The Eleventh Virgin
Part II, Chapter I
(first part) ==========

By Dorothy Day

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PART TWO
STILL ADOLESCENT

CHAPTER I.

Mother Grace was proud of her daughter with her restless brain in spite of the crudities of her adolescence. Cigarettes and her freedom of speech were not so objectionable as her religious pose, nor indeed as that phase which comes to all youth when they feel that they are misunderstood.

Mother Grace's pride was not that of a mother whose egotism is satisfied that she has produced an intelligent continuation of herself.

"No, you recognize me as an individual," her daughter pointed out in what Mother Grace had come to term as one of her frequent harangues. "Most mothers refuse to recognize their children as individuals with minds and aims of their own. Usually the instinct of motherhood is merely a desire to perpetuate themselves or their husbands. At least women act that way. And when their children are born they say, 'this is mine,' or 'this is my husband's child,' and they don't recognize their children's rights at all.

"Now the fact that you gave birth to me, Mother, I shall regard merely as an incident. If you hadn't done it, somebody else would. So we won't let the mother and daughter relationship stand between us in our friendship. Just the same, there are ties of blood, of course and I shall always cling to you just as I cling to Adele. I don't expect her to exert any authority over me and I don't expect you to. But you can give me advice of course, because you are older and more sensible than I. But you needn't ever expect me to follow it, or get mad if I don't. If I make mistakes by not taking it, I'll have to suffer for it."

"And so shall I," added Mother Grace mentally, for after all she knew what it was to be a mother.

All this was rather irritating to her at first but after thinking it over, she decided it was part of June's new-found ability to reason, to flaunt her ideas in her mother's face. And further reflection showed her that it was the flaunting of them and not the ideas themselves to which she objected.

On the occasion when her mother did venture to remonstrate–"Oh, June, don't be such a prig!" her daughter disarmed her by an immediate acceptance of the word.

"How can I help but be, when you and Adele insist on thinking differently about

human relations?"
Yes, she was a prig, she thought, and the real reason for it was her ever changing and modifying ideas.
Day by day they twisted into new shapes, and while she held them she must needs state them with all earnestness and conviction. And with all the more conviction because in so short a time another thought would come, bringing doubts.
Why couldn't she formulate a satisfactory program for life and stick to it? Why couldn't she reach some conclusion about human relations and then hold it?
If she could only see clearly as her father obviously did, distinguishing exactly between right and wrong, good and bad.
There was Regina for instance. She knew exactly what a good woman was and what a bad one. Not that she would ever condemn what she considered a bad one. She prided herself too much on her tolerance. She knew too, exactly what her principles would allow her to do, in her relations with men, present and future.
When June stopped to think about it, she realized she was capable of doing anything–capable of following her desires, wherever they led, and justifying herself for so doing. And whether her reason would be treacherous in this justification she did not know.
There are certain stock situations in one type of novel which the very young girl reads. June and her friends at the age of thirteen had often discussed them with mingled and pleasurable emotions. Why the words blush and bride were always associated. What a wedding night felt like. Why a wife always hid her face in her husband's breast and dilly-dallied about telling it when she was going to have a baby. Why be so reticent about it, anyway? All the world gave birth.
June had decided upon the way she would act. She'd face her husband triumphantly across the breakfast table and announce: "I'm going to have a baby!" And if she acted immodestly proud, it would be with the consciousness that she was taking part in a grand movement. It was quite proper for the husband to be astonished and pleased as though he hadn't thought her capable of it. "Why you cute dear! What a wonderful thing to do," he should say, showing a befitting admiration for a function he could never possibly perform himself.
As it was, the situation could only be treated that way once or twice. Each time it happened there would be less triumph for the woman and less wonder for the man. Hadn't she heard her mother say, before Glubb's arrival, "Yes, damn it, I'm going to have another." Then why all this flumdididdle about the little shirt or bootee hidden in a work-basket?
Still considering the stock situations, the most delightful one of all was that in which a girl was forced to confess to her husband that she had had a lover before she met him. It was full of emotional possibilities and more interesting to consider, from every standpoint, than June's favorite romance writers ever meant it to be. At the age of twelve it was easy and interesting for June to conceive of herself facing the realization of a loss of virtue and the necessity of confessing it to a husband. At the age of eighteen, more sexless and unemotional than ever before by reason of increasing mental activity, it was harder than ever to see

wherein lay the crime of love out of bounds. In all the books she read–English as well as Russian and French translations–conventions were forgotten, love was treated aesthetically and morals, as the world knew them, ignored. It was for the weak to be uplifted or cast down by the world's opinion. In literary history people had lived as they'd seen fit to live and the race had benefited by the stimulating companionships of men and women even though they rested on the basis of sex.

