

Who is Guilty?

By Sarah B. Smith

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I dedicate this book with love to my husband, Max. M. Smith and to the memory of my son, Gerald B. Smith, whose short life brought me so much joy.

Sarah B. Smith



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Table of Contents

Forward.....	6
Mary.....	8
Torn Shoes.....	11
Guilty!.....	13
A Comedy.....	16
She Follows.....	19
Fear.....	21
The Mouse.....	23
His Eyes.....	25
The Eternal Bridegroom.....	29
Sin.....	31
His Memories.....	33
A Madam.....	36
A Murder.....	39
Papa is a Bum.....	41
The Statue.....	42
Sister vs. Sister.....	44
The Repressed.....	47
Moshke Tiger.....	49
A Mother.....	51
Teeth.....	53
Who is Guilty?.....	56
An Engagement.....	59
Resurrection of the Dead.....	62
A Criminal.....	64
Competitors.....	67
The Tragedy of a Fool.....	70
Bad Words.....	72
Outfoxed.....	74
The Living Dead.....	77
Fire!.....	79
Ben D. David.....	81
The Coquette.....	83
The Mother and Children.....	85
His Diploma.....	87
Revenge.....	90
Foiled.....	92
Her Inheritance.....	95
Friend.....	98
The Strict Law.....	100
The One-Time Author.....	103
A Bride from the Underworld.....	105
The Truth.....	107
The Doctor's Wife.....	109
The Liars.....	112
A Love with Punches.....	115
Little Sisters.....	117

The Charitable Lady	121
.....
Freed.....	124
The Notebook.....	126
Sister.....	128
A "Murder".....	130
Dowry.....	133
A Doctor.....	135
Apollo's Lover.....	137
Interrupted Careers.....	140
The Little Witness.....	142

Forward

Sarah B. Smith is not a name totally unknown to the Yiddish reader. For the last several years her name was often seen in one of the greatest Yiddish daily newspapers. But her name is completely new on a book. This is the first collection of her writings in a form that will make possible the true valuation of her worth.

We must say right from the beginning that the author does not pretend to have produced great literary masterworks. As a member of a large newspaper staff, as one who has to regularly produce reading matter for the readers, she does not dwell too long on the *form* of the articles that she has created with her pen; that alone makes it impossible for the creations to have every characteristic that is fundamental to true art.

But Sarah B. Smith is an artist of the soul. She has an eye to see the tragic and the comic in life, and she sees it in places where other people would never have seen it. All of the vignettes collected here, are nothing more than her impressions of what she encountered in the courthouses in the great, noisy world city of New York. Not a single detail is invented, rather each detail has been captured. With her sharp eye she peers into the situations that bring before justice so many people from such varied character and classes, and in a few lines she reveals to us their sorrows and joys, their tears and laughter, in a manner that doesn't permit us to be indifferent.

Therein lies her art.

She does not need to paint with a lot of colors. She is uncomplicated and somewhat primitive. However, she never fails to place before us a complete picture, not only of the person being judged, but of all the other people around. The portrait is not always polished, or complete in every detail, but always clear, and sufficient to move our sympathies and call out our interest. There is a great deal of humanity in everyone, even in the most brutal or those who have fallen the lowest, such that our heart is seized by the verdict against every lawbreaker. Against our will the thought comes to mind: Who is Guilty?

Yes, who is guilty?

Sarah B. Smith, seeing so many lawbreakers pass before her in the courthouses, does not forget for a minute that all the gangsters, swindlers, charlatans, bigamists, alphonsees, prostitutes, murderers and other unfortunate creatures are all just people in chains, people whose behavior is dictated by the circumstances under which they live, and they can not be held totally responsible for their bad deeds. She writes about them with so much sympathy, that she carries the reader along with her. She does not propagandize. She does not lecture. She only recounts. She is realistic in the highest degree. She does not draw conclusions. She holds herself in the background. But she reaches her goal. She strives to strongly engage the reader, and what more can a writer hope for?

It has been ten years since Sarah B. Smith began writing. She is the first female professional writer for a Jewish newspaper in America. The writer of these lines assisted her in the early days, and it is a great pleasure for him to see how she has developed in the past few years to become an important news reporter.

The images from the courthouses which Mrs. Smith will place before you for the first time in book

form are certainly not the best things she will ever create in her life. She is still developing. When her works achieve a more literary form, she will be one to reckon with in Yiddish literature. She has a talent for painting complete pictures with only a few strokes. From her will grow a very interesting power as a writer of short fiction. But also now, one can read her with great pleasure, because she grabs the reader with a natural, not artificial manner.

Her portraits are, perhaps, somewhat monotone. But one should keep in mind that the works have to do with lawbreakers, with people who were caught in the same net, and the goddess of justice is always strong, earnest and monotone. Nevertheless, the writer is able from time to time to find a human impression in even the hardest Madame Justice, and sometimes even a hint of a smile through the tightly-pressed lips. And that is thanks to the fact that Madame Smith is a bighearted person who sees for herself only the eternal humanity in mankind and in the gods that men have created for themselves.

William Edlin
May 25, 1919

Mary

Mary G.! – The short, fat clerk called out.

From among a long line of prisoners who were seated on the right side near the iron grates, Mary stood up. Her steps were unsteady, as if she were measuring the distance.

She came before the judge.

The young judge looked thoughtfully at her for a few seconds, and with a half smile he said:

“Mary. You seem a little changed, what are you doing back here?”

“Changed for the better or the worse?” – She asked, ignoring his last words.

“Worse, Mary!” – He clarified in a friendly tone.

“A nice compliment you give me,” she said with a smile.

I don't know if her smile really could be called a smile. She curled her dry lips in an odd manner. Only in her eyes could you see a little of the smile, the rest of her face had a sour look. It was a scary face! I have seen a lot of faces among the outcasts of society, ugly faces, but ugly was something different than this.

The most noteworthy was the nervous movement of her chin. The chin was pretty, nearly perfectly formed, a little pointed, and a second later it turned a little to the side, taking with it half of her mouth and one side of her nose.

Her mouth was not bad. Rather full lips, a little too dry but with a crooked smile on it.

A longish nose, sprinkled with a lot of freckles, and beneath the deep red false color on her cheeks the freckles showed up blue, sickly.

It was a face that you would instinctively back away from...

Eyes black, tired, with thick swollen eyelids. The forehead scratched red, half covered by a dirty, black straw hat, under which in great disorder hung long strands of half gray hair.

Her clothes were very worn. A long green-black coat, with dirty, greasy threadbare, too long, sleeves. From the sleeves shown two odd, dirty hands.

Two big men's shoes, bound, not tied, with brown straps. Thin black socks with several holes. In one sock you could see a small blue box.

And that was Mary!

And that was who smiled.

“Mary, what are you doing back here?” – The judge asked once again.

“I missed you, Your Honor,” she answered with a wink.

The young judge turned red. He stiffly stuck out his chest and shoulders. He gave his tiny mustache a twist, and trying to be severe with an odd voice he quietly said:

“Mary, be serious.”

“What for? You are serious for the both of us.”

“Officer, what is the complaint against her? – The judge turned impatiently to the tall, thin policeman.

The lawman stepped up onto the high witness stand, swore to tell the truth, and with a grave monotone voice explained:

“I saw her sleeping in the park again. She was drunk without a cent in her pocket. I took her away to night court, and from there I was instructed to bring her here, since this is not her first offense.”

“And that is not your first lie!” she said defiantly, looking the policeman right in the eye.

“Mary, Mary!” – the judge warned her.

“I am not insulted by such,” the policeman calmly explained.

“I know, if I were not afraid that I would be punished severely, I would say a few things to you, that you would find insulting! For example, I would remind you of a few years back when I did have a “cent in my pocket.”

She couldn't speak any farther, a very fat bailiff grabbed her arm.

With his little hammer the judge called everyone to order. Mary's defiant attitude dissolved, her face became submissive, with her head to one side she looked at the judge

“You slept in the park?” he asked.

“When one gets sleepy, one has to sleep.”

“Don't answer with a question!”

“Aha, you are becoming strict? Please, don't be dramatic, don't be proud. I hate that. Maybe next you are going to judge all of my sins? Me remember everything? Feh, I won't, I want to forget! I have sinned? I slept in the park? Send me away! How long, fifteen days, twenty days? Say, and an end on it!”

The judge listened calmly to her. She had spoken quickly, excitedly. And her chin danced nervously. He let out a deep sigh, then mechanically said:

“Thirty days!”

Mary was a little surprised. She shrugged her shoulders then said defiantly:

“Ha, you've become vengeful?”

The fat bailiff took her by the arm, and began to lead her out. Quickly, almost unnoticed, she snatched the little blue box from her sock, slipped something from it into her mouth, and slipped the packet back into her sock.

The tall, thin policeman saw it, and raising his hand he called out:

“Your Honor, she has morphine in her sock!”

“Mary, yes?” the judge asked.

“Take it!” Mary said and stuck out her foot.

The fat bailiff bent down with difficulty and took the little box from the ripped sock and tossed it to the clerk. And Mary was led away.

Torn Shoes

He had wanted very much to be rich. His very young life had been *one* long struggle for money.

When he was still very little, 'money' was the most popular word in his house. Money, money money – the struggle was always about money. It was what they strove for and they talked about it constantly.

When he was little, he often went without shoes, and at night when he lay in his bed he decided for himself that when he grew up and earned money he would buy shoes. A lot of shoes.

His dreams about a lot of shoes in the end did not come true. In spite of the fact that he had worked for four years it was often the case that he would hide one shoe under the other, because one was torn. Above all he was ashamed when riding the subway or the streetcar where people had to sit for a long time with their feet in front of them. Then he would shove his feet under the seat, and it seemed to him that those who were sitting across from him and next to him, did not look only at their newspapers, but sneaked looks at his torn shoes.

He liked the subway better when it was packed, and his shoes did not show. Then he could forget about his shoes and think about other things. About good things, because dreaming was a part of his life. Sometimes he dreamed that he worked in the bank, where he was employed as a messenger boy, but was an important official there and made a lot of money and did important things.

First off, he would fire the short-sighted clerk who was always yelling at him, then secondly, he would buy shoes. A lot of shoes.

For Mama – yellow, pretty, with a high heel; for sister – half white and half black with a lot of buttons, and for Papa... Oh, no, he will not buy shoes for Papa, because he is sure that Papa often drank the money instead of buying him shoes and he is angry with Papa.

However, for himself he would buy black, yellow and colored ones such as would squeak when you walked and draw attention to the fact that his feet were resplendent with the beautiful, squeaking shoes. He wants to look at them, but it is very crowded in the subway.

Bending over, he remembers the packet of money laying in the leather courier bag he was holding in his hand and was supposed to take to another bank. He started trying to calculate how many shoes he could buy with it. He was shocked to realize that, it appeared, he could buy shoes for everyone he knew.

Soon he decided that he wanted to know how much was in there and would take a look. He opened the bag, but it was too crowded in the subway. He got off at the next station, and began counting the money.

Fifteen thousand dollars!

He was a little shocked. He looked around and realized that he was not at the right station. He was at 42nd Street, Grand Central. He shuddered and closed the bag.

He stood by and waited for a train going downtown. It was very busy. He looked down at his left shoe

which was torn at the toe, there, where everybody could see, and he started to run.

From that point, everything began to go just as it had in his dreams about being rich. He lived, he bought diamonds and he bought shoes, a lot of shoes, but it only lasted a few months. The New York detectives found out that he was in Chicago, and his dream was over.

He told me all of this in prison “Pen... where he waited for his “next..

Now he stood with bowed head as the jury declared him guilty.

The judge gave him a long lecture and stuck him in a reformatory for three years.

As the bailiff escorted him out, he said to me quietly:

“All twelve jurors have nice shoes, and I left mine behind in Chicago...”

Guilty!

There was dead silence in the court room.

Most of those present were pale and tense. They looked nervously at the door where the jury would enter.

All were curious to lean the verdict – His friends and his enemies.

The accused, whose life was hanging in the air sat motionless with his long thin hands poised on his knees.

With an intense stare he looked at his hands – the hands with which he had killed his young wife.

His cold, dark eyes had often lifted to look at the clock. He looked impatiently at the clock which moved so slowly as though it understood the misfortune that the next few minutes would bring him...

