

They will lift their long skirts and drift up the steps in whispering groups. They will exclaim over my gay silk quilts and ask me to tell them how old my writing desk is. Yes, I shall let them in. One after the other the ladies enter. I hear them laughing softly as they go upstairs. Their yellow and blue gowns ascend and descend the steps. They are assembling in the drawing room. Madame Cheritz begins to sing and play for us; Elizabeth Boswell is to read.

"Oh! There is the quick jangle of crystal—my French chandelier! I go at once—Broken?—No, no, Mrs. Conway, it is quite all right.—Yes it can be fixed. She must not know that I care. I shall tell her how I once carelessly brushed off four pendants (but not how I cried). There is music again—tea-time atmosphere—soft carpets, slender-legged chairs, ladies murmuring about my new painting—a fine purchase—appraised at ever so much more than we paid for it, including the cost of cleaning and retouching the canvas—the gilt frame, heavy and scrolled—such a prize!

"Oh! There—Madame Cheritz is trembling on the final crescendo. How deep and ringing is the tone of the piano! I must find a rich Paisley to throw over it. Now—now the ladies are sweeping into the dining room. Mrs. Jay will pour from my old silver teapot. You will have sugar, Mrs. Laird? Yes, Mrs. King, the candlesticks are very old, Sheffield pattern, you know. Yes, they are exquisite. Everything is in harmony, the blue and buff walls, yellow candles and yellow flowers. The ladies swish their silk skirts around the polished table and chat softly over their thin tea cups. More cakes, Nettie, please. Tea, Mrs. Lough?

"Now they are swaying up the long stairway. Mrs. King looks back over her shoulder at the great grandfather clock that stands in the hall. It is my oldest piece.

"Yes, I am so glad, Mrs. Chenoweth,

that you enjoyed it. Yes, Mrs. Ray, thank you so much. —One by one the guests trail down the carpeted steps—The ladies have gone now. The last white glove has been drawn through my finger tips, and the sound of the heavy door closing is resounding through the quieted room. Once more my house and I are alone, and I am folded in the gray curtains of its peace—Let me replace this spray of jasmine in the low rookwood bowl."

manthy

by

mary elizabeth search

Into the stairway which led down from the side-walk to a dirty-gray frame structure turned two women detectives. "I'd like to see Manthy Cooper's room," requested Mrs. Shaeffer, the eldest woman, as a large burly negro man clouded the doorway. They stepped into a black dingy room cluttered with used furniture and followed the negro as he cleared a path. He led them up a few steps, and into a large bare room whose walls had been covered with newspapers. Several corners had come loose, and the draft caused these to flap and rustle. An old straw mattress thrown in one corner was the room's only furnishing. "But I wanted to see Manthy's room."

"This is Manthy's room."

"What does she do with the things she steals?" inquired the detective.

"Trades 'em at Oathie's for liquor."

As the two women stepped upon the sidewalk, a large, flabby fat, negro woman dressed in a blue calico dress with an old black cloth cape thrown over her shoulders stopped and waited for them. She turned as they approached her, and walked down the street between them.