"But–" Mother Grace pointed out when once June was trying to give expression to her muddled thoughts, "I don't see how the convictions of genuises as to sex and life in general, affect you who have to live and work with the great mass of people in the world."

But didn't Mother Grace herself condemn the conventional reaction of the husband in the case of Tess of the D'Urbervilles? Who had been wrong in that case–the husband for leaving Tess on the wedding night because a momentary weakness made her the victim of a man she'd have to submit to even if she had struggled? Or Tess?

"But that's only a novel you're talking about."

Continuing her line of thought June decided that the only reason to condemn Tess was for her submitting without love. That made an unbeautiful splotch on her life. If she had loved her seducer heart and soul, however, it was still less probable that her "sin" would have been forgiven by her husband. Why should a woman justify herself by saying it was only her body which sinned, not her soul? Suppose she said to her husband–"Yes, this man was my lover and every moment I spent with him was beautiful. The experience made me more alive to the beauty of the world and I am more human because I loved so much. But it passed. We grew past it, and now we are not lovers, but friends." June could not imagine it said without disastrous consequences.

It seemed that love with all its possibilities of bigness could not stand such a revelation. It was always demanded of a woman to say that a former lover had been just an incident, bringing no beauty or gladness into her life. This was jealousy. And when June tried to contemplate that she could not, for she could not yet realize love.

"Why is it so unusually hard for me to think straight?" she demanded.

"God knows," said Mother Grace, "I don't. But I'll trust to your instinct not your mind, to take care of you through life." And blessing her, June went out to find a job.

At dinner time several days later she burst into the house after an afternoon in the city and told her mother with glowing eyes that she had found work to do. "Every afternoon this week I've taken my clippings from the school paper and the town paper and gone to newspapers. And even though I visited several every afternoon, I've only managed to see three city editors. Those office boys are the devil to get past and I wouldn't tell them I was looking for a job. I just said I wanted to see the editor on business, and didn't look important enough to have business, or else the city editors were really busy, so I didn't get in. I saw the editor of the Tribune and he told me I was very young and that newspapers weren't the place for young girls. So did the next one. He said he'd never allow

a daughter of his to work on a paper. I wish they wouldn't be so paternal. Both of them said my stuff was good and that a country newspaper was a nice place to work and one of them even gave me the address of an agency where you can apply for work in the country. They were very nice and after I got in to see them, relaxed and chatted very affably.

"After trying to get in on all the big papers I thought of that little labor paper that I brought home the other day. It's socialist and has most of the news of the big sheets even if it hasn't the advertisement. That's the difference in bulk, really. You didn't read it and I'll get another for you. The editorials are all for labor and most of the news is written from the standpoint of the socialist."

"Oh, June," Mother Grace protested, "you know how opposed your father is to any socialism or anarchy. He thinks reformers all foreigners or laboring men. This is much worse than it would have been if you found a job on a regular paper."

"It's quite a respectable looking office," June assured her. "It looks like all the other newspaper offices, only smaller and all the men working there were Americans that I could see.

"They didn't seem to have any office boys–only a copy boy and he was rushing downstairs to the press room when I went up and didn't pay any attention to me. You could see right in the editorial room over a counter. Some men were working at typewriters and three men were sitting around a desk reading copy. A little blond man with a nice face went by and asked me what I wanted and I told him the editor.

" 'I'm it,' " he said, and opened the swing gate for me to go in. He led me in a private office on one side marked 'managing editor' and I was scared. The managing editor seems to be so much more important than the city editor.

"I told him what I wanted and he laughed, not nastily, but as though it were a great joke.

"'Why, we have hardly enough money to pay the office boy,' he said, 'let alone a woman reporter.'

" 'That's all right,' I told him, 'I wasn't expecting a big salary. I am sure you need a woman reporter. I can picket with strikers, and write human interest stories of strikes, and as you know the clothing workers and waitresses are striking now. And they're predicting it will be a hard winter and there are all sorts of sob stories to write.'

"'I know,' he said, 'women reporters are always a good thing, but we're broke, simply broke.' And then I showed him the things I'd done and he approved and I told him I could live on a small salary. You see after being to all the other papers I'd made up my mind that I'd have a job.

"He went on to tell me that some weeks the paper was so broke they had to issue half pay, and sometimes they had to take up a collection from the staff to pay for cuts for the next day's paper. He seemed to really want to hire me, but not to see his way clear to do it.

"Then I had an inspiration. You've noticed accounts of this squad of policemen who are living on a diet and showing how cheaply working people can live if they do it scientifically. And those society women in Chicago who are feeding

themselves in a club on a quarter a day. I asked Mr. Bright–that was his name–why I shouldn't constitute myself a diet squad of one and live on five dollars a week. Lots of factory girls are living on that and I had lived comfortably on nine in the country. I pointed out to him that working girls couldn't very well club together the way these 'squads' are doing and that I'd like to show how it would work out.

