



Jchap9

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Jchap9

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In good weather, on the prettiest day of the year it started. A day so pure and steady trees preened. Standing in the middle of a concrete slab, scared for their lives, they preened. Foolish, reckless, yes, but it was that kind of day. Lenox widened itself, and men came out of their shops to look at it, to stand with their hands under their aprons or stuck in their back pockets and just look around at a street that spread itself wider to hold the day. Veterans in half uniform and half civilian stopped looking gloomy at working men; they rolled cigarettes and settled down on the curb as though it was a Duncan Fyfe. And the women tip tapping their heels on the pavement tripped sometimes on the sidewalk cracks because they were glancing at the trees to see where that pure, soft but steady light was coming from. The rumbling of the M11 and M2 was distant, far away and the Packards too. Even those loud Fords quieted down, and nobody felt like blowing his horn or leaning out of the driver's side to try and embarrass somebody taking too long to cross the street. The sweetness of the day made them generous enough to holler "I give you everything I got! you come home with me!" to a woman tripping in shiney black heels over the cracks. Young

men on the rooftops changed thier tune; spit and fiddled with the mouthpiece for a while and when they put it back in and blew out their cheeks it was just like the light of that day, pure and steady and kind of kind. You would have thought everything had been forgiven the way they played. The clarinets had trouble because the brass was cut so fine, not low down they way they love to do it, but high and fine like a young girl singing by the side of a creek, passing the time, her ankles cold in the water. The young men with brass probably never saw such a girl, or such a creek, but they maade her up that day. On the rooftops. Some on 254 where there is no protective railing; another at 131, the one with the apple green water tank, and somebody right next to it, 135, where lard cans of tomato plants are kept, and a pallet for sleeping at night. To find coolness and a way ^{from} ~~to fool mosquitoes unable to fly that high up and~~ unwilling to leave the tender neck meat down below near the street lamps. So from Lenox to St. Nicholas and across 135th Street, Lexington, from Convent to the Park you could hear them playing out thier maple sugar hearts, ^{like they were} tapping ~~it from~~ four hundred year old trees and letting it run down the trunk, wasting it because they didn't have a bucket to hold it and didn't want one either. They just wanted to let it run that day, slow if it wished, or fast, but a free run down trees bursting to

give it up. That's the way the young men on brass sounded that day. Sure of themselves, sure they were holy, standing up there on the rooftops, facing each other at first, but when it was clear that they had beat the clarinets out, they turned their backs on them, lifted those horns straight up and joined ~~the~~ light just as pure and steady and kind of kind.

No day to wreck a life already splintered like a cheap window pane, but Violet, ^{//}we you had to know Violet. she thought all she had to do was drink malts and eat pork and she'd put on enough weight to fill out the back of her dress. She usually wore a coat on wamr days like this to keep the men at curbside from shaking their head in pity when she walked by. But on this day, this kind, pretty day, she didn't. Nobody cared about her missing behind, and neither did she that day because she came out of the door and stood on the porch with her elbows in her hands and her stockings rolled down to her ankles. She had been listening to the music penetrate Joe's sobs which were quieter now that she had returned Dorcus' photograph to Alice Manfred. But the space where the photo had been was real. Perhaps that's why, standing there on the porch, unmindful of her behind, she easily believed that what was coming up the steps toward her was the true-to-life Dorcus, four marcelled waves and all.

She carried an Okeh record under her arm and a half

pound of stewmeat wrapped in pink butcher paper in her hand.

Nov. 1.30.91

In good weather, on the prettiest day of the year it started. A day so pure and steady trees greened. Standing in the middle of a concrete slab, spaced for their lives, they greened. Foolish, reckless, yes, but it was that kind of day. Ladies walked slowly, and men came out of their shops to look at it, to stand with their hands under their aprons or stuck in their back pockets and just look around at a street that spread itself wider to hold the day. Veterans in half uniform and half civilian stopped looking gloomily at working men, rolled cigarettes and settled down on the curb as though it was a Duncan Pyte. And the women tip tapping their heels on the pavement tripped sometimes on the sidewalk cracks because they were glancing at the trees to see when that pure, soft but steady light was coming out. The rumbling of the M1 and M2 was distant, far away and the Postwards too. Even those loud Ford's quitted down, and nobody felt like blowing his horn or leaning out of the driver's side to try and embarrass somebody who was too long to cross the street. The sweetness of the day was then generous enough to holler "I give you a pound of I got! you come home with me!" to a woman walking in shiny black heels over the cracks. Young