

The Last Leaf

There is a little area west of Washington square called Greenwich Village. The Streets there are crazy and break themselves into small parts called "places." These "places" make strange angles and curves. One street even crosses itself twice. Artists soon came to Greenwich Village, looking for big windows, high ceilings and low rents. They called themselves a "*colony*."

At the top of a three-story brick building Sue and Joanna had their studio. Sue was from Maine, Joanna from California. They had met at an Italian restaurant, and found that their tastes in art, potato salad and *flared pants* were so similar that they moved in together.

That was in May. In November a cold, unseen stranger, whom the doctors called Pneumonia, visited the colony. He touched one here and there with icy fingers. Over on the east side this killer travelled easily, finding many victims, but he moved more slowly through the maze of narrow "places."

Mr. Pneumonia was not a nice old gentleman. It wasn't fair that he would *strike* a skinny young woman who was used to Californian sun and gentle breezes. But he did. He struck Joanna, and she lay in bed hardly moving, looking out the window at a brick wall.

One morning the busy doctor had a secret talk with Sue in the hallway.

"She has *one change in ten*," he said, "but she has to want to live. I think your friend has decided that she will not get better. Is there anything she lives for?"

"She – she wanted to paint the Bay of Naples someday," said Sue.

"Paint? Nonsense! Has she anything on her mind worth thinking about – a man, for example?"

"A man?" said Sue, with an annoyed *note* in her voice. "Is a man worth... No, doctor, there is nothing like that."

"Well, that is a problem, then," said the doctor. "I will do everything that I can do. But once a patient gives up, medicine loses half its power. You need to get her to ask one question about the new winter style in pants. Then I will promise you a *one-in-five* chance for her, instead of one-in-ten."

After the doctor had gone Sue cried. then she skipped into Joanna's room with her drawing board, whistling a happy tune.

Joanna lay still under the blanket, with her face toward the window. Sue stopped whistling, thinking she was asleep.

She set up her drawing board and began a pen-and-ink drawing to illustrate a magazine story. Young artists must *climb the ladder to* Art by drawing pictures for magazines stories that young