" 'Of course it won't,' he said, 'but if you'll try that for a month, and work for five a week, I'll raise your pay to twelve.'

"So I told him I would and now if you don't mind, I'm going to move and live in a tenement."

"Well I'll be damned," cried Mother Grace.

"You can tell father I just decided to go away and be independent just as I did that last year at college. Then he can't blame you. He'll only commiserate with you at having a thankless child. And you know, Mother Grace, I always wanted to live away from home and be independent."

"*Why* you want to, I don't see," cried Mother Grace in despair.

"It's just a case of living one's own life, though that's a trite way of putting it."

"But I never wanted to live my own life." And June in her triumph forbore to point out to her mother that hers was a new and more adventurous generation.

"There's another reason why it's best for me not to live at home," June added. "The Clarion is a morning paper and I start to work at three in the afternoon and don't know exactly what time I'll be through. And it's quite possible I'd run into father around twelve or even get home later than he did. And it wouldn't only be one row but many of them. He'd quarrel about my working and about what I'm working at, and the hours I work. You know very well, too, he wouldn't quarrel with me. It would be with you. He doesn't seem to realize that we're old enough to reason with. Why, only last Sunday at dinner he turned to you and asked you if I liked the breast or the dark meat, just as though I weren't old enough to speak for myself. And instead of coming to me he'd ask you why I wanted to work and why you couldn't persuade me that it was impossible for young girls to be out at night alone."

"I know–I've always borne the brunt of the misbehavior of all of you."

"But if I actually got out, and proved myself to be beyond your influence, he couldn't scold you for what I'd done, could he? I've got to go, mother dear. I've been home two months now and there is no work or anything to look forward to. It will be easier for you and for me too. I'll just pack my suitcase and leave."

The upshot of it was that June, with a thrilled feeling of adventure at her heart, kissed Mother Grace and Adele good-bye and took the car to the Clarion office the next afternoon.

"I'll telephone you every afternoon, and come home on my nights off. And you and Adele will have to come often and have dinner with me. I have about an hour off and we'll go to Chinatown and have chop suey. It's near the office."

Mr. Bright, the editor, had told her that in view of the fact that she had to find a home, she need not appear at the office until five. So leaving her heavy suitcase by the side of the desk which had been allotted to her, she set out through the East Side streets.

The Clarion office did not occupy a place of dignity on Park Row. You got off the subway, the elevated, the surface car, whichever you happened to be riding on, at Brooklyn Bridge, and walked down that dingy section of the Row given over to pawnbrokers, saloons and recruiting stations. Just before you reached Chatham Square, that gloomy crossroad where all streets lead out under shadowing elevated tracks to still gloomier regions, you turned down a little side street to the east and after passing three saloons, this was before prohibition, and two warehouses reached the Clarion offices which occupied a loft above the Meisel Printing Company.

To get to June's room which she found that afternoon you continued east on this street. In another block it ends at Madison Street which digs straight into the East Side, running parallel with the river. It was a cheerful and lively street with horse cars which jogged every half hour through the crowds of children playing in the gutters and hiding among the ash cans. The air was full of shrill child voices, shouted admonitions from the mothers hanging over their fire-escapes which front the buildings like grim skeletons. Street organs surrounded by little girls played the latest popular tunes and every once in a while a merry-go-round set on a wagon was drawn to the curb by a lean and deafened horse. Rides were for a penny and the music which the man ground out as he turned the handle which set the carousel spinning held an invitation which gathered the children from blocks around.

Mulberry Street runs into this thoroughfare and spills a delta of tenements with shops where long cheeses and sausages and chains of red pepper and garlic contribute their smell to the cluttered air. There are Greek and Turkish coffee houses with strange colored curtains at the windows. When the curtains are not drawn you can see the men inside playing cards, smoking long water pipes. Sometimes there are dancing girls and often at night comes strange music which, with the echoes of daytime street pianos, haunts the silent street.

Late at night June found it a strangely sinister neighborhood. It seemed at first that she, alone in all the world, was awake. Her footsteps so stirred the silence the first night she went home that she had rubber heels attached to her shoes the next day so that she could swing along without feeling so gruesomely alone. And soon she discovered she was not alone. A whole silent world was alive, a world that slept at dawn as she did. There were huge sleek cats, furtive pariahs that prowled through the hallways and gutters. And their cries and calls answered the dreary rustle of the wind in the trash of the street. A dull murmur came from the coffee houses, a subdued bustle from basement bakeries, the door of which opened sometimes to give out a warm, sweet smell of coffee bread and a glimpse of a perspiring and floury baker sniffing the night air.