His deep, musical voice still sounded in my ears, and when he moved his bluish lips I realized he was speaking. He recounted again the gruesome tragedy.

Slowly and with a heavy demeanor, his lawyer by his side, he repeated the details of those horrifying moments.

He spoke each word distinctly as though forcing each one out. One had the feeling that he spoke the truth.

His mother was a widow, he cared for her. She wanted for nothing up to the time he met Jenny.

Jenny was in a very bad situation when he first got to know her.

She would get through the day with a bottle of milk and some cereal. She was very gentle, but pretty, a white, pale beauty.

Everything she earned she spent on piano lessons, music – she wanted to be a musician.

He helped her, she protested, but he helped her.

They got married. In a short time she blossomed to her full glory...

And her music also blossomed.

Quickly, quickly all of her hopes were fulfilled. Long hours into the night he would sit and listen to her play.

He became very tired after a long day of hard work, and it was hard for him to keep his eyes open until late in the evening.

He was an engineer and slowly his weariness began to affect his work...

There came nights when he fall asleep in the chair next to the piano. She felt terribly insulted by that, and as a result she would be angry with him for days at a time.

When the hopes for her future success were at their highest, her longing for it grew every day.

He began to be more stingy with his mother in order to fulfill his wife's ambitions.

After a while she began to go to concerts by herself. She was becoming more beautiful and he more exhausted. She was coming home later, and he was becoming bitter toward her.

One afternoon he came home very upset. Work had not gone well.

“Jenny continued getting dressed,” – he recounted – “Her greeting was horribly cold. After a few minutes of silence she began to scold me, that I was ignoring her, did nothing but sleep, and she hated that.”

“For the first time I reproached her about the time when she went hungry.”

“That got her very upset, she suddenly started tearing her clothes off, everything, she said, she would give back to me.”

I laughed bitterly. “Everything? Is that even possible?”

“Oh, what a scene it turned into!”

He covered his pale face with both hands, and, trying to control himself, he continued:

“Terrible words flew from her lips. Stamping her foot with each one, she screamed that she did not love me, never loved me, she only married me because I was a 'convenience'... But now she was tired, and could no longer hide it!”

“I can not tell you what happened after that, it is hard to recall.”

“She laughed at me, at my simple, unmusical soul, flabby body, my 'natural disposition' to sleep all the time, at everything!”

“A thousand times over she swore that she never loved me, I don't know but that I went crazy,” he said wiping the perspiration from his brow.

“I shot and now I am here,” he ended with a crooked smile and again covered his face with his hands.

It seemed like the hands of the clock had not budged. At this point the judge entered and made his dramatic walk to the bench. He held his hand with with calculated effect over his heart. (Every day in the same place.) He made his theatrical bow to the audience. Something about that in this terribly serious moment seemed almost laughable.

The Jury with pale, earnest faces, with pressed lips walked with measured steps slowly to the jury box.

Quietly, in a tense voice the jury foreman reported their decision: Guilty!

Everyone looked at the accused, I looked also. It seemed to me that he looked smaller and smaller every second...

His tall form became small, the veins on his forehead grew bigger and blue. Quick as a lightning bolt, he snatched the water glass from the table, smashed it with his hand and cut his own throat.

A terrible tumult ensued. Most just saw blood. Blood spewed from the arteries he severed.

Women fainted and men began to run, everything was red. Only the hands of the clock were black – horribly black...

A Comedy

A friend asked me: "Why don't you write a comedy sometime? Surely you must hear a lot of funny stories in court." I agreed with him, but it is difficult. Court is a building of tears and misfortune; There is where your soul stripped naked. There, even the comedies are tragedies. Every comedy has at its root a tragedy. For example: I think that every child that is born into the world is entitled to a bath. His own bath where their little limbs can splash about and where one sees their first jokes while playing in the water by splashing water on their smiling mother. Can you see the joke in the fact that a father can not care for his child by giving it a bath? And yet is such an event a joke in court. That early morning everyone laughed. Many with bitter, heavy hearts, but they laughed.

Two big, strong policemen brought him in. He looked very small beside them. From his body, which was average sized, his clothes hung loosely. His thin face appeared as though it had not been shaved for several days. A pair of short, yellowed mustaches drooped down in his narrow mouth. His eyes were wild and frightened. In his hand he was holding on tightly to a small bathing tub.

The policemen, the frightened man and the little bathtub made for a tragicomic scene. Hearty laughter broke out in the courtroom. People started making jokes: "He needs a bath," "Look, is he going to take a bath?" "The fool, why didn't he steal a bigger bathtub? Is he afraid of big bodies of water?" These and similar jokes were heard from all parts of the courtroom. The young judge also smiled and like before slowly rapped with his little hammer for order.

This was a police court where newly arrested suspects are brought. Here it is decided if the suspect will be held for trial or set free.

With a light push the fat policemen nudged the upset young man toward the judge. The young man looked around fearfully, stared for a while at the clock then set the little bathtub down next to himself.

The judge looked at him for a long time and with a light tone in his voice asked:

"Did you steal that bathtub?"

The young man shuddered slightly. One of the policemen coughed and then explained:

"No, Your Honor!"

"So, why did you bring him here?"

"He got into a fight with the guard at the Third Avenue elevated station," the second policeman answered.

The young judge sat back in his chair and looked at the frightened man for a few seconds.

"He doesn't look like someone who gets into fights," he said decisively.

"The guard said he did."

“Where is the guard?”

“He continued to ride on.”

“Did you see them fighting?”

“N-no,” the policemen responded reluctantly.

The judge smiled again and said:

“I think I will hear you out,” he said turning to the accused.

The frightened man shuddered again, and grasping the railing with both hands he said quietly:

“I wanted to get on the train and he pushed me away, pushed me away.”

“Why?”

“While... while... I... I didn't know that I couldn't carry the bathtub on the train. He didn't tell me that, he just pushed me away. Then I called him a name which was appropriate for him.

“What did you want with the bathtub?” the judge asked.

“I didn't mean any harm, I assure you.”

“But what did you do with the bathtub?” the judge asked, smiling.

In the courtroom there was sniffling laughter.

“My, my sister lives in Suffolk Street, I got it from her. She will swear to it.”

“But why?!”

“Didn't I tell you? See now, you don't know!” – And his eyes lit up with a happy cheerfulness, all of the fright left his face and it was transformed.

With a calm, changed voice he continued on:

“My wife, Mary, gave birth to a baby boy. We had both wanted a boy. And as soon as they told me the good news, I ran straight to my sister in Suffolk Street. That is, I rode there, because we live on 103rd Street. I ran there to get the bathtub because my sister doesn't need it anymore, and I can't afford to buy one. I guess that makes me a bum!”

“And the child never got a bath?” the judge asked.

“No, no! And Mary doesn't know what happened to me,” he answered looking with fright at the hands of the clock which were moving fast.

“So, go home and give your child a bath,” the judge said.

As soon as he uttered these words the man took off running, holding the little bathtub with both hands.

The whole courtroom had a good laugh...

She Follows

He is a gangster and she is his girlfriend. He steals and she keeps the loot. He shoots and she keeps the revolver. He watches out for himself and she helps him.

He is tall, dark with a large pointed nose, with thick lips which are always dry and always have a very unpleasant expression on them. With large prominent ears that hang down like a dog's. The only thing attractive about him is his eyes. They are big, very black, caressing. One moment still, longing. In the next – fiery, seductive.

He is on trial for attacking a seventy-year-old man. When I saw the gangster and his girlfriend in court, I could not understand what sort of mysterious bond of nature bound this young, blond woman to this tall, brutal man.

She was so young, with such a childish appearance, that it reminded me of paintings of little girls that painters used to paint years ago and now hang in museums. When I looked at her I wondered why we don't see little girls like that today. Her eyes were a childish-blue, and when she looked at him they became moist and full of pleading.

She had a high forehead, intelligent. Something made me want to stroke her brow.

She sat in the last row and was always tugging at her snow-white neck and looking at him.

He was sitting – big, broad-shouldered at the defendant's table. Seldom did he cast a glance at the pale child. When he did look her way, her face lit up with heavenly joy.

A lot of witnesses testified about his bad deeds, but the young woman seemed not to hear a word of it: As though she were certain that none of it were true. She simply looked at him. Yet, from where she was sitting she could only see the back of his thick, shaved neck. But she was happy with that.

In the dark of night he had gotten together with some of his friends and jumped an old man. They robbed him of his watch and a few dollars. They beat him up and ran away. The friends disappeared and he got caught.

From the testimony it came to light that they did not jump the old man for the couple of dollars he had on him. Rather the old man had an enemy who hired the thieves to beat the man up.

The young woman sighed deeply several times when the witnesses testified, and he bit his thick lips and smiled.

When the defense began, she was the first witness.

At first she appeared distraught and lost in the big witness chair. Stammering, she gave her name, address and age. Seventeen years! And she was the well-known girlfriend of the well-known gangster for two years!

His lawyer asked her:

“Do you know this young man?”

“Yes, for two years.”

“Do you know him to be a fine man?”

“Yes, yes.”

“Do you know where he was on the evening of April 4th?”

“I...”

Here she hesitated and with her mouth half open she looked at the accused.

He bit his lips. His beautiful, dark eyes became terrifying. An evil fire burnt in them. His chest heaved fast and his long ears trembled. He looked at her with a horrifying command in his eyes. She understood the order and followed it:

“He was with me,” she said decisively.

“Where?”

Once again her child-like eyes looked at him. She looked for the answer in his face, and again she followed, and with a forced laugh said:

“With me, with me in our room, hehe, with me...”

A big drop of sweat ran down from her childish forehead.

She looked at him again and now his thick lips smiled at her. Between those lips you could see two rows of beautiful teeth. Encouraged by that smile she repeated:

“With me. I swear to you that he was with me.”

The grave judge turned away in disdain.

Two hours later, when the jury declared the gangster guilty, the judge patiently implored the young girl to go home and be good. But she wept and cried out:

“I want to go with him, I want to go with him.”

Fear

The style of this trial was one of those where everything goes too slow, and the witnesses speak quietly, half stifled.

She was sitting, shattered, at the defendant's table. Her white head was distraught, hanging down on her chest. Her whole appearance was that of old age, or at least of a middle-aged woman. But when she lifted that white head, she looked at you with big eyes, and very deep in those big eyes you could see the signs of her pain. Also the face was young, except for two deep wrinkles by her mouth that spoke of great sorrow.

In the courtroom there were only men. Except for a few journalists the guard at the high doors had not allowed any women to enter.

“The testimony is not for a woman's ears,” he said each time when a woman wanted to come in.

The charge against the old-young woman was “assault,” and the accuser was her own husband!

The sensationalism, that which the guard by the door deemed not proper for the ears of a lady, came from the statement of her husband!

But those who were waiting for it were disappointed because the husband was a very reluctant witness. In half chopped-up words and a weak voice he answered the questions from the District Attorney.

When the first two witnesses, a policeman and a doctor, testified that they had encountered the man injured, his head cut by a bottle, the wife seemed indifferent. Only when the husband got to the witness chair did she seem curious, and with pressed lips she looked at him with a long, penetrating stare, which got him mixed up, and stammering, he gave his age: “Thirty-eight.”

He was a tall, broad-shouldered man with sympathetic blue eyes and a brutal feature around his full red lips.

Under his right ear is a deep red cut, recently healed, that ran nearly all the way to his square chin.

When his eyes met those of his wife, he quickly took out a white handkerchief and covered the cut. His hand shook.

His voice was unsteady when he answered the District Attorney's question as to who injured him.

“My wife.”

“With what?”

“With a bottle.”

“Why?”

I...I...I can't talk about that. I have said enough, I don't want to be a witness.”

The more the District Attorney asked and the Judge insisted, the more he fought their words, stammered, denied until he managed to squirm out from answering.

When she took the witness stand in her own defense, her face was very calm except for her lower lip which was bluish-white and trembled noticeably.

“How old?” Her lawyer asked her.

“Thirty-five.” came her quiet answer, and throughout the courtroom you could hear a murmur surprise:

“Thirty-five and already gray.”

“Children?”

“Yes. Six.”

“Did you throw a bottle at your husband's head?”

“Yes, a patent medicine, which I have been taking for a month to build up my strength, but it did not help.”

“Why did you do it?”

