



JChap 8

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There she is. No dancing brothers are this this place, nor any [laughing] girls waiting for the blue bulb to be exchanged for the white. This is an adult party--what goes on goes on in bright light. The illegal liquor is not secret and the secrets are not forbidden.

Dorcus is comfortable. Two arms clasp her and she is able to rest her cheek on her own shoulder while her wrists cross behind his neck. It's good they don't need much space to dance in because there isn't any. The room is packed. Men groan their satisfaction; women chuckle in anticipation. The music bends, falls to its knees to embrace them all, encourage them all to live a little, why don't you? since this is the it you've been looking for.

Her partner does not whisper in Dorcus' ear. His promises are already clear in the chin he presses into her hair, the fingertips that stay. She stretches up to encircle his neck. He bends to help her do it. They agree on everything above the waist and below: muscle, tendon, bone joint and marrow cooperate. And if they have a question, a moment of doubt, the music solves it, clears up any confusion.

Dorcus is happy. Happier than she has ever been anytime. No white strands grow in her partner's mustache. He is up and coming. Hawk eyed, tireless and a little cruel. He has never given her a present or even thought about it. Sometimes he is where he says

he will be; sometimes not. Other women want him--badly--and he has been selective. What they want and the prize it is his to give is his splendid self. What could a pair of silk stockings be compared to him? No contest. Dorcus us lucky. Knows it. And as happy as she has ever been anytime.

"He is coming for me. I know he is because I know how flat his eyes went when I told him not to. And how they raced afterwards. I didn't say it nicely, although I meant to. I practised the points; the obvious ones about cheating, and having to be sneak, and his wife and a couple of different ones too. I never said anything about our ages or [tk]. But he argued with me so I said leave me alone. Just leave me alone. Get away from me. You bring me another bottle of cologne I'll drink it and die you don't leave me alone.

"He said, You can't die from cologne.

"I said, You know what I mean.

"He said, You want me to leave my wife?

"I said, No! I want you to leave me. I don't want you inside me. I don't want you beside me. I hate this room. I don't want to be here and don't come looking for me.

"He said, Why

"I said, Because. Because. Because.

"He said, Because what?

"I said, Because you make me sick.

"Sick? I make you sick?

"Sick of myself and sick of you.

"I didn't mean that part...about being sick. He didn't. Make me sick, I mean. What I wanted to let him know was that I wanted girlfriends to talk to about it. About things. About stuff. To be with them and everything and I couldn't talk to anybody about him. I tried to tell [x] and she laughed before she stared at me and then frowned. we are so close. Lots of girls here want to be

doing" He is coming for me. Has been looking for me all over. Maybe tomorrow he'll find me. Maybe tonight. Way out here; all the way out here. want him. He doesn't like it and turns his head

to me "When we got off the street car I thought he was there in the doorway next to the candy store, but it wasn't him. NOT yet. I think I see him everywhere. He is coming. ad to have a mirror

"He didn't care what I looked like. I could be anything, do anything--and it pleased him. Something about that made me mad. I don't know. It's like war. Everyone is handsome, shining

"This man, my boyfriend, tells me when he doesn't like the way I fix my hair. I never wear glasses when he is with me and I changed my laugh for him to one he likes better. I think he does. I know he didn't like it before. And I play with my food now. Joe liked for me to eat it all up and want more. This man gives me a quiet look when I ask for seconds. He worries about me that way. Joe never did. Joe didn't care what kind of woman I was. He should have. I cared. I wanted to have a personality and with this man I'm getting one. I have a look now. All my bracelets are just below my elbow. Three straps are across my instep and at home I have shoes with leather cut-out to look like lace. e will see

"He is coming for me. Maybe tonight. Maybe here.

"He will look, then, and see how close me and my new man dance. That I rest my head on my arm holding on to him. The hem of my skirt taps the calves of my legs while we rock back and forth, then side to side. The whole front of us touches. Nothing can get between us we are so close. Lots of girls here want to be doing this with him. I can see them when I open my eyes to look past his neck. I rub my thumbnail over his nape so the girls will know I know they want him. He doesn't like it and turns his head to make me stop touching his neck that way. I do.

Joe wouldn't care. I could rub anywhere on him.

He let me draw pictures in places he had to have a mirror to see."

Anything that happens after this party breaks up is nothing. It's like war. Everyone is handsome, shining just thinking about other people's blood. As though the red wash flying from veins not theirs is infused into their faces making them glow with health. Inspiring. Afterwards some chatter and recapitulation of what went on; nothing though like the action itself and the beat that pumps the heart. In war or at a party everyone is wiley, intriguing; goals are set and altered; alliances re-arranged. Partners and rivals devastated; new pairings triumphant. The excitement here is to Dorcus' taste because here--with grown ups--people play for keeps.

"He is coming for me. And when he does he will see

I'm not his anymore. I want to please this man; do anything to please him. He expects it. With Joe I pleased myself and Joe encouraged me to. With him I worked the stick of the world, the power in my hand."

Oh, the room--the music--the people leaning in doorways. This is the place where things pop. Anybody from outside trying to disrupt or make a dent in this crowd is a fool. Any thrown away lover in wet unlaced shoes should stay out of here. This is not the place for romance; this is the place for [x] *low like a tray, fall*

"He is here. Oh, God he's crying. I am falling. This man is holding me up but I am falling anyway. Heads are turning to look where I am falling. It's dark and now light. I am lying on a bed. Somebody is wiping sweat from my forehead, but I am cold, so cold. I see mouths moving, they are all saying something to me I can't hear. Just there at the foot of the bed is my new man. Blood is on his coat and ahe is dabbing at it with a white handkerchief. Now a woman takes the coat from his shoulders. He is annoyed by the blood. It's my blood, I think and it has stined through his jacket to his shirt. The hostess is shouting. Her party is ruined. My new man is angry; the woman brings his jacket back and it is not clean the way it was before.

"I can hear them now.

"Who? Who did this?

"I am tired. Such sleepiness.

"Who did this? Who did this to you?

"They want me to say his name. Pretend the world did not rock from a stick beneath my hand. Felice leans close to me. I try to say with my mouth to come nearer. Her eyes are bigger than her nose. She leans close and I scream it to her. I think I am screaming it. I think I am.

"Now it's clear. Through the door on the dining room table is a brown bowl, flat, low like a tray, full to spilling with lemons. I want to sleep, but it is clear now. So clear in the dark wooden bowl the pile of lemons. Bright. I see. I see. It's bright."

Her partner does not whisper in Dorcas' ear. His promises are already clear in the skin he probes into her hair, the fingertips that stay. She stretches up to embrace his neck. He bends to help her so it. They agree on everything above the waist and below: muscle, tendon, bone joint and marrow cooperate. And if they have a question, a moment of doubt, the music solves it, clears up any confusion.

Dorcas is happy. Happier than she has ever been anyone. No white strands grow in her partner's