Up dusky side streets you could see occasional pushcarts and beside them slept dim, bowed figures who occasionally roused themselves to hold murmured conversations.

Sometimes on a corner a little tobacco shop gleamed brightly. There was one on Rutgers Slip which was always open. A young Russian stood guard over tall jars of candy and colored syrup and neat stacks of cigarettes. It was nice to stop and chat with him before the nights got too cold.

Later on there was a woman who ran along the silence of the streets and broke it with her calls. Occasionally June heard her, darting down this side street or that and once she saw her running, stopping to get her breath, then running again. And every now and then came that long shrill cry of seeking.

When November with its flurrying snows sought to disguise the tawdry street, June made the acquaintance of two policemen who met each night for a chat under Manhattan Bridge while they ate their midnight meal of coffee and rolls. As the nights grew colder they had a glowing fire in an ash can, and June stopped to warm her hands by it. She was offered the seat of honor on a dry-goods box, and presented with a cup of hot coffee. The bulky ham sandwich she refused.

They asked her what she did so late at night and she told them, showing her newspaper police card.

Convinced that they didn't have to waste professional curiosity on her, an easy friendship was established between them. Her office was two "beats" from home, they told her, and often one met her as she turned into Madison Street and escorted her to the ashcan fire under the bridge and from there the other took her to her door.

"We'll watch out for you," they assured her as if dangers lurked in every doorway. And they gave her a police whistle to blow on, if ever emergency should arise. They vied with each other in telling her long fantastic tales of tenements, haunted by crooks, catacombed with secret entrances and exits, tenements in which if a man once gained shelter, it was impossible to trace him. There were tales of gangsters, of the Cherry Hill gang and their hangouts along the docks, street battles and gang feuds.

Once as they sat there and talked over steaming coffee, the stillness shattered every now and then by the heavy trains far above the houses on the bridge, a woman came running with little steps down the street, and seeing the policemen's fire, approached it slowly, shivering. June recognized her as the woman who called in the night, and listened curiously as the policemen welcomed her.

"How about it, mother? You haven't found him yet? Better come and get warm and have a cup of coffee. You've hunted long enough tonight. Better luck next time."

"You haven't seen him?" she asked piteously at first, but after she drank her coffee she seemed to forget and babbled of Sadie and some other women with whom it seemed she shared a basement room; of the way they swore and fought and stole; how she had to wear her shoes to bed or they'd go and pawn them for a drink; (and to illustrate her point, she pulled open her ragged coat and waist and showed how in lieu of an undershirt she had to wrap newspapers about her bony chest to keep warm, "Went and washed the shirt one night," she said, "and hung it hidden in an oven to dry. Next morning it was gone.") of Ike, the Jewish bartender in the saloon on Pike and Front Streets and how he let her sit around on cold days and sometimes gave her soup.

Her breath was heavy with the smell of whiskey as she talked, an ingratiating smirk on her lean old face. The horrible sadness of her calling and the tragedy of her running feet was gone. It was life which was sad and tragic. She was tawdry.

" 'Dis-audrey conduct,' they call her," one of the policemen told June. "Her name

is Audrey and she's an old street girl."
"Not now!" June shuddered, incredulous.
"Sure. They keep it up until they die along the docks. There's always some rotten foreign sailor so far gone with dope or drink to pay her. You see she seemed pretty sensible while she talked to us, yet every now and then she goes off her head and starts running through the streets till you'd think she'd drop dead. You see it was this way. She had a kid once, a boy. No father, of course. She took care of him and hung on to him until he was shot in some street fight when he was eighteen. He'd joined a gang when he was twelve. It didn't seem to bother her an awful lot until the last year or so. It happened twenty years back. Now she's taken to looking for him–and not the grown boy that he was either, but a little tot of five. She thinks he's lost and every week or so when the fit's on her she drops in the Madison Street station and asks the captain for him."
Facing a tiny square which was overshadowed by warehouses and tenements and which led down to the river, was the six-story tenement where June lived. Back through a long passage-way, she walked, past doors through the glass panes of which came a dim flicker of light or the occasional wail of a child. Sometimes in the narrow entry way, a couple stood, as in other doorways along Madison Street, lingering in their silent farewell. Sometimes cats were the only evidence of life in that huge tomb. They crouched on the stairs and glared with flaming eyes. Up five flights of steps, stepping over children's playthings and treading carefully to avoid any stray bits of garbage, June made her way. The door of her room, though it was one room of a four-room flat, opened on the hall, and she let herself in with a key which fitted any other door in the house.
The single bed took up half the room. A table and one chair left enough space to open either of the two doors, one leading into the Warzinsky kitchen and the other into the hall. Over the foot of the bed hung a wardrobe, and covering the window which opened on an airshaft was clean white muslin.
Candle light hid the dingy woodwork. A rubber hose attached to the one gas fixture was connected with a one burner gas stove on which she cooked her breakfast and late supper.
A row of books–poetry and fiction–decorated the table and pictures of Amenemhat III, Stefansson the explorer, and Bellmonte the bull fighter, decorated her walls. They could not approach Mr. Armand, of course, but she admired them all. She liked the first for the dissolute line of his broken nose, and the pleasant sensuousness of his expression. Stefansson typified high endeavor and Bellmonte, arrogant strength. It amused her to have them share with her her tenement bedroom.
Her rent was five dollars a month, including gas. She could walk to and from the office and other carfare incidental to her work for the paper was paid by the office. On the day she started to be the "Clarion diet squad of one" as the editor put it, she sent for a budget from a charities bureau, which gave weekly menus for families living on starvation wages. Not that they called it that. The adjective was the Clarion's. According to the organized charities a family could live, eating scientifically and keeping track of the calories, on very little indeed. After June had adapted the "menu for a family of five–$10 a week" to herself, it