Because... because...” her pale face turned bright red and through her translucent skin one could see how the blood ran across her whole face, “I've become very nervous every evening. I am always nervous. Every day the children behave badly. I haven't been able to do anything with them. My head became big and heavy. Something got mixed up in my head. My youngest child is two-years old. When one child reached eighteen-months old, I always had another one. When the first three came it did not bother me. I was still young and strong. I had plenty of energy and I could still work. But with the last three I had already forgotten that I was a person. Working around six children and having to do for them, and get them clothed, is beyond my strength. The youngest is really the worst. I don't have the time to give him a little air. And since he was born I have been praying G-d that he will be the last. The thought of another child drives me crazy. When my husband smiles at me I hide... I am afraid of him... I am afraid for myself... On that evening I was so tired, so upset, my husband wanted to embrace me. The fear of having another child made me wild... The bottle of medicine was by my hand, and without thinking I threw it at his head. All I saw was blood. I had forgotten that once he was my beloved. I don't want any more children!”

Exhausted, she fell silent.

The jury said “Not Guilty,” and sent her home to go back to work.

The Mouse

So insignificantly small, and pitiful appear the human tools that are used by big swindlers in order to carry out their crimes.

When you look at this little person, he is small, very frightened, and gives you the impression of a little mouse.

He does not have the sure, the shameless look of a true criminal who has courage and inclination toward crimes, as dictated by his own will.

He is one of the little men that one sends, one of those that let themselves be easily led and for a few dollars they are ready to do all sorts of shameful crimes.

Just such a little mouse this morning was sitting at the defendant's table. Others, not he, had made thousands and thousands of dollars from his crimes: He was the one that got caught and *he*, the fool, would pay the price.

Just like a mouse in the dark of night, when people were asleep, he came out of his hole, looked around with his small, black eyes and did his damage. There was only one difference: His work endangered thousands of lives.

He was an arsonist. He set fires for money, often for a very small sum of money!

His work, took place in the early morning hours, with a little fear and with a little kerosene smeared on his hands, it earned him a small living. But for him, being a lazy person, was good enough to keep him from having to work a real job. He didn't understand that from his inhuman work, his bosses who hired him were getting rich.

And now, when the stern law was staring him in the eye, he sat there frightened, shrunken, as he listened to the witnesses, finally his little soul began to dance within him and he confessed.

His testimony drew in several 'respectable' individuals.

There was a whole gang of 'agents' who had gotten rich from the fires, and the proceeds totaled over a million dollars.

But he, the mouse, received only a tiny part of it, and he spoke with bitterness about those who merely used him as a tool and who had forgotten that even a tool can speak sometimes.

Now the tool was talking:

“They sent me, and I went.”

“What did they have you do?” the District Attorney asked.

“They had me make a fire, they didn't even tell me how to do it. I had to buy the kerosene myself, I had to carry the newspaper myself, I had to light the fire myself, and I had to run away by myself and

go tell them that everything went all right.”

“What did they tell you, why they were sending you to set the fire?”

“Because, because I understood for myself, that, that they were getting something from the people where I made the fire, that those, the ones who sent me, would tell the insurance company that it was a good, big fire.”

“What do you mean by “...a good, big fire”?”

“In the beginning they paid well. Sometimes a *whole hundred dollars*. But later they became stingy. For the last job I only got 50 dollars.”

“And when did you do the jobs?” the District Attorney continued his questioning.

“At night.”

“Did it ever occur to you that at night a lot of innocent people were sleeping and could be killed by your job?”

“Me, no, I never gave that a thought,” he answered with a foolish smile.

They questioned him for a long time, and he answered without understanding the gravity of his answers.

And when the judge passed his verdict, he took into consideration that the man was a fool and 'only' give him not less than twelve years and not more than twenty-four years in prison.

And he, the little mouse, smiled in gratitude.

His Eyes

The day was gray and colorless, the kind of gloomy Autumn day which brings sickness and sorrow... Very early in the day a heavy rain fell and the people who gathered together brought with them a lot of gloom into the not-too-warm atmosphere in the courtroom.

But the rain did not stop them. All of them came to hear the result of the long drawn-out trial. Everyone looked with curiosity at the beautiful child-murderer, who was sitting on the edge of her chair with her hands folded.

The calm appearance, the strong look and the large, blue eyes, which were always looking down at her long, pale, folded hands – that was the daily attitude of the accused. It was not a false, contrived attitude; even the heated arguments of her lawyer seemed not to interest her, as though they were not about her.

Such an attitude in a woman criminal is not seen very often. The usual court visitors are used to seeing a certain charm that even the ugliest of women make use of.

It was with that same expressionless face that she recounted her sorrowful child-tragedy.

For a long time her lawyer had been begging her to testify. The judge also encouraged her to speak, but she remained silent. Only when the judge took to severely threatening her, did her lips slowly open and sadly staring ahead she asked:

“Why didn't they let me die?”

The courtroom became completely quiet. Slowly she raised her beautiful eyes and looked at the judge, who nervously drummed his fingers on a law book.

“Because it is against the law!” he answered with a sorrowful tone.

For the first time her demeanor changed. A lightly ironic smile came to her thin lips.

“Against the law? That law should be erased from the book!”

Slowly she looked around the courtroom and quietly explained:

“I have committed a horrible atrocity... My own child strangled... My own child strangled... – with one hand she covered her eyes, and with the other hand she nervously turned a button on her coat – “I did it, and I want to pay for it with my life. I was very weak. I could hardly climb the stairs to the elevated station, wait for a train, and willingly jump, someone rescued me... And the end? – The electric chair, death?... I have no right, the law has more right to my life!...”

There she covered her eyes, bit her lip and went silent.

Quietly she answered her lawyer's question:

“28-years old, born in Austria, eleven years in America.”

“Who did you come to America with?”

“An Aunt brought me here.”

“Tell us about your childhood, you are an orphan?”

“When I was born my Mother went out of her mind. I don't tell you this to help with my defense. I think you are wrong in what you are saying, that when I murdered my child I was insane. I assure you, I am fully competent.”

After a short pause she continued:

“As you see, with my birth I brought misfortune. Four more children came along. They took them from my Mother. My oldest sister, who was eleven years old, raised me. My first memory is of curses. All of my siblings hated me. I took their mother from them...

My father... I don't know... It seems he never even gave me a kiss. When I got older I understood that he was angry because he could not marry. Mama was still alive.. And she lived, if you can call that living, for another eight years. She was locked in an asylum. It was an institution that was well known for the murderers who were sent there.

Once they took me there to see her. It seems one of our good neighbors thought that, perhaps, my Mother seeing me would clear her mind again.

It was an unfortunate idea. Mother apparently remembered that I was the source of her misfortune. Through the iron bars she looked at us, measured us, and when she saw that I was the smallest, she looked at me for a second. Oh, what a steely look she gave me! They weren't eyes, they were deep holes. At first the look was earnest, then she laughed wildly. And with both hands she began slapping me... Slapping me through the iron bars... Violently she pulled me to her, ripping my sleeve, making deep cuts on my hand.

When they pulled me from her, I was half-conscious, but I heard her wild yammering screams and the pounding of her head on the iron bars... I can still hear it...

A few days later they brought Mama home, dead.

When I was nine years old my sister got married. A short time later her husband disappeared, and she returned home. Home? Four empty walls... Father got married and went to live in another town. My brothers soon ran off.

My sisters and I lived off of doing hand-work. Rich ladies bought it off of us for a few pennies and we had two, often only one meal a day. My sister still hated me even more now. Her husband had left her when he learned about her Mother. And Mother became what she was because of me. I was once again the guilty person.”

She nervously wiped her forehead with cramped fingers, thought for a few minutes, and with a bitter smile she asked:

“Can you understand how that affected my childish thoughts? I hated everything. The sisters, the hard

black bread, the sewing, above all counting stitches with the sewing machine when I was making lace – I always got the counting mixed up.

My sister got a chill and became sick. We received two tickets to America. But I was the only one to go, my sister died.

I was very afraid of America. The Aunt who sent the tickets was my Mother's sister, and perhaps she would hate me, too. I was certain that *I* was guilty for Mother's insanity.

For a few weeks things were good for me. I went to school... In a short six weeks my Uncle died. My Aunt was left without any money and I was sent to work at a laundry. In my bitterest moments I still have to smile when I think back on that day... It was a small shop, and every time the door opened I had to hide under a table in case the visitor was an inspector from the Board of Health. They taught me to say in English: "I am fifteen years old." Once a female inspector found me under the table. She caught hold of me and asked me how old I was? Trembling, I answered, "Fifty-years old."

The boss was fined and I lost my job.

Another shop... Another experience... The Aunt remarried and I became a boarder, went to school at night, made a living and soon felt better... But my life was very empty. All around me I saw love. I learned quickly, went to lectures, read a great deal, but that alone did not make me happy, I wanted love...

Two years ago I met "him." – she said quickly – And soon he made me to know love...

We never spoke about the future. I was happy. When he kissed me I was in seventh heaven: When he stroked my hair, I often felt as though it was in place of my Mother, my Mother... My hungry heart was happy... Nothing bothered me. When we had known each other for two years, I felt as though I became Mother. I did not go in the shop any more. In my room I sang cheerful songs, and made sweet, little clothes... If..." – Once again her long, white hands covered her eyes, but just for a second. When she continued speaking, her voice was much weaker.

"His frequent visits became more seldom, and now I realize how he had become more distant and cold. But then I did not see it. When he told me that his mother was ill, I did not question him farther. Then he did not come for a whole week. I telephoned, wrote, sent telegrams – no answer. I was certain that his mother had passed away.

Three days after my child was born, I received a letter. The postmark was from Atlantic City. He had gotten married a week earlier. Now he was on his honeymoon. I survived that. You are men... It is surely hard to understand... Even then, I found excuses for him. It must certainly have been the influence of his Mother... He is a young dentist, she undoubtedly wanted a money-match... When my child was two days old, I learned from a friend that he had married a pretty-as-a-picture young woman that he had known for seven months.

A beauty... loved... I looked at my child for a long time. I don't know now what I was thinking... One thing hammered loudly in my head. With my kisses, with my hot kisses... He went off to another!... I pressed my child against me, he opened his eyes, and looked at me with *his* eyes. I don't know... When I looked at my hands I could not believe it, that I had done it... The tiny body was cold, the eyes staring, with something of a reproach in them looking at me. Feverishly, I got dressed, and slowly

slipped out of the room...”

Once again her hands covered her eyes.

Her lawyer spoke with the judge for a long time, portraying her insanity as inherited from her Mother.

When the judge brought the verdict, “guilty,” a sullen, but contented smile shown on her pale lips. When along with the verdict also came a plea to the judge to give her a lighter sentence because they believed that the crime was committed in a moment of insanity which was often seen in women following childbirth, one could see a look of disappointment cross her face.

And when the judge, with a short lecture, ordered her sent to a correctional institution, she shrugged her shoulders with indifference and with a mechanical step, slowly left the courtroom.

The Eternal Bridegroom

The accused seemed very familiar to me. Where do I know him from? The question hammered in my head the whole time he stood waiting for his turn.

The small man with his red cheeks, with his little, pinpoint eyes, which were deeply sunken in his big, awkward head, with the black mustache which he chewed on constantly, with the pompadour which nearly covered his whole, short forehead sort of reminded one of a hearty laugh. Laugh at his appearance? No, what else can it be?

“I want to be my own lawyer,” he said with a deep voice. And suddenly I remembered who he was. This was the man who never grows older, who fooled several women and is his own lawyer!

And then I laughed. Laughed along with all the spectators in court.

“Thirty-two,” answered the playboy who was clearly over forty.

The complainant against him was from a woman about sixty-years old. She told that a few months ago she gave him one hundred and fifty dollars for wedding expenses and to fix the house, but a few days before the wedding he disappeared.

The little man began his cross-examination, like a lawyer. He straightened his round shoulders, patted his pompadour, cleared his throat then asked in a firm voice:

“Where did you first meet me, in Boston or in New York? Answer “yes” or “no.””

The woman sat there surprised. In the courtroom there was laughter, even the judge coughed into his handkerchief.

“Answer “yes” or “no,” he yelled again, just as the woman was about to answer.

“The playboy thinks he is clever,” said the woman's lawyer.

“I object!” yelled the little man thrusting his finger in the air like a lawyer.

