

spoke to her than she had before; she made fewer mistakes in her experiments; the odor of the chemicals came to have a half romantic suggestion to her. Then one day she found herself.

She was working at her desk happily. Things had gone well; her work was all up and the assistant had spoken of the improvement in her papers. She had cleaned up her desk and locked it. Now she stood at the hood smoothing her hair. The sliding window made a very handy mirror against the darkness behind it. When she turned to go she found the assistant behind her with a paper.

"It is a telegram" he said "for you."

Jean read it quietly and without knowing why held it out to him.

"My mother is sick," she said with a little break in her voice. "I will have to go home."

As she turned away she whispered it all to herself with a pang of remorse:

"I care more for him than for her, now, even when she is sick, my own mother."

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When Jean came back to school in February to catch up as best she could the thread of her year's work, she began with a curious apathy. What did she care about school or love now, after that awful burial? Why didn't people understand and let her stay at home to think?

The first day she went around to her classes, saw curious glances at her changed face and black dress, received the unsufferable sympathy of people who turned from her to laugh about their Latin verbs. The second day it was the same bitter round, except that today there were audible whispers of pitying comment.

In the laboratory she dreaded to take up her work. She felt something of her first fear and dislike for the assistant. She told herself recklessly that she was cursed because she had loved him too well. She hated him now. She could not bear to have him come to her and ask her, perhaps lightly, why she had made her visit home so long. Perhaps he had not heard. She would tell him herself. So she went to his desk when she came into the laboratory.

"I have come back," she said listlessly. "My mother died when I was home."

The assistant raised his eyes with a keen sympathetic glance.

"I had heard about it," he said gently.

With a sudden impulse he rose and stretched out his hand to her. Just for a moment she felt his fingers close over her own. He did not speak again except afterwards to tell Jean about her work. But suddenly Jean felt the old eagerness in her face and the old glow about her heart. She loved him. And she knew more; he loved her.

To Hilton the clasp of Jean's hand had been a pledge. To a young girl, motherless, to Jean, he pledged himself, the best he could make of himself.

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The rest worked itself out. Hilton could walk homewith her from the laboratory, not very often, once in a long time. He came one day and brought her a handful of white wind flowers from the prairie. Later he came with wild roses. The last time he came in the evening just at sunset. He was tired, he said, and wanted to talk. It was a tall narrow house where Jean boarded and the sunset played little part in its atmosphere. There was just a narrow streak of red light across the carpet and even that vanished as they talked, and left them in quiet dimness. They talked of school and Jean's home, the work in German universities where Hilton was to study for the next three years and then just a little of the two weeks that were left of school.

Jean congratulated herself, laughing, because she had but two more afternoons in that hateful old laboratory. And Hilton said gravely that he would not be sorry when his work as assistant was over. He would not have easy work in Germany though. He would probably be glad enough to get away from that, too, and get back home again.

When he had left the house Jean put down two lies in the account book of her conscience, one for herself and one for the assistant. She was quite sure that neither of them was glad the end of school had come.

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On Jean's last laboratory day she worked silently the first part of the afternoon. It had been hard work for her to finish all the experiments. Today she had two to make up and her desk to clear out, then she would