the eighteen year old whose face she tried to cut open even though nothing would have come out but straw. Violet didn't know anything about her except her address, her former beauty, and that she was very well liked in the beauty parlor. She started going around getting all the information she could on her. Everything. Maybe she thought she could solve the mystery of love that way. Good luck and let me know. She found out what kind of lip rouge the girl wore; saw the marcelling iron the beauticians used on her (though I suspect that girl didn't need to straighten her hair); listened to the band the girl liked best (Slim Bates'Ebony Keys which is pretty good except for his vocalist); and did the dance steps the girl used to do. All that. But when she had the steps down pat--her knees just so--everybody in her building got disgusted with her. It was like watching an old street pigeon



pecking the remains of a sardine sandwich the cats had left behind. But Violet is nothing but persistent and no crack or ugly-eyed look stops her. She haunted PS12 to talk to teachers who knew the girl. Clinton High School too, because the girl had dropped out from there in the eleventh grade. And she fought a long time with the girl's aunt, a lonesome woman who works as a seamstress in the garment district, broke down and began talking, mostly to relieve her own sorrow, then began to look forward to a chat about youth and love and misbehavior. The aunt showed Violet all the dead girl's things and it became clear that her niece had been sweeter as well as pretty. One particular thing the aunt showed her, and eventually let Violet keep for a few weeks, was a picture of the girl's face. Not smiling, but alive at least and very bold. Violet had the nerve to put it on her own fireplace mantle in her own parlour and both she and Joe looked at it and cried--for the same reasons: to hang on to what they had lost.

It promised to be a mighty bleak household, what with the birds gone and the two of them wiping their cheeks all day, but when spring came to the city Violet saw her--the dead girl--coming into the building with an OKEH record under her arm and some stewmeat wrapped in butcher paper. Violet's mouth flew open and she uncrossed her arms and stopped the girl who looked exactly like the one Joe had killed, down to the four marcelled waves on each side of her head. Violet invited her in to hear the record and that is how the treesome on Lenox Avenue began. What turned out different was who shot whom.