Finally, he finished his cross-examination and the lawyer for the complainant began to recount the woman's story. The whole time he spoke, the little man stood by proudly and remained silent, but when the lawyer said, “Do you know where he learned to be such a good lawyer?” He was sent up several times for conning young women, and fifteen years ago for bigamy. That's the young thirty-two year old man!”

“Ah, shut up!” the little man shouted, upset and totally forgetting his honorable lawyer demeanor.

The woman who had worked very hard for several years to save a hundred and fifty dollars, recounted in a monotone voice how the 'young man' made her 'wait' for him and delay the marriage which was to take place in a big hall, with a marvelous supper for four hundred people. I listened to her and wondered how she could speak so coldly about the huge banquet hall, the supper and the guests which seemed to be so important to her. And I imagined the scene: The bride in crown and veil, and the

white dress that every girl dreams of, and of the moment of truth under the marriage canopy, of the secret wish for a true life-companion. I see the other young girls surrounding her – one places a hairpin in her hair (that is obligatory), another buttons her dress, the guests begin to arrive. Many, many arrive, the reverend with his long white beard cheerfully circulates through the hall. The music plays gaily and the young people dance. There is good cheer all around. For the bride, her heart is pounding. Every moment the hands of the clock move on unmercifully. How fast the seconds go by...

The groom is not coming!

The guests start departing and the bride is left alone in her crown and veil.

Everyone looks at her with pity, everyone's heart aches for her, for her shame.

And her heart?

An emptiness stands in its place.

And I begin to understand that it is that emptiness that controls her voice and make it so cold.

It seems that the judge also understands, and he sends the 'lawyer' to relax a while in prison.

Sin

She killed him because she wanted to save him from 'committing a sin.' So she explained from the witness stand looking strait ahead with her soft, blue eyes which were very like the blue of the heavens on a peaceful day.

Her lawyer said she was not fully competent when she committed the crime.

She denied it, her actions were clear. She remained very calm during the whole trial. No hysterics, no screaming. With a steady step she walked to the table where her lawyer sat. With one hand supporting her head, as though she wanted to relax, she remained, thus, the whole day seldom even moving her hand which must be getting tired.

For every day of the trial her appearance was the same. Except for her eyes, which daily looked more tired, and the dark rings around them which became darker and deeper each day.

Quietly, as though she did not want to wake him from his eternal sleep, she told about him, about his habits and his demeanor.

Long, long they had loved one another, since they were children, far away in the old country.

They grew up together. Together they planned and hoped.

Soon after their wedding they came to America, ready to work, planning for a future.

They both went to work, he in a store, she in a shop. The whole day she longed for the evening when she could be together with her beloved husband. They lived in a small room and were very happy.

She worked until her condition no longer allowed her to work in the shop...

The few months that she sat at home and waited for the birth of her child, were not very happy. Her husband was becoming indifferent to her.

He was becoming impatient with her and when she complained he became annoyed.

In money they were not very rich, and her condition required that she eat well. In spite of that he began to dress better, and stay out until late at night, leaving her at home sitting by herself and crying.

The blow came just a week before they were to celebrate their first wedding anniversary.

She had been saving to buy him a present, and he had spoken of surprising her.

Early one morning she found a ladies pocketbook. Thinking that this was her present, she took it and looked inside. At that point her husband came into the house, and he wanted to take it away from her. The pocketbook opened and out of it fell a slip of paper. On it, in her husband's handwriting, was written: "With love to Jenny," and her name was Mary!

"The whole world began to dance before my eyes. That is when I first understood where he was

spending his evenings!” – quietly she continued – “He angrily left the house. I was left alone, alone with my heartache.” – She covered her eyes for a moment before going on. – “I searched and found a letter, a letter full of passion to my husband, to him, who I had praised, to the father of my child!”

She thought a while, then said, as though to herself: “My dead child is lucky, what could he have awaited in this world without a father, and his mother a murderer?” She sighed heavily and continued on:

“I found his revolver. At first I wanted to extinguish my own life, it had become ugly, very ugly. Then I thought about him. I am religious and I recognized the horror of the sin he was going to continue to commit, and I decided to rescue him from it.”

She fell silent for a while. She looked at her finger and then a bit of color came to her face, as though her blood flowed to it.

“He came home and started making excuses. I knew he was lying and I shot him!”

She exhaled deeply, and on her face came an expression of contentment, and the whole time that her lawyer pleaded, and the District Attorney in a stormy speech demanded of the jury that they send her to the electric chair, her face remained peaceful.

Silent and calm she stood when the jury declared her not guilty on the grounds that she was not of sound mind at the moment when she shot him.

When the door to her freedom opened before her she was still calm, and asked with a bitter smile:

“Where to?”

His Memories

He was very old and weak – so weak that his body trembled, when he was brought before the judge.

The judge was also elderly, but it was a different sort of age: A white face, close shaven, fresh and clean, with all the signs of being well cared for.

He, the judge, rubbed his eyes which were ringed with wrinkles and in a severe voice he asked:

“What are you doing here?! Shame on you! Such an old man!”

At first the old man did not answer, a bitter smile flitted about his lips. Then he said respectfully:

“I... I am not a criminal!”

The judge looked at him for a long time. Both were silent. Then the accused said quietly:

“I want to laugh.”

The surprised judge asked:

“Why?”

“Because I have lived such a long time just to find out that I am a fool.”

“So, laugh!” the judge said angrily.

Something seemed to suddenly bother the judge, and in a softer tone he asked:

“What do you mean by 'a fool?'”

The old man answered:

“I am looking at you. It appears that you are also of a good age, and yet so handsome, how fine you look. Am I not a fool?? Why am I not a judge also?”

Now the judge laughed to himself and began to take a closer look at the face of the old man, but on the wrinkled face there was no sign of craziness. His gray eyes were clear and lucid.

“You laugh, Your Honor? You may laugh, because you are smart, you have succeeded in your work which never goes out of style. People will always need judges, and a court will always be needed. But me, I have gone out of style along with the horse-drawn streetcar.”

“What do you mean?” the judge asked in a sympathetic voice.

“I mean just what I said to you: You are a smart man!”

The judge smiled again said good-naturedly:

“But to be a judge, my friend, one must have education, understanding and – – “

“Education? Perhaps you are correct. But understanding? What do you mean? To be a driver of a horse-cart, you don't need understanding?!” – the old man interrupted. – “Don't you think that it is also a job. One also has to think. When a horse doesn't want to go, a driver with some sense won't beat him right off the bat. One thinks about it a little, one places himself in the horse's position, it is just like in court except it's a horse.”

The judge did not answer:

“In the street there are always a lot of people, and if you are a driver without brains you will run over someone, a child. But I am a driver with good sense. I think hard about my work and I can proudly say that in the fifty-one years that I have driven a horse-drawn streetcar I have never run over anyone, never even given a child a smack with my whip!”

The old man made an effort to square his thin shoulders, which did not allow themselves to be squared, they just continued to droop, droop toward the ground...

“However, I am still a fool,” he continued on, “making a living with a horse. I did not realize that I would go out of style along with them. You see, a judge is quite another thing. A judge never goes out of style!”

The judge was silent. A moment later he asked:

“How old are you?”

“Seventy-three.”

“Why were you arrested?”

“Because I was sleeping in the horse stalls at the streetcar company.”

“And he was disturbing the workers who were coming and going there, Your Honor,” the policeman mixed in.

“Why did you do it?”

“Because I don't have any place else to go. I am used to being in the stalls. For so many years I used to go there! And now, when they don't need me anymore, I don't have anywhere to go. Who does it bother if I lay down in the corner of a stable? Tell me, Mr. Judge, is that a crime? I am not a drinker, I don't go in saloons. And the stalls remind me of so many things, of when I was still young and my hands did not shake. Yes, I, too, have memories.”

“And what do you have to do with the workers?”

“Do with them? A few times I may have asked for a little tobacco. The foreman is new, he wouldn't allow it.”

“What do you live off of?”

“I sleep in the stables and to eat I buy food with the few pennies that the other drivers give me every payday. They are younger and have learned the skill, how to drive a streetcar without a horse.”

“Do you have a family?”

“Somewhere I have two grandchildren. But both are girls, and are certainly married by now and have changed their names. I don't know where to find them. The rest have passed away.”

The judge thought for a long time. Then he asked:

“What should I do with you?”

The old man shrugged his shoulders. He was clearly saddened not to be in the stalls which held so many memories for him. And perhaps he was also sad because he was not a judge?

The judge sent him to a home for the elderly and indigent.

A Madam

The accuser, a small brunette with very sympathetic eyes and a childish mouth, was sitting frightened in the witness chair and stared nervously at her long, thin fingers.

Her head hung shamefully down on her small chest, and her whole body told of childish shame and inexperience.

“An when did you realize that he had betrayed you?” the District Attorney asked.

“That day.”

“Which day?”

“When he took me to her.”

“How did that come about?”

“How? Very simple,” she said quietly without lifting her head.

“Tell us about it,” the older District Attorney said with a gentle tone in his voice. His whole bearing to the young girl showed great compassion.

For a while the young girl remained silent, then she slowly lifted her head. Her big, dark eyes fixed on the accused. She shuddered violently.

The accused sullenly turned her broad face aside.

It was interesting to watch her face. It looked like the 'typical' face of a Madam.

An artificially preserved young face of a middle-aged woman. A face well worked-over by skilled hands, painted with various cosmetics and as a result appeared to me to be slick, almost rejuvenated skin without a wrinkle, without a sign of the quickly passing years. The red lips, rosy cheeks, penciled-in black brows and glossy, too glossy eyes. The 'artist' only failed with the eyelashes. The eyelashes were short and very sparse emphasizing the shamelessness of the too glossy eyes.

Her clothes were also of the same sort, costing a lot of money and showing little taste. Conspicuous, loud clothes, bright varied colors that shouted shamelessness.

When she felt the look of the young woman on her, she turned her head, brazenly measured the young girl with her too glossy eyes, twisted her lips into a smile and stared back at her.

The young girl made herself smaller in the big witness chair like a little mouse, a terrible fear was evident on her face, and she began to tremble.

The District Attorney saw all of that, and quietly almost pleading said to the young girl:

“You don't need to be afraid of her now, the law will protect you.”

“She... she told me that she would always find me,” the young girl stammered, forcing the words out.

“Don't be afraid. She will be behind the gray walls of prison so long, that she will forget even you!”

Here the Madam gave a mild shudder.

A little color came back to the young girl's face. Encouraged by the District Attorney's words, she began to quietly tell her story:

“It began with his restlessness. He didn't like my Misses, he began to say. He said she talked too much. He no longer wanted to sit with me in a room, it was unpleasant. He would say that he was used to a warm home, with a homey samovar, and if we went to his Mother's, things would be better between us. That surprised me greatly, I was still a greenhorn, only in America for four years. I knew that his Mother was an elegant lady and lived uptown, and I never went uptown except in the summer to Central Park, even then I made a point of not looking at the beautiful houses there.”

“But you went anyway?”

“Yes, I loved him very much. Marrying him seemed like a dream to me. He is so tall, so handsome, and earned so much money. I mean that is what he said.” – Here she caught herself, and her face contorted in pain when she remembered that all of that was now in the past.

“I was afraid that his Mother would not let him marry me,” – she continued on quickly, – “because of that I was very surprised when she gave me a warm welcome. It seemed like I was dreaming. The beautiful furniture, the black servant, the good food, his beautiful Mama and her kindness to me. I couldn't comprehend it all.”

“And who was his Mother?” the District Attorney asked leaning toward the young girl.

“Then I believed that she was his Mother, that woman there!” the young girl said pointing at the Madam.

“What happened after that?” the District Attorney asked.

“The same thing that happens to a lot of foolish girls, that, which I used to read about in the newspapers, and would laugh at the girls who let themselves be tricked like that,” she said with a bitter sigh.

“Explain.”

“It is difficult,” – she answered, rubbing her forehead with both hands, – “It was late, she told me that I could sleep there, and since the wedding was so close, I shouldn't bother to go back to work or to my little room. I said, “No,” I wanted to get married from my own lodgings, but he was tired and asked me to stay over just for that night. And I stayed.”

“And then?”

“Then their smiles vanished. He hit me, she locked me in, and for many long days I saw nothing more than the white teeth of the black servant, and I was also terrified of him. They only gave me bread and water. I felt my strength leaving me, and then they won.”