ran something like this:

Breakfast:	
1 pt. of milk	.05
Cereal	.01
Fruit	.02
Rolls	.02
Late Supper:	
Soup (potato, pea, bean)	.02
Rolls	.02
Egg	.03
Milk	.05
Butter	.03
	.25

For her dinner at six, she found she could get a passable meal of soup, fish, bread and coffee for twenty cents at most of the East Side bakery lunches. To her great surprise when she finished figuring her rent, she discovered she still had almost a dollar left over. This, of course, according to the organized charities budget, should be saved for "doctor, dentist, clothing, entertainment and education," but seeing no need of any of the foregoing, June was not content until she had devised a way of spending it.

One of the advertisements in the Clarion pointed out that a dollar down and a dollar a week, for fifteen weeks, procured for you a phonograph. This June proceeded to buy, receiving a contribution from Mother Grace in the shape of fifteen records. For something had to be done to make the diet palatable, she pointed out in her second article. This it accomplished and more.

For the morning after the bulky parcel was carried up the five flights of stairs, she was awake at eight, eager as a child to survey a Christmas present, unpacking, putting together and finally, winding up the machine and adjusting the needle to the first whirl of one of Sousa's most stirring marches.

There was a little rustle in the hall and then the patter of many baby feet. Downstairs and upstairs they came, leaving their play on the tenement stairs to snuffle around June's door like a litter of puppies. June could hear Mrs. Warzinsky shoving them away, but back they came, to listen. She opened her door to them when she had dressed but they were shy at first and hung back. When she paid no attention to them and devoted herself to the cooking and eating of her cereal, a book propped against the milk bottle, they edged in, sat shyly on the bed, stood close against the wall, or peered from the hall around the corner of the door.

June felt like the Pied Piper of Hamelin at first and wanted to laugh. But she didn't. They were all so seriously attentive. As she cooked and ate and read, she changed the records, and when the last bite of cereal and roll had disappeared, she shoved them out, locked her door and proceeded to cover her afternoon assignment.

But they came back every morning even before she was awake. In a half sleep

she could hear them whispering and shuffling, tentatively trying the door-knob, Mrs. Warzinsky hushing them wrathfully. "Smootchy-faces," she called them, the only two English words she knew.

But June loved them all–little Jews and Poles and Russians, loved their appreciation of her morning concerts, loved their bright eyes and curly heads, black, blond and red.

Mrs. Warzinsky liked the music too. Often she came in with a bowl of soup or some coffee bread and many times June found a carefully covered dish of pickled fish, redolent with onions, standing on her table when she returned at night.

She and her landlady could not talk together but there was no restraint between them. By expressive smiles and eyebrows they could say all that needed to be said of soup, music or babies.

June's room was cleaned by little Ruth who was twelve and who attended the public school around the corner. She was the eldest of five children who slept in the kitchen and living-room in the front. In the room next to June the parents slept with two younger ones. They were all clean and healthy and well-cared for, for their father was a tailor and never out of work. Ruth read when she wasn't housecleaning or ironing or taking the younger children to the baths around the corner. She showed June the life of Helen Keller one Saturday morning when she came in with the little ones to listen to the phonograph and timidly asked leave to borrow of an evening some of June's books which stood on her combination of desk, stove and dining table. Her brother, who was eleven, studied Hebrew in addition to his school work. June liked the little family.

She too used the baths around the corner. They were all showers and rooms were kept clean, though much frequented by the foreign mothers in the neighborhood. June enjoyed scrubbing under the hot spray and listening to the mothers bathing their children in the little rooms on all sides. Occasionally they burst into Russian folk songs, strange harmonies in a minor key with a sad happiness running through them.

