

her. A girl cornerways across the aisle giggled. The red-headed boy was coming to help her, but he drew back. The assistant stood suddenly at Jean's side and began to pick up the pieces of glass without speaking. When he had cleared the desk he turned to Jean. Her eyelids burned with a film of tears but he did not notice.

"This is the third explosion today," he said unconcernedly, "Careful work seems to be an unknown quantity. If I gave an experiment on green peas, some would be likely to use gunpowder."

Jean answered hotly

"I didn't make a mistake with the chemicals. The heat broke the glass. I forgot. I can't help forgetting sometimes. It's my own fault."

She smiled nervously.

The assistant turned calmly on his heel.

"You are quite right" he said sarcastically, and walked away.

Then Jean noticed that the handkerchief in her hand was blackened by the acid, and that her fingers were numb and blistered. Her eyes stung with tears as she walked unsteadily to the sink. She turned her face away from the desk where the assistant sat twirling his chain. She held her hand low in the sink and turned on the noisy water. How cold it was! It drove the blood up to her elbows and made her wrists as white as the blistered places on her fingers. It steadied her nerves and forced the tears back from her eyelids.

She supposed the assistant was looking. "Let him look." She held her head high and turned off the water. Then she walked back to her desk and began to write out an order for a new retort. She would try again.

While she wrote he came and stood by her. She heard him come and kept her level eyelids down. Her fingers burned again against the pencil, but she wrote steadily. When she had finished she turned with the paper in her hand and looked him squarely in the face. She would have brushed by him but he stopped her with a gesture.

"I did not think about your fingers," he said quietly. "If you will let me put some of this on them—"

He reached out as if to take her hand. Jean snatched it away from him and threw back her head.

"My fingers don't hurt," she burst out. "If you will just let me alone—!"

She stopped suddenly. He was looking sternly away from her, and she realized what she had said.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she ended up gently. "They do hurt;" and she held out her fingers to him again.

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When the students were gone that afternoon, the assistant filed the papers on his desk. The laboratory was almost dark. The desks and floor had taken on a sombre shade of brown. The hoods looked deep and black. Dirty, half-melted snow was piled along outside the windows. Somewhere in one of the sinks the water dripped loudly. And when he walked he jarred the floor and rattled a row of test tubes left outside by some careless student. They were on Jean's desk. The assistant found them and put them away. He stood a moment and smiled at the scar of the acid on it. She would never make a good chemist nor, he smiled again, a good housekeeper. But she was interesting. He wondered what she would be like when she came to know the world. He remembered how illogical she had been when she attempted to explain her accident. He saw again her girlish figure as she stood at the sink and let the water run down over her blistered hands. She had blazed immature defiance in his eyes when he had offered to bind her fingers up for her. She had shrunk back from him.

The assistant wondered, there was not the shadow of a smile on his face now, wondered gravely and intensely what had led her to shrink back. She was proud—or she knew. But then she couldn't have known—nobody knew except Pete; and afterwards she had let him tie her fingers up and had smiled at him, a pale confused sort of a smile.

The assistant's eyes softened and he put out his palm over the scar on Jean's desk.

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The assistant sat in his room and held his eyes on his books. The wind sucked the yellow green curtain out into the window, held it there in a strained sort of way and then puffed it in again. The assistant wondered why boarding houses always had yellow green curtains. Not that he cared particularly. Curtains seemed very insignificant tonight since he had made up his