Then, as though it were broken, her head bent down to her small chest.

“How long did they hold you?”

“I could not tell at the time. Only when I got out did I learn that I had been captive for five months.”

“Who freed you?”

“Two more young women came to the house, and the dealings became more free. One evening, when everyone was in the parlor, I put on a man's hat and coat and quickly slipped out. When I felt the fresh air, I started running and nearly knocked down a man. It was late. The man along with a policeman ran after me, I fell. I told the policeman everything.”

At the defense table the Madam made use of all of her charms and the tricks of her profession, but the jury was made up of hard, experienced men, and they watched her with scorn.

And since *he*, the tall, handsome *he*, had mysteriously disappeared, and since white slave handlers were a common sight in the New York courts at the time, and since the girl was very young, and the Madam very insolent, the elderly District Attorney asked for a very severe punishment.

The judge stuck her with fifteen years hard labor in the penitentiary.

When she heard that, all of the sweet tones left her voice, and she let out a loud, ugly laugh:

“She is lying, but you believe her because it serves you better! But you are *respectable* men! Here you condemn me, but when no one is looking, you kiss me!”

Some of the jurors turned away in disgust. She saw that, and laughed even louder:

“Here, I am in your power, and when no one is looking, you are in my power!”

She couldn't say any more, because at this point a tall bailiff roughly led her out of the courtroom, through the high doorway that led to prison.

A Murder

He was the only one in the packed courtroom who thought the sentence was too light.

The foreman of the jury, an elderly man with yellowish, dry skin on his face and with deeply sunken eyes, had, with a sour tone to his voice and shaking hands declared:

“We find the accused guilty of murder in the first degree!”

In the courtroom, warmed by the May sunshine, it suddenly felt as cold as if a winter blast blew through. It was impossible to look at all of the faces at one time, but instinctively they all looked at one another.

In spite of the fact that the near relatives of the young accused man had been sent out of the courtroom, you could little by little hear the rising voices, the bitter wails of people standing in small groups on the left side of the large room.

A look of pleading was on the face of the men, severe, hard faces that now took on a look of mildness and pity. The women cried freely and loudly.

He was very young, the accused, hardly nineteen years-old.

His head was not bowed and his face was not sad. The same, cold, “I don't care” look was on his not-unpleasant face, as it had been during all the days of the trial. His eyes remained dry and his shoulders never shook from crying.

During the trial, people talked about his bearing.

Men, experienced in court circles, said that he was an arch-typical example of a cold-blooded killer. That his bearing did not show one shred of remorse, and that he committed the crime with the calculated method of an experienced murderer.

Women with their mother-instinct, sighed and explained that the youngster did not understand the gravity of the crime and moreover, because of his youth, he should be handled with mercy.

Obscured by a thick, black veil, was the face of his mother – The reason for the horrible crime, with limp hands and stooped shoulders she sat in a far corner of the big courtroom. And if ever a woman paid for a sin, *she* paid bitterly, when her own son was on the witness stand, and in order not to besmirch her name, he refused to defend himself. On the contrary, even with the heavy shadow of death in the electric chair hanging over him.

He sat coldly in a corner of the huge witness chair and with tightly-closed lips remained silent in the face of any and all questions from his advocate:

“Is it not true that the deceased lived with you in the house for several years, and, that you were not pleased by his too-intimate attentions toward your mother?”

No answer.

“Tell us about the time when your Father died two years ago, how you asked your mother to send the boarder away and how she answered you,” his lawyer said.

“Tell us about the day when you left your Mother's house because of that.”

No answer. His thin lips pressed even tighter. The advocate became more agitated and in a heated tone he asked:

“And perhaps you will remain silent about the scene with your mother when you begged her for the sake of the little children, for the sake of your little sisters, to send away the man whose actions besmirched her name?!”

In despair the advocate, who the young man had not paid a single penny, made a gesture with his hand and did not ask any more questions.

The whole time the young man had remained silent and stared ahead. Once, he cast a cold look toward his Mother, she quickly pulled aside her veil and pleadingly thrust her hand out toward him and looked at him in silence. But his only answer was a hard stare full of contempt.

The District Attorney now had a free hand to pursue the charges against him. His witnesses were very willing and it was not difficult for him to show that the young man a few days before the murder had come back to his Mother's house, made out that he wanted to be the boarder's best friend, then at night when everyone was asleep he took a sharp bread knife and murdered him!

Also since he had taken time to sharpen the knife, the murder was premeditated.

The young man remained cold and silent when the jury said: “Guilty!”

Papa is a Bum

A group of Jewish women were standing around enjoying themselves.

Joy – in a criminal court is a rare sight, particularly among women. There, we see women crying, we hear them yammering with wild curses, often they fall down in a faint when their loved ones are sentenced. Rarely do you see them smile – enjoy themselves – in the dwelling place of sighs and tears.

“You are happy?” I asked them, wanting to know what had made them so happy.

“Happy? Certainly happy,” an elderly lady answered me.

“Where is he, could it be he's not coming?” asked a thin, older woman, “Honestly deserved!”

“Certainly,” the first one said, “Well deserved! But they caught him.”

“It is high time he got his!” the second one said again, “Three long years since he left her, and no one heard a single word from him. Don't even talk about the money. Me and my elderly husband were terribly affected in our old age with his wife and child to feed.”

“But she is your daughter,” a young woman said.

“Nu, so what?” said the old woman somewhat agitated, “Married, should she have to support him if he goes to prison! Really?” she asked a young, sweet woman who was also standing in the group holding on to the hand of a four-year-old girl.

“Yes,” said the young woman biting her lips.

“Are you really happy, Mary?” an older woman asked.

“Why not?” her mother spoke again, and Mary remained silent... At least cause him some troubles? Give him a couple of hundred dollars that it took you eleven years to save! And how long did you live together? Not a whole year, but I fixed him. He wanted to see the child, a plague on him! I taught him a lesson. Tell us Lelinke what your Papa is?

The little girl lifted her head, and looking at her Bubbie she said angrily: “In prison, Papa is a bum!”

The ladies all laughed. Mary also laughed with them, but then she put her head against the wall and broke out in bitter tears...

The Statue

With an unpleasant expression on his face the young accused looked around the courtroom, slowly his eyes wandered to the high window as though looking for something in the heavy Autumn rain.

The mood in the courtroom this day was unpleasant, even the white flower in the lapel of the older District Attorney was a little wilted today, and it was still early. Something about the defendant's yellowish face with the drooping cheeks, and the nervous mouth that twitched every few seconds cast a melancholy pale over the people in attendance.

He was accused of theft and the primary witness against him was a statue of Venus, the Goddess of Beauty.

Under the usual circumstances, if a thief is healthy, the people in the courtroom would hear a lot of jokes about a thief who steals a statue of Venus, but one glance at the nervous, twitching face and the smiles froze.

The charge was clear. He entered into a big store and thinking that no one was looking at him, he slipped the marble statue of the Goddess of Beauty under his coat. But people did see him. He was arrested. Witness after witness testified to his crime. Finally, it came time for him to defend himself. He had no witness and he, himself, kept silent. He did not speak a word. With an intense stare he looked at the artistic, white form.

“Is it your wish that the charge be handed over to the jury without any defense?” the judge asked.

The young man gave a start as though he had been asleep. With a painful demeanor he tore his eyes away from the white Venus. Quickly, quickly his nervous mouth danced, and with reluctant steps he climbed up to the witness chair.

His voice was clear and his yellow, almost translucent hands trembled lightly when he lifted the Bible and swore to tell the truth.

“Tell us, why did you take the statue?” the young man's lawyer said.

“I think it is better not to say,” was his weary answer.

“Tell us, it will help you.”

“It doesn't make any difference,” he said again in a tired voice and again his mouth began to twitch.

“But your lungs! You certainly will not be sent to prison in the condition you are in.”

“Why not? There the struggle will be over. There I will have something to eat.”

In frustration the lawyer made a gesture with his hands, and sat back down.

“Do you admit that you stole the statue, then why did you plead 'not guilty'?” the older District Attorney with the wilted flower asked.

“Because I don't feel entirely guilty,” came the weary answer.

“Tell us young man, why did you steal the statue of Venus?” the judge asked.

“Because I love it very much, it awakens a sea of memories in me.”

“Tell us about them,” the judge said with unusual interest.

“It doesn't do to bring the most dear, the loveliest into a hall of justice, where justice itself is blind... What's more it is all already dead...”

“But surely you can speak of it, and don't forget, you still live, you should defend yourself,” his advocate begged him.

For a while he stared unhappily ahead of himself, then his eyes wandered to the little white statue, and for a moment he studied the goddess' lovely legs. His expression became warmer, and in a weary, dreamy manner he told his story:

“Even as a child a weariness lay upon me, a weariness that up to this very day I have not been able to cast off. I like to dream. My Father was a doctor. In his waiting room was a little statue of Venus. I was in love with that statue. All of my childish cares I would lay at her white feet. It seemed to me that she understood me. If I were getting pushed into fighting other kids, I had only to think of her face, and I would stop and not fight.”

His mouth twitched a few times, he sighed deeply and quietly continued on:

“Those were happy years, but soon they disappeared along with the statue, with my beloved Venus. My Father died, and being a goodhearted doctor, he was, and died, a poor man.

I did not grow up to be what my Mother hoped. I was too weary to fulfill her hopes. And then *she* came along, also a Venus, but this time a living Venus. Her feet were also white, but she was warm and her arms were not broken off. Hers were hot, living hands.”

For a while he closed his eyes, and the next words he uttered sounded like a sigh.

“But my natural weariness was too much. I could not give her everything she wanted, and she left. And afterwards? Afterwards came dark days. Dreams that I bought in a drug store. The dreams were good as long as I had money. Then they drove me to theft... I was in the store and I saw the Venus. I felt ashamed before her... I took her with me... I stole.”

The jury deliberated for a long time. Finally they declared him guilty, asking the judge to be merciful with him.

The judge sent him to a jail for the tubercular.

His mouth twitched, but his eyes with a smile said 'good-bye' to his beloved Venus.

Sister vs. Sister

It was all about a mere twenty-two dollars.

The seventeen-year-old girl was standing before the judge ashamed, with bowed head.

The judge was new to the job and young. He was not yet acquainted with the more bitter side of life. He did not understand evil people. He wanted to make the whole world better...

In the witness chair sat the complainant – a woman nearing middle age. Her face was full of deep lines. Her small, pinpoint eyes were full of hate as she looked at the frightened young girl.

“What is your complaint?” the judge asked.

“She is a thief, Your Honor!”

“Do you know her?”

“Yes, she is my sister, Your Honor!”

“Your sister?!” the surprised judge asked.

“Yes, unfortunately!”

The woman spoke with coldness and contempt. Her lips were pressed tightly together, and every word came across like a bullet shot.

“And you are accusing her of theft?” the amazed judge asked again.

“She stole from me.”

“What?”

“Twenty-two dollars, Your Honor!”

“And because of that sum you make your own sister a thief?”

“I make her? She made it herself!”

“What do you mean?”

“When somebody takes money that belongs to another, isn't that person a thief?” the woman asked coldly.

“That depends upon the circumstances,” the young judge answered with a sympathetic tone.

“I am not concerned with circumstances. She stole from me and I want to see her punished,” was the severe response.

“All for twenty-two dollars?”

“For *me* that is a lot of money!” with a bitter tone she interrupted the judge, “in your eyes twenty-two dollars may be a trifle: For *me* it took a full two years to save it up!”

“But why?” the naive, young judge asked.

The woman laughed bitterly.

“Why? Because I needed it. I have to rob from my children, lie to my husband just to be able to save a few cents a week. Why did I save it? My husband is not a very good man. He likes to enjoy his hard liquor and doesn't want to hear that we can't afford it. One can't tear one cent from him. He has to have what he wants. For a long time I have had the feeling that my teeth are going bad. I can't even say one word to him about it. At first I complained, then later I realized that it wouldn't help. I had to be strong to endure the problems. So, I started saving pennies.”

The young judge gazed out the window. The woman had spoken about weekly events: “Could not make ends meet,” “hard liquor,” “teeth,” – there was such drama in it... You could not have a calm discussion about such things, the sorts of things that newspaper reporters revel in.

“And now?” he said, stifling a yawn.

But before the woman could answer, the young girl began to cry and whine loudly.