She was given her afternoon assignments the night before, so she did not go to the office until she had covered them. There was much to do–meetings to attend of protest against labor, capital, the high cost of living, war-profiteering, entering war, not entering war, conscription, anti-conscription. There were meetings to start strikes, to end strikes, to form unions, to fight against other unions. Food riots came. The city hall was stormed–if you can call it storming (as the papers did) when a crowd of fat Jewish women from the East Side with babies in their arms, stood in front of the city hall and scolded that institution of city government. Heroically they paraded Fifth Avenue and "stormed" the Waldorf under the mistaken idea that the governor was staying there. There were birth control meetings–trials of birth control leaders, meeting of the Anti-conscription League, the Emergency Peace Federation–and interviews galore.

The city editor of the Clarion at this time was a young Russian Jew, twenty-five years old, who had lived all his life in New York and who had worked for the last five on the Clarion. Every now and then after six months or so of intensive work, Ivan failed to show up at the office and his place was taken by one of the desk men, older but less qualified for that position of responsibility. It was generally

understood on these occasions that Ivan was on one of his poker sprees which lasted until he returned to the office several weeks later, a nervous wreck and in debt to the extent of several hundred dollars. In spite of his trembling hands and bloodshot eyes, he was always welcomed like a prodigal son. For the paper never ran so smoothly as when his shaking fingers were fumbling among the evening papers for rewrite stuff and among the syndicate news sheets for features.

No one knew how he had been educated–how he had come by his knowledge of languages and literature. Nor was anything known of his family. (Most of the young men and women, in fact, that June came in contact with were remarkably reticent about families. For all she knew they might have been spontaneous growths with no background but their hall bedrooms and the newspaper office. June was engagingly frank about hers. Mother Grace and Adele often met her in the office around six for little dinner parties at which Ivan or Chester or Emil clamored to be the host.)

The Guillotine column, a special feature of the paper was run by Chester, who had a nose like that of Cyrano–his favorite character–keen eyes, a Rabelaisian tongue which June soon got used to, and ferocious ambition. He ran the column for the fun of it, and was paid for sitting at the desk as a copy reader from five in the evening until one in the morning. Outside of the office he toiled at a three-act problem drama, relaxing from his great work by writing verse and short stories that were usually rejected.

When the three of them could leave the desk at the same time it was usual for them to eat together. June protested at first, thinking of her diet. In spite of her attempt to satirize diet squads, she wanted to treat the matter fairly. “If I can get a dinner for a quarter, I’ll go,” she told them the first time she was invited. “That’s the most my budget allows.”

So the boys took pains to find cheap eating-houses and she overruled all their attempts to treat, and stuck to her regime as nearly as possible.

So far, June’s only dissipations had been at Child’s on lower Park Row when she sat with her three new friends and talked, over pancakes and coffee. There was no longer a chance to indulge in the ranting to which Adele and Mother Grace took exception. Everybody always wanted to talk at once and June was content to sit and listen, throwing in a word now and then to keep them at it. Often they sat till three, June smoking surreptitiously, although at that late hour the manager smiled leniently. Other newspaper workers came in and soon left. Pressmen with smudged faces came to eat and took away coffee in pails. Occasional trucks rumbled by through the cold night and every half hour a Third Avenue car clanged as it passed the Bridge. Diagonally across the street, a fruit stand with glaring lights kept busy. Continuously street cars came around the loop of the Bridge, received one or two sleepy night workers and went their fan-shaped way into Brooklyn. Paper boys shouted even at that sad hour of the morning, and newspaper wagons clattered along the cobbles to receive their load of papers and raced off.

And Ivan and Chester and June talked on and on. Emil, another reporter, usually rushed away after half an hour’s chat. “He’s got a girl uptown,” they told June regretfully. “But he’ll get over it in a couple of months and be a night

owl once more. We all have our spells when we desert the pack for a while. Yours will come."

"No, indeed," said June, stretching luxuriously. "I intend to be free and have to answer to no one."

Ivan was sympathetic but Chester ridiculed her. "In the newspaper and artistic crowd, nobody remains free. They are all the victims of their desire for love, and because they have so-called freedom–to experiment and taste and try–they are all the more victims of their passions."

"Shut up, Chester! Don't disillusion June. She's too young. Besides all this talk of yours has just sprung up in the last couple of months. You're the slave of a chastity ideal. If anyone ever had a complex, you have one now."

What a complex was, June did not know at that time, but she soon found out where he got his purity ideal. One freezing night when she shivered at the thought of her cold little room, into which the breath of seven sleepers stole through the cracks around the door if she did not open the window, Chester insisted on her accompanying him to the flat of a friend of his, Ellen Winter.

