



"If I remember right..."

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Everybody needs a pile of newspapers; to read.

If I remember right, that October lunch in Alice Manfred's house, something was off. Alice was vague and anybody in her company for thirty minutes knew that wasn't her style. She was the one who with a look could cut good gossip down to a titter when it got out of hand. And maybe it was her head-of-a-seamstress head that made what you thought was a cheerful dress turn loud and tatty next to hers. But she could lay a table. Food might be a tad skimpy in the portions, and I believe she had a prejudice against butter, she used so little of it in her cakes. But the biscuits were light and the plates, the flatware--sparkling and arranged just so. Open her napkins wide as you please and not a catface anywhere. She was polite at the lunch of course; not too haughty either, but not paying close attention to things. Distracted she was. About Dorcus, probably.

I always believed that girl was a pack of lies. I could tell by her walk her underclothes were beyond her years, even if her dress wasn't. Maybe back in October, Alice was beginning to think so too. By the time January came, nobody had to speculate. Everybody knew. I wonder if she had a premonition of Joe Trace knocking on her door? Or it could have been something she read in all those newspapers stacked neatly along the baseboard in her bedroom. That ended everything, the last people