The judge became a bit more lively, and soon began to talk with some agitation in his voice:

“Now you come here and want me to send your sister to jail? How can your heart stand it?”

“But my teeth...”

“Who cares about your teeth?!” he interrupted her severely, “because of your teeth you want to make your own sister into a true criminal? Do you have any idea the people she will come in contact with in jail? Do you know who her friends will be? Do you know what they will turn her into? She is still so young, blood and milk, and – the most important point – she is your own blood, your own sister, from your Father and Mother. How can you do it? I ask you!”

“Why did she steal from me?!”

The judge looked at the young girl, and quietly asked:

“Why did you steal from her?”

“Because.. because, I had not worked for four weeks. I had to pay her board, and I was afraid of her,” the young girl sobbed holding her face in both hands.

The judge became very agitated. Pointing his finger at the woman he yelled:

“Shame on you! The girl simply took the money, to pay you board, and you come here and accuse her! You would have her thrown in jail and make her a criminal forever!”

“She says she is afraid of me because she doesn't have a job, ha? She should use less powder and spend less on beautiful blouses, then she would have money for board!” the agitated woman screeched.

“You see, Your Honor? That is how she is always yelling at me. It disgusts her that I am young,” the young girl said becoming more relaxed.

The judge looked in confusion from one sister to the other. The psychology of the older woman was a mystery to him. He had little understanding of her bitterly decaying teeth. He had more sympathy for the girl, he was also young...

Therefore, over the protests of the older woman, he freed the young girl and sent her home.

The Repressed

“Excuse me,” I hear the heated voice of a woman who came with quiet, almost silent steps to my desk.

Looking up from my work, I saw a woman, Mrs. ____, Number One, whose husband had, a few days earlier, been sent to prison for a year for having two wives.

“I have come to you to ask a favor,” leaning in closer to me, “You know already that I am a very sick woman. My two children are also not well. What will I do now?” and tears streamed down her sunken cheeks to her thin, colorless lips. Her face took on the appearance of an old squeezed-out sponge.

“I have told you,” I began to speak to her, but she interrupted me:

“I know what you are going to say, about the charities? That they can provide relief, can do a lot for me, with the rent they will make me happy? What will my children eat?”

“Haven't I told you that you have to be patient, I will try.”

“Try,” she interrupted me again, very upset, “When will you try? You speak of patience – my children want to eat and not be patient.”

At this point I started to get a little upset, why was she coming at me? But I thought back about the sweet, blond little boy who had been holding her hand, and the charming little girl who thanked me so nicely when I wiped her tears away (She had helped her Mother cry when they took the Father away.)

“And after all those things,” the woman continued to talk to me, “I stayed by him, do you know what he said to me? He didn't want to see me again! He wanted the other one to visit him! What do you think about that? Such trash, such a fallen woman! Him, you see, I don't blame, she is the one who turned his head. Molly, Molly could come see him! She should break her foot when she goes! I beg you, can you fix it so she can't visit him?”

“I will see,” I tried to calm her.

“I beg you please, because the year will pass and what if he still wants to be with her, what will happen then?”

I thought for a while, probably thinking about what else she might ask me for. – “Please, I beg you, don't forget. I am so miserable with my two children, I am a sick woman,” and again she recounted all of her sorrows in a monotone voice, not missing a single word of her sad story that I already knew from earlier.

“My husband would go to the docks to take the air, he is weak. He would take the children with him. He loved them very much, until she turned his head. She would buy the children pretzels and milk, and she talked nice to them and was charming... How he managed to marry her, I don't understand. Unless it was a day when I was very ill, you know?” – She leaned in even closer to me, – “He suffers from epilepsy. When it comes upon him, he doesn't know what he is doing. He is not responsible, I know.”

I heard out the woman and wondered at her strong faith in the man, the bigamist.

She began to go, but at the door she turned again visibly upset.

“I totally forgot, you haven't written about any of this in the paper?” she asked me, very upset.

“Yes I have written about it, but it is not yet in,” I answered.

“What does 'not in' mean? Never mind, when you want, it will be printed,” she said as a reproach.

“Do you really think it is nice of you, or for the children, that the whole world should know,” – She got angry again, – “what an wanton woman she is, what a bum!”

So once again she called down a thousand curse words upon her husband's second beloved.

“You are going to write about this. I only ask that you write about it all.”

“Write, write,” I promised her, finally closing the door behind her.

Moshke Tiger

Everyone knew him as 'Moshke Tiger.'

When his trial was about to start, I waited impatiently to see this famous horse-poisoner, who had earned his nickname because of his frightful strength.

In the court he was brought in by the two biggest and strongest men in blue-coats. From their constant looking at him, you could see that they expected nothing good from him.

With a sure pace Moshke came into the courtroom. His piercing eyes measured the judge, as though he wanted to penetrate the thoughts that resided under the gray hair.

Like a good cheder schoolboy he went straight to the defendant's table and sat down.

Only then when his eyes began to wander over the packed courtroom, could one see how unusually penetrating they were. He had very unusual eyes, big, deep black, even the lashes projected a bluish blackness. They were pretty eyes, but the penetrating look spoiled their beauty.

His face was not the face of a tiger, quite the opposite, it was the handsome face of a strong man.

There were perhaps ten separate charges against him. He had poisoned horses for money.

If a businessman had a competitor and wanted to play a trick on him, he would go to Moshke Tiger and agree on a price for which Moshke would give some 'little pills' to some of the horses. In the morning the competitor would come out to find his horses cold, poisoned.

When the District Attorney managed to catch Moshke, he was very busy and he was certain that there was a big job ahead of him.

Through Moshke he began seeking out everyone who had hired Moshke. He wanted very much to punish them. In the first place because the law demanded it, and in the second place, and this was very important, – the District Attorney was young, full of ambition, and if he could make Moshke talk, it would help him, the District Attorney with his political ambitions...

He worked very hard to make Moshke talk:

Every day he had men bring Moshke from jail to the District Attorney's office. Every day he held the stubborn Moshke for hours at a time, questioned him about various events, who the other guilty parties were, but Moshke remained silent.

Moshke stayed stubborn.

How mysterious are the morals followed by certain men. Moshke, the horse poisoner, Moshke, who for a couple of filthy dollars goes off into the dark stillness of the night into a stranger's house, lays hands on the warm body of a stranger's horse, forces open their mouth and gives them poison – This same Moshke closes his full, bluish lips and stays silent, not betraying those who, for their own greed, sent him to commit such an atrocity.

And therefore, now, at Moshke's trial, the District Attorney would get revenge on Moshke. He called witness after witness who gave terrible, damning testimonies.

And the young District Attorney knew exactly how to make use of the testimony, how to draw from them the best, and to minimize the worst.

And Moshke sat there straight and tall, with broad shoulders and tight lips. His eyes were interesting. Like raw steel they flashed and penetrated.

A silent duel was taking place between the physically powerful Moshke and the educated advocate. So severe, so cold did Moshke look around. He did not have the appearance of a caged tiger, who sticks his head through the bars of his cage, no, he looked free and proud.

His defense was weak. He must have known it, but his outward appearance did not change.

Only once did his appearance alter, and that happened when a short, blond woman with a very pretty, almost child-like face and with two little children by her side entered into the courtroom. Then the steely coldness in his eyes disappeared, and a warm color flowed into his olive-brown skin. The expression on his face became milder, almost tender.

The blond woman smiled. Looked for a seat, and found one in the left corner in the third row. She had only just sat down when she became uncertain whether from there she could see him well. With a happy smile she sat the two small boys down and then she looked and looked at Moshke.

Then there were the closing statements. With frightening words the District Attorney painted a picture of the dangerous crime that Moshke perpetrated.

Moshke's advocate praised Moshke to the heavens above because he was not a squealer, and did not implicate anyone else.

And the jury said: "Guilty!"

Tall and even more proud stood Moshke before the judge. The elderly judge spoke for a long time. He pointed to the Tiger and how easily he could have saved himself from a long prison term if he had given up his accomplices into the hands of the law. Moshke remained silent.

The judge gravely said: "Ten years at hard labor in Sing Sing."

Not a single muscle moved on the strong face of Moshke Tiger. Only his eyes became more proud, more penetrating.

And when he heard the quiet crying from the short, blond woman the severity of his face melted away, his look became soft, tender, and the small woman wiped a tear from her cheek with her sleeve and lovingly smiled at him.

A Mother

It was a sticky June afternoon. It was the beginning of Summer, but we were already feeling the terrible city heat, that causes so much discomfort. More than in the streets, we felt the heat in the courtroom. The Venetian blinds were open, the electric fans were turning, one could hear their humming, but the artificial breeze only helped a little. In the packed courtroom you could almost touch the heat.

In spite of the heat, the courtroom was packed. Those who had to work on such a hot day, it appeared, if they only had the time, would have run out seeking some fresh air somewhere. I will never be able to understand how some people give in to their curiosity. Even on such a hot day, they come in to a packed courtroom to hear about another person's misfortune.

The older woman who was on trial for murder looked like she had fallen apart. Her high chest was heaving fast. Her steel-gray hair was wet with sweat, the face bloodless, the thin lips trembled and the weary eyes were bloodshot.

She sat before our eyes as an accused murderer. The testimony was strong. She had murdered her husband out of jealousy. According to all laws she should be damned, and yet when you looked at her it tore your heart apart. She incorporated so many human sufferings, above all the sufferings of women. She looked like everything in her life had gone wrong.

It seems like she was of that type of woman who suffered in silence: So what happened that she did not stay silent, she fired the gun instead?

It was her second husband, she was much older than him. For eighteen years she had been a widow, wept at her fate that had robbed her of her husband at twenty-two years old. She was left a mother of two children, and she devoted her whole life to those children. According to the testimony – even the witnesses for the prosecution had to admit – she was an ideal mother, lived *only* for the children and *never* sought out anything for her own pleasure.

It was only when the children were older and began following their own interests, when she had for a long time felt alone and abandoned, only then did she fall in love with another man.

It was the love of a forty-year old woman. All of her stifled desires, all of her unfilled wishes once again flickered to life. She had suffered frightfully. She did not want to marry in spite of the fact that he asked, because she had certain principles as a mother. She was sure that she had to give her *whole* life away for the children. He, the young thirty-two year old man, convinced her otherwise and they got married.

For two years she was so happy that she believed G-d was good and was repaying her for all of her previous sufferings.

The her older son got married, and a young daughter-in-law came into the house.

She was young, charming and something of a flirt. At first the older woman took it as gentleness, a joke; but later she noticed that her relationships were becoming more serious, and when she protested, her husband laughed at her.

“A double jealousy began to develop within me,” she stated on the witness stand, “I began to envision the downfall of my new-found happiness, but also my son's honor was mixed up in it. I know his nature very well, I mean my son's. I knew that if he suspected anything, then something bad would happen. I tried talking to my daughter-in-law, but she said I was crazy.”

“Some time passed. I watched their love relationship and I thought him to be a disturbed man, I went wild. I forgot everything that was once dear to me. I only thought about his horrible deed which affected myself and my son.”

Her face became more pale. Her long, thin fingers moved nervously, and with a stifled sob she continued on.

“I heard them in the next room. I heard them make a pact to run away from us. I heard their long, hot kisses. I knew that my son would be home soon. I knew that if he came across them like that, he would shoot them, he would become a murderer. He had not yet lived his life. I – What good was *my* life, what could it bring *me*? I heard my son's footsteps. My husband's gun lay in the drawer, and *I* was the one that fired the gun. I had, after all, nothing to lose, and he was so young, my son.”

There were still several testimonies, but all of them focused on the sincerity of the murderer.

The twelve young jury members only took a half hour of deliberations to declare her “*Not guilty!*”

Why? Who knows, perhaps many of them had mothers at home, mothers who sacrificed everything, everything for them.

Teeth

“Don't send me home, I don't want to go home, don't send me, don't send me!” the pretty young girl begged the judge with outstretched arms.

When she saw that the judge did not answer, he just peered in a thick book as though she and her great suffering did not exist, she called out again:

“Don't send me home! Punish me, I am guilty, I am guilty, I took that money! I am guilty! Punish me, I want to pay for my sin, but don't send me home, they can't know!”

That is what she said, shaking violently, and with tears streaming down her face.

It was a strange sort of face she had, the pretty thief. Big eyes, with such an innocent appearance, a round chin with a great deal of charm, a white, round neck which was gracefully extended toward the judge. And two lips, indescribable lips created to quietly whisper mystical prayers...