"It's steam-heated," he told her, "and she'll have coffee ready. She usually waits up for me if I let her know I'm going to stop in. I live on the next block."

In a little book-lined sitting-room, Ellen received the three of them, sitting graciously behind an electric percolator. She had a mass of bright golden hair, prim features and a decisive way of talking. June felt immediately that here was one of those comfortable people who always know exactly what is right for them to do and whose principles never waver.

Ellen also was working on a play, and when June finally fell asleep curled up on the cushion-strewn sofa, talk of technique and criticism of everything that had been written for the last twenty years ran in her ears.

After that, Ellen often telephoned June in the evening and asked her to spend the night, an invitation June was glad to accept. Ellen was a self-reliant young woman with a sharp tongue and rigid ideals which kept other women at a distance. She took the woman of the world pose with June and the latter listened to all she had to say in silence. She was ten years older than June and she had a gratified feeling that June realized those ten years and looked up to her as an experienced woman.

June admired her abilities and secretly condemned her intolerance of other peoples' morals. But then, she reflected, she had a reason for her condemnation. For Ellen, as she soon found out, was in love with Chester and was unable to marry him. Chester had referred darkly to a tragedy in his life on one occasion when June dined with him alone. Another time it came out. He had made an unfortunate marriage when he was twenty and had one child. (He was twenty-five now.) The girl was continually unfaithful to him, she admitted it, but he could get no proof that would procure him a divorce and give him the custody of the child and he had no money with which to hire a lawyer to conduct the case for him. As a consequence, whenever he and Ellen remembered it, they looked darkly on life and all women.

"A pure woman in these days is the rarest thing under the sun," Ellen often told June solemnly. "Modern women think nothing of their virtue and sacrifice it

without giving it a thought.
"My dear, your virginity is the only thing you have. Hold on to it."
On reflection, June did not think the attitude a nice one.
"She keeps harping on virginity," she told her mother. "She talks of it as though it were a commodity, a thing we have to sell. We give up our virginity and a man gives us a home, and permission to bear his children and his name. If we haven't got virginity, we're to be cast into outer darkness. Nothing else we've got is of any account–only virginity. Oh–I'm sick of the word."
"This Ellen takes the worldly attitude which is the only sensible one to take seeing the world is what it is," her mother told her. "She's probably a very fine woman and you can't come to any harm through listening to her talk."
June made another friend of whom her mother could not possibly approve. This was Billy Burton, a pert little artist, whose one idea in life was to follow the whim. That her whim often created situations bothered her not at all. Situations were the breath of life to her. As she herself often signed rapturously, "Ah, that was a situation!" and she defined the word as a scene, a mass of complications, a melee, a ticklish moment–in fact a mess.
She and Ellen Winter never spoke to each other if they could help it, but a conversation between them would have run something like this, didactically:
Billy– "Sex is a barrier between men and women keeping them from a complete understanding of one another. Barriers are made to be broken down. If I meet a poet or artist or writer that I feel to be big of soul, that I feel I can learn from, and sex comes up between us and might prevent me from having a more perfect understanding of him, I let it be broken down. Once there are no barriers and men don't want to get something out of a woman in the way of sex, there is complete freedom between the sexes. At no other time will you have that."
Ellen– "But think of the value men set upon a woman's virtue."
Billy–sniffily, "I suppose that's why you set such a value on it."
Ellen– "A woman's virtue is a gift which a woman brings her husband. She always feels the lack of it if she hasn't it to give."
Billy– "I count the gifts of the mind of far more worth than the gifts of the body. I'm spiritually better off than you are, because I put the body where it belongs. Dust to dust and that sort of thing. You exalt it."
Ellen– "It's only by keeping purity of the body that you can have purity of the mind. The men with whom I came in contact know that I am pure and I get the best and purest in them in my intercourse with them. And they know they can expect nothing from me, so sex doesn't come up between us."
Billy– "But I don't want to know the best and the purest in life. I want to know the good and the evil, the pure and the impure. And I do know both and I love all that life has to show me. I can't hate anything and I can't judge anybody or anything, so I am very happy."
Ellen– "According to your lights. But once you come up against love which is the biggest thing in the world, and the man scorns you for looseness of living, and refuses that which other men have taken so lightly, then you will know remorse."
Billy– "My love affairs are to me merely incidents in an erotic education. And this education ought to make any man love me more instead of less. Think of