When the judge looked up from his thick book, and looked at her, she lowered her head and it appeared that she was about to fall on her knees, put her beautiful hands together, forget the judge, and absorb herself in godly devotions.

“You want to plead guilty?” the judge asked.

“Yes. Yes. I am guilty. I took the money. It belonged to my friend. She entrusted it to me and I shamefully betrayed her,” the pretty girl answered.

“Don't you think you should first talk this over with an advocate, and perhaps go to trial? It could happen,” the judge was now speaking with a sympathetic tone in his voice.

“No. One sin is enough. At a trial one has to take an oath, and sometimes tell lies, I... I have no defense. I took the money, and I am guilty!”

She formally entered the guilty plea, and the clerk recorded it and swore her in. She resolutely mounted the witness stand.

The judge said:

“Now, tell us why you did it?”

Quickly, without holding back, the young girl began to speak:

“I know her very well. We were students together in night school. She was very friendly, and nearly the only one among the girls and other young people who did not laugh at me.”

“Laugh at you? What for?” the curious judge asked.

“Because of my teeth. I was missing four teeth in the front. It was more than two years that they were missing. And my G-d! How I did suffer because of it!”

“But why?” the judge asked, not understanding.

“You don't understand? You have never had any missing teeth? In the front, I mean,” the surprised young girl asked the middle-aged, well-preserved judge.

When he shook his head 'no,' she said quietly:

“How lucky you are. It is horrible to be without teeth. They called me the 'Old-Young Lady.' It made me so annoyed. I wanted to give them a sharp answer, but it was hard: It was not easy for me to speak, without front teeth. In the first place, you lisp, and in the second place it is not very pleasant to open your mouth and show everyone that you don't have any front teeth. You know? Many times on the streetcar or elsewhere when I met a stranger, and he looked at me with interest, I would think: Look, look until I open my mouth, and then you, too, will laugh like the others.”

“But what is there to laugh about?” the judge asked.

“I should know?!” she said, shrugging her shoulders, and then added: “Maybe I just looked funny.”

The judge asked:

“And the money? Why did you take it?”

“For the teeth. Even now I don't understand how I could have done it. She was so good to me! It seemed like she was the only friend I had, but the teeth! Several times I wanted to admit to myself that in order to buy teeth I could kill someone! A horrible thought, yes? It even frightens me. But the terrible thought about my teeth often got me so mixed up that I would forget about everything else. In the shop everything was going badly! When I first went to work there I had all my teeth, and they called me “Beautiful Madonna.” That name was given to me by the lady foreman. She was a very good person, but the colors had so damaged her eyes that now she is in a 'home' and can not see her own fingers. She worked there nineteen years.”

“What kind of work?” the judge asked.

“Flowers. Artificial flowers. And when she left, it was very bad for me. My teeth were gone by that time and everyone laughed at me.”

“How much did you earn there?”

“Lately, since a year ago, eight dollars. I started out at five. That was five years ago.”

“How old are you now?”

“Nineteen years old.”

“You could not save up for the teeth?” the judge asked.

“Save?!” the young girls asked in complete surprise as though the word was completely unknown to her. Thinking for a moment, she said quietly: We don't save. We hardly have enough to get by from day to day.”

“Who is 'we'?”

“My Mother and the three children. Three weeks ago Nettie started work. She earns four dollars a week. She is a cashier in a department store. There where Mama is a sales lady. In the same basement. Mama earns nine dollars. A year ago, when I got my raise, Mama promised that I could start going to the dentist. I danced with joy. But that same week Eddie got sick. Now we owe money to the doctor and the drugstore.”

“How did it come about that you took the money?”

“She told me that she had some savings in her room. She lost the key to the room. I found it. A few weeks before that I had begun to have my teeth fixed. I simply *had* to pay the dentist. He had threatened me saying that *he* would have me arrested. When I found her key, that is when the awful thought came to me. I didn't take all of her money. I only took forty-two dollars for the dentist and four dollars for shoes. But I am guilty. I did it.”

The judge nervously drummed his fingers on the thick book, thought long, and then gave her a long lecture over the other party's property, about the forthrightness of a person and over the fairness of the law. He frightened her and made her think long and hard. Finally, he told her to go home and be good.

Who is Guilty?

The accused was a tall man with a brutal, but handsome face. The horrid appearance of his red face reminded one of a wild animal

She, the complainant, was delicate with plain face on which you could make out yellow flakes, the natural result of the rouge that she had used for years.

Her cheeks were a little sunken. Around her eyes there were some very thin lines, her lips pale, with a chagrined, long suffering expression.

Everything told of terrible suffering... Only the eyes, the fiery black eyes were very young, full of life, and were devoid of the horrible weariness that emanated from every limb... Something moved her as in a gray, Autumn evening...

He was accused of forcing her to live in shame... In a quiet, trembling voice she told of the horrible years of suffering. After every few words she glanced at him and in her eyes you could see the fear of a slave.

“For a long time I didn't want to make a complaint, I was very afraid of him.

I lived in fear, and I did everything he ordered me to do. I did not have any close friends, and I was also afraid of the police.”

She fidgeted nervously with her thin hands, and quietly, like it was an ordinary occurrence, she recounted the tragic chapters of her life.

“When my husband left me, both of my children were sick. I had just turned twenty-one years old. My feeling for morals was still strong, and I still believed in people and in hope.

My view of life then was very different,” a sad smile crossed her pale face, “Now I am more experienced. In the type of life I have led you have to learn fast. Many become philosophers in a very short time.”

Once again she smiled a sarcastic, bitter smile.

“Then, I appealed to people, but how slow the help from 'good people' came, only those people know who have waited for it while sitting next to the burning, feverish, tiny body of a little baby who can't tell you where it hurts...

Women came, they investigated me, plagued me with various questions which humiliated me. I thought that they would help me quickly. But no, the next morning another woman came. She had a very severe look on her face, and also asked me questions... Oh, if the women, if those who sent the women would have asked fewer questions, less harassment, then how many tragedies would be avoided!”

She covered her face with both hands and sat silent for a moment.

“I had not been in this country very long, I had a greenhorn's fear of city hospitals, I forced the children to stay together and the result is that my five-month old boy died.

“His little soul carried with it to the grave half of my belief in people.”

With a penetrating look she stared in front of her, forgetting all of the spectators in the courtroom.

“Ah,” she said as though awakening from a sleep, “Pardon me, it is very hard for me to talk about that time, about the terrible emotional battles a miserable woman has to deal with in a city like New York. It is hard to talk about them, you won't understand, only those whom you call 'bad,' those unlucky ones understand it, but seldom, seldom do others...”

“When I got a job, I left the three children with the Misses. At night when I came home from the horrible noise of the shop, where the sound of the machines made me crazy, I was no longer used to them, – When I came in at night, I had to heal the wounds that my children received in the streets. – The whole day in the streets...”

And again she covered her face with trembling hands.

“From there I moved to another Misses who let my children go hungry.

“I left there and went to live with a young women who told me that she was a dressmaker.

“And that is where I truly became unhappy.

“Very quickly I found out that no dresses were being made there, and that the young girl made her living from strangers... from shame...”

“That evening I decided to look for another room. I went to work and after begging for a long time the lady foreman gave me permission to go. When I got home I saw an ambulance in front of the house and a doctor in white who held both of his hands the thin hands of my child, which a streetcar had severed!”

She put her hands to her temples and her pretty, lively eyes filled with tears.

The judge nervously tapped his fingers on the desk before him. On his face one could see the deep pity he felt for the young woman.

“When I opened my eyes after a terrible sickness, I found a man standing next to my bed, that was him,” she said indicating the accused, “He was good to me, *then* he was a little bit decent.

“Then I found out that my child was struggling with death in the hospital. When I got better, it was obvious that he,” and again she pointed scornfully at the accused, “was making advances toward me.

“I moved away from there, but he followed me. When he wanted to marry me, I refused. He as a Christian and I was a pious Jew.”

That sarcastic smile returned to her face:

“In a moment of despair I became his lover, and for many long weeks I suffered from terrible misfortune. I was forced to go into the street and earn money for him and his liquor.

“Every time I ran away, he caught me and beat me with murderous intensity. I was terrified of him, and because of it did not report him to the police, and also because I knew he was a 'good buddy' to a lot of detectives...

“Once I ran off to Philadelphia, where he soon found me. A few days later he was arrested for disorderly conduct when he was drunk, and he was sentenced to six months.

“I came back to New York feeling free. By chance I ran into my husband. We went off to live together, and when he questioned me closely about my life, I told him everything, hoping that he would forgive me and rescue me from the beast.”

Placing one hand in the other, and with a bitter smile, she continued:

“I thought a man could understand and forgive. I didn't ask him what he did in the five years since he left me in misery, but he took me to account...

“We separated and I went on with my earlier life.

“What could I do? What else could I do?

“One child in the grave, the second one a cripple, without hands and a foot, in an institution.

“When Phillip returned and began bothering me, I had him arrested, something gave me the courage.”

When the judge declared him guilty, she said to me that in spite of everything she was sorry for him...

“Where are you going to go now?” I asked her. She just shrugged her shoulders...

An Engagement

“No. He will not play with me, no, no, no!” she said rapidly with tight lips.

“How old are you?” the District Attorney calmly asked.

“What does that have to do with anything?”

“It must be recorded.”

“Because he has stolen my ring, you have to know who old I am?” the agitated woman asked and her large, black eyes burned with anger.

“How old?” the smiling District Attorney asked again.

“Twenty-six” and she turned bright red in the face.

“Since when do you know the accused?”

“Eight months.”

“You are engaged?”

“Were, were. Do you think that I am so low as to still think of him as my bridegroom?”

“No, I don't think that. How did it come about that your engagement ended?”

“A better question is how I became the fiance of such a low-down person! I swear to you that he tricked me. He was so holy, I would have believed anything.”

“What happened?”

“He gave me the ring, and people broke plates.”

“What did people do?” the surprised Christian District Attorney asked.

“People broke plates.”

“You had a fight?”

“No. That is how we celebrate. – When a couple gets engaged, people break plates for good luck.”

There was laughter in the courtroom.

“What happened after that?”

“A good 'friend' of ours told him something else about me, and he turned his back on me. I didn't know it at that point and I entrusted him the ring for safekeeping.”

“What do you mean 'entrusted'?”

“He said he would get the diamond reset into a nicer setting. I was happy to hear it and gave him the ring. After that I didn't see him again or the ring.”

“Did you give him the ring in the presence of witnesses?”

“Certainly, the house was full of guests. People were eating and drinking and having a good time.”

“Is that all?”

“No, that is not all,” the woman said turning to the judge, “I want to tell you that he made a mockery of me, my friends point at me with their fingers, and on top of that he stole from me. If you knew how hard it was for me to get that ring, you would send him to prison for life.”

Now the defendant's advocate placed himself a few steps away from the witness chair and, pointing at the young woman, he said in a deep, baritone voice:

“Did you ever love the defendant?”

“Step back a little, you are going to push me over with your finger,” the young woman said.

“That would not be easy to do. Please answer the question.”

“I was his fiancee.”

“That is not an answer!”

“I will not answer that. He gave me the ring? The ring was mine? I wore that ring several months on my finger! He gave it to me? Stole it away? That's enough. It's as simple as that,” she explained defiantly.

“You are a real lawyer!” the advocate said with a smile, stroking his gray mustache.

“That is my business!”

“But you knew that the defendant is poor? It seems that you also knew that he bought the ring on installments?”

“What does that have to do with the story?”

“It has to do with the fact that you promised him six hundred dollars dowry, and he hoped with that to pay for the ring, and when he found out that you didn't have any money, and that you and your mother were out to trick him, he took the ring.”

“But the ring is mine!”

“You got the ring because of the lies you told him.”

“Lies?!” The woman nearly bored a hole in him with her fiery eyes.

“Certainly lies. You promised him money that you did not have. And another thing: When, I ask you, did you tell the truth: When you told him that you were nineteen years old, or here on the witness stand when you said that you were twenty-six?”

Now the young woman was silent and the defendant stroked his glossy hair. In the courtroom there were many smiles, and the clever old advocate knew that his climax was a good one, and with a wave of his hand he said:

“That will be all!”

“He is a thief, Your Honor, you must punish him, he is a thief!” she exclaimed defiantly, and holding her head high she got down from the witness stand.

He sought sympathy from the jury with his complaint against the young woman's mother who had promised him a dowry and lied to him.

The jury was made up of Americans. For them the idea of marrying a woman for money was totally foreign, and they declared him guilty.

Resurrection of the Dead

In Coroner's Court where the Angel of Death plays the central role, many names are written every day, and when the names are written in the thick, black book, it means that the owner of the name has ended his career on this world and did not willingly accept the invitation from the Angel of Death to follow him into the unknown darkness.

Many, many times a day the serious clerk turns the pages of the book and writes a new name. In a home somewhere, it might be rich, comfortable, or a miserable room where the walls are dirty, the little iron bed is broken and on the creaking table where there is not even bread and salt – lay a cold corpse, a life ended. And two beaten-down, broken people cry.

In a lodging house on the Bowery, there, where a lot unfortunates reside with their shame, a drunk man split the head of his friend.

In a city hospital, where there was no one for him with love or friendship, the friend sighed his last breath.

Among the long row of dead people in the New York morgue, where our great bustling city sends its unknown dead, was also to be found our dead friend. A white ticket with a number on it was attached to his cold corpse, and he waited there for someone to identify him.

Into the Coroner's Court came a bent-over woman. Her face was young and the body broken, worn out.

Sobbing bitterly she said that she knew the unidentified body as her husband, who, several months before, had left her. She recognized him from a broken finger and an old scar on his chin. Those were the signs she used because the face was so badly beaten.

Continuing on she told how his drinking became so much worse in the last two years. He had lost their small savings, which she worked years for, in Wall Street. He used to beat her terribly, would go away for periods of time, and would come back to take from her every cent she had earned then disappear again. This time she had not seen him for a much longer time and by day and by night she trembled at the thought that he would come back. He was the father of two children, and in spite of the fact that once she had loved him very much, she now thought that his death was the best thing for everyone.

Through the tears there was a flash of hope in her blue-gray eyes and she told of her plan to study, and make of herself that which he had never allowed her to do.

Once again she began to cry bitterly and left. Outside it was Springtime. She cried, yet the beautiful weather harmonized perfectly with her mood.

Two weeks later, again in Coroner's Court, the young woman returned. But this time she came on the arm of a tall man who had a deep scar on his chin.

Her face beamed with happiness. Shamefully, she went over to the clerk's desk and said quietly:

“There has been a mistake. He is not dead.”

“Who?” asked the clerk with an indifferent tone in his voice, because he had long forgotten the young woman.

“Him, my husband,” proudly indicating the man standing next to her – early this morning he came back home.”

“The name?” asked the clerk.

“John R.”

“Good,” answered the clerk and wrote something in the thick book.

An the young woman with the big plans about self-improvement left happily with her new-found husband who would most likely beat her again and run off with her hard-earned salary.

A middle-aged woman came and identified the unknown man as her son who she had recognized at first glance.

Her lips were dry and her eyes a feverish red.

Her son was her sole provider, a musician, a fine young man. He was in love with a young girl who betrayed him. He took it to heart and began drinking.

A few weeks ago he completely disappeared. She went to the hospitals. From there they sent her to the morgue where she recognized his body.

The older woman did not cry, but her broken heart was obvious on her face.

And the clerk, with an ironic smile, noted: “That is how life plays with us. It would have been better for the young woman to carry out her plans for self-improvement.

A Criminal

A regular type from the old prison system, a true product of criminality was this bowed old man who was sitting at the defendant's table.

How tangled was his white hair hanging down over his high forehead. – The forehead of a thinker – The eyes were short-sighted, glowing, he narrowed them as if he couldn't stand the daylight that was streaming from the high courtroom windows.

His broad shoulders were bowed, his head hung down on his shiny coat which covered his sunken chest. On his face was an expression of self-pity. Often when hard, heavy words were spoken against him his demeanor changed to defiance. His head lifted like a proud stallion. For an instant his eyes became dangerous slits, but only for a moment. Quickly, he gave a submissive glance at the judge, shuddered from fright, his eyes blinked and he lowered his head.

A detective testified that he caught him with his hand in another person's pocket.

The complainant testified that the man bumped into him on the subway, backed off then bumped him again and finally, by the door put his hand in his pocket and took out his pocketbook in which was all of twenty-five hundred dollars.

On the face of the defendant a quick smile played across his face as though laughing at the money, at himself, that he had let such a sum escape from his own hands.

Finally, he was on the witness stand, with measured words as though he had memorized them, he recounted that he was already past 60-years old, and that his last son had just died. He had had five. His wife was sick and needed medicine. He had not eaten for three days when he was arrested. He had never been a thief and he did not plan to take the money.

He recounted all of that in a few minutes, his face was pitiful. His eyes were wet with tears.

A crooked smile was on the District Attorney's lips. He got up slowly, looked at the old man for a long time, and finally asked:

“Perhaps you would like to tell us your real name?”

Again the defiant expression flashed across the old man's face. He lips contracted into a thin line and he remained silent.

“Perhaps you yourself have forgotten. Shall I remind you?” the Prosecutor pressed him.

The old man remained silent. The District Attorney quickly shuffled through his papers. In the end he drew out a long yellowed sheet of paper, held it high and with piercing eyes looked at the old man.

The wrinkled face turned deathly pale. The bottom lip began to tremble, his eyes blinked nervously. On his neck the thick blue veins stuck out. He took in some difficult deep breaths. Slowly his head sank, as though he were giving up the battle.

Looking at the yellowed paper the District Attorney loudly declaimed:

“Twenty, three, four, twenty-nine... Sixty, four, five, seventy... Yes, that is your seventieth name, alias, the seventieth false name that you have given in your criminal career, am I correct?”

And not receiving an answer, he went on to say:

“You are not as old as you appear. You are only fifty-one years old, am I correct?”

“Yes,” came the weak answer.

“And this is your one hundred and fortieth crime,” the District Attorney said slowly, drawing out every word.

On the faces of the jury were expressions of surprise. On the face of the judge was an ironic smile.

“Did you really think that you could fool us?” the District Attorney asked.

The accused remained silent. For a while the muscles in his face worked violently. Finally, his hand brushed the white hair on his forehead aside revealing it as wet with sweat.

“I thought that you had forgotten me a long time ago, it is more than twelve years since you last saw me. Since that trial I have been in eight other trials in the country,” he said quietly.

“And after all that, still a poor man?” the District Attorney asked with a smile.

“That is the kind of luck we have in our family. My four brothers who are thieves are also usually in prison. And the one we call 'fool' is the respectable one. It is true that he sees more of the bright world than I, but what does he need with the world when he lives like a dog? He works and in spite of that, he seldom has anything to eat. Not long ago I met up with my brother in a jail in Pennsylvania. He told me that even the girls have little good luck. Other girls go to the streets. Often they catch a big fish who keeps them in luxury, but not our sisters. All three are very pretty, and what has become of them? The two older ones, when they go out into the streets, they get arrested. That's how it goes with them. A policeman testifies against them and a good girlfriend. And the third, got married, and is dead now. Had a child every year, and what do you think became of them? The same thing that my Mama's children became.”

“Are you afraid now that you will be found guilty?” the District Attorney dryly interrupted him.

The old man remained stock still, let his head fall, thought for a while, and with his eyes blinking said uncertainly: “I don't know, am I guilty? I wanted to eat, I had nothing. I wanted to take something from someone else, and I saw the man put the money in his pocket in the bank. It was a fortune! Can you imagine how many meals you can buy for that much money?”

“Guilty or not guilty?” the District Attorney ask shortly.

“Guilty, what can I say? When I threw a stone into a grocery store that wouldn't give bread to my Mama, they asked me that time also to say guilty. Then, I was only eleven years old. Since then I have said 'guilty' a lot of times. In court when you report yourself guilty, you get a shorter sentence. So, let

it be 'guilty, guilty.'" he answered impatiently.

He quickly gave his real name, fifty-one years old, no home.

"Do you have anything to say before we pronounce the verdict?" the clerk asked in a monotone voice.

"Say? Say? That earlier – for a long time I wanted to be free: Winter is not so bad in prison, one does not suffer from the cold."

"Two years and eleven months!" we heard the judge's cold voice.

And with a pleased smile on his lips the 'criminal' was off to prison.

Competitors

When they were brought into court, both of them looked terrible. Their hair hung in wild strands around their bloody, injured faces. It reminded me of a fantastic painting I saw once and wondered if the brain of the painter was in the right place.

Amid all of the old blood which was running slowly down their faces you couldn't tell if they were young or old. Their clothes were half torn up and in tatters, hanging from their well-formed bodies.

The taller one screamed wildly when the burly bailiff roughly brought her into the room, and the short one, the fatter one, gesticulated with her hands like a madwoman.

"I am not guilty, I am not guilty! I didn't want to fight, she has such sharp nails!," the tall one screamed.

"Just wait. I will fix you alright!" the smaller one answered.

In spite of the fact that their clothes were ripped from the battle they had been through, one could see that clothes were expensive, and their eyes did not look like the eyes of 'cheap' women who were used to fistfights. It is remarkable how easy it is for the primitive to manifest itself in people, in spite of their apparent civilization.

"He is mine! We have been living together over four years. What right do you have to him? I ask you, what right?!" the short one yelled.

The bailiff placed both of them before the judge.

A crooked smile played across the lips of the judge and half-joking he asked:

"Well, ladies, who won the fight?"

Both were a little ashamed at the words.

"Your Honor, I have never gotten into a fight, that person came at me," – the tall one began talking, and with one hand she wiped the blood from her face. But the short one did not let her go on talking.

"*Person*, she calls me? She doesn't know who I am? She knows very well! Putting on airs like she has never gotten in a fight before? She is a fine lady, ha? Fighting is not nice, but seducing another girl's fiance is nice?! Shame on you!"

"Ladies, you must only talk one at a time, I don't have four ears," the judge said laughing.

The small one got very agitated.

"It's not a laughing matter, Your Honor, it is very sad! I love him very much, my whole life hangs on that love. For four years I have dreamed of a happy life together with him, and suddenly, she comes along! Her, with her coquettish charms, she could turn the head of the best of men!"

The tall one smiled with satisfaction. She had forgotten about her beat up face, forgotten the drying blood, forgot everything, she was so pleased with the compliment of her competitor.

“Now she is laughing, you see? Are you happy to see her laugh, she thinks she has won! And she calls herself a respectable woman! It is not nice to fight, she says, but watch it, secretly seducing another girl's fiance is nice?”

She got very upset, the little one, even the judge would not let her get a word out, but in spite of that her speech was the speech of an educated woman.

“Your Honor, you won't let me speak, but I assure you, Your Honor, I am not accustomed to such barbaric...”

And again the small woman broke down.

“Barbaric she calls it. Fighting is barbaric she says! And to come like a thief in the night and cozy up to strange man, that's not barbaric! Creeping like a cat...”

Now the tall one got upset.

“Your Honor, she blames me too much! I...”

“You? What are you trying to say?!” the small woman screamed again, “I am the one making the complaint! I want to speak first! Your Honor, she seduced away from me my fiance, that's why I smacked her!”

“And yet you are the complainant?” the judge asked, laughing.

“Yes, she is the civilized one, yet she can fight like a wild woman. I only gave her a few slaps, but she, she tore my face up, just like a cat.”

“I will not allow...,” the other began to speak, but the judge raised a hand and in a severe tone said:

“Let me say a few words also.”

Turning to the small woman he asked:

“She took your fiance away from you?”

“Took away?! No, she can't do it! He loves me too much!”

“Then why did you fight her?”

“Because she was flirting with him too much. Truly, he is a good man, but the best of men can be taken down the wrong path by a bad woman!”

“A bad woman she wants to call me?!” the tall one responded in a wild scream, “I want him...”

“Enough, enough, ladies! It really is not nice. You have fought enough. This time I will forgive you,

and let you go home, but try coming back here again before me, and I will punish you severely! Now, go home!”

The voice of the judge was so stern that both of the women stayed silent and with bowed heads they left the courtroom.

The Tragedy of a Fool

And thus did the tragic novel of a fool end up in court with death hanging over his head.

“There in the land from which I come, it is very difficult to earn a lot of money, but one can save, and I learned how to save.”

This talk of his about money was not