all I can teach the man I love. For a woman learns more by a free life than a man ever does."
Ellen– "Men don't want to be taught, they want to teach."
But a conversation of this kind could never have taken place between Ellen and Billy, for their intercourse was of the briefest. It could not have taken place between what the world considers a good woman and a not-good one because each has such conviction of truth that they would never argue.
June, being eighteen and of few convictions made her mind the battleground and often, unknown to themselves, Billy and Ellen fought it out there. That neither side had the victory, it is unnecessary to say.
June became acquainted with Billy through Ivan who was a special friend of hers, and the two girls became immediately fond of each other. The fact that Billy "sexed" as she called it, and June didn't, was no barrier between them. June liked the little artist because she felt that at heart Billy had as few convictions as she did. Her proclaimed attitude towards sex was a justification for whatever she did, and June could not help but admire the ease with which she formulated a creed for herself.
After the diet squad had retired and June was living as precariously on her twelve dollars a week as she had on her five, she often made her way to Billy's hovel of a room to find her still in bed, hair uncombed, unwashed, wrapped in a soiled kimona in which she had probably slept, puffing furiously at a cigarette in a long green holder that matched her eyes. This morning there was the usual pad on her lap and she was listlessly drawing one nude and decadent woman after another and throwing them on the floor.
"Hell, hell, hell!" she kept muttering softly to herself, as she saw June come in. Then, "Oh, you darling. Just in time to prepare me some moral support. I've been awake for an hour and haven't had the gumption to get up and get it for myself."
Curtained off on the other side of the room June found coffee and when she had put it on the little gas stove she sat on the edge of Billy's bed and surveyed her work. The utter clutter in which the little artist lived had repelled her at first and she had wondered how it was that anyone so unaesthetically untidy could have so many friends. But dropping in of a morning when she always saw her at her worst, she soon became used to externals and devoted her attention to Billy's whimsical gossip.
"You're wasting enough paper there," she remarked as another sheet fell to the floor.
"I can't exactly get it. Is that the moral support which I hear boiling? If it is, you'll find cream on the window sill and an extra cup in the closet on the floor. Whew! That's hot," and she set the cup of coffee on the floor by her low bed. "And now I'll tell you what else you can do for me. Just strip off your clothes–the room's warm enough, and while you're drinking your coffee I'll sketch you."
Although June would not have thought of undressing before her mother or Adele, it was impossible to refuse Billy's request. So June quickly slipped out of her clothes and curled up on the end of the sofa which was softer than the chair and solaced herself for the discomfort of unaccustomed nudity with a cigarette.

"You have just the sort of impalpable figure that I am expected to draw for that blooming magazine," Billy said with satisfaction as she started to work. "Don't try to sit still. Move around all you want to. I want just a general impression, anatomically correct and yet impossibly lissome. I really think you more nearly approach the sort of stuff I draw than any body I've ever seen. You'll probably have a beautiful figure by the time you're thirty. Have the men around here started to make love to you? You're just the type, you know."

June didn't know what the type was, but she told her friend, "Yes, very nicely. But not violently enough to be convincing."

"What do you want them to do? Rape you? Violence has gone out of fashion, don't you know that?"

"I enjoy it immensely until they try to kiss me. But there is a sort of futility about their love making. It's purposeless–as though they did it because everybody else does it. I don't get half so many thrills as I thought I would when I became grown up and untrammeled."

"Unawakened," said Billy with her pencil in her mouth.

"No, pure, Ellen Winter would say," June put in rather maliciously.

"It's a lucky thing I don't live at home now," June told Adele on one of her frequent visits home. "I'd have so much to talk about that you'd never get a word in edgewise. It's all about causes, too,–the poor working girl, the police system, homes for fallen women and how they should be run, birth control, pacifism and any number of other things. But all I have time to tell you about are my adventures."

"We'd a great deal rather hear them than the conclusions you draw from them," Mother Grace said. "They're bad enough for a mother to hear about anyway. Can't you manage to avoid some of these experiences of yours?"

"I don't go out of my way looking for them," June protested aggrievedly. "If they worry you, I won't tell you any more."

"Of course you'll tell me. I'd rather know exactly what I'm worrying about. I should worry in any case. If you didn't keep me informed as to what you were doing and where you were living, think how shocked I would have been when Mrs. Gunther called me up that time."

The woman that Mother Grace referred to was the chief factor in an unpleasant experience June had had several months after she had left home. On the lower East Side near the river she stumbled upon an old parish house next to an Episcopalian church that had a slave gallery. She explored the church which had been opened for a vesper service and wished also to explore the parish house next door when she noticed a small sign tucked unobtrusively away in one window announcing that there were rooms for rent. She was immediately fascinated by the somber atmosphere of the place, and the result was she rented the room (two dollars a week) and moved in the next day. It was the completeness of its desolation which attracted her. The first floor was occupied by a young woman with an old husband, the rector of the church. Mrs. Gunther puttered around the two rooms on the first floor of the house where she and her husband lived, leaving her lodgers to care for their own rooms as best they could. The beds were never made, the floors were never swept, clean towels were scarce and hot

water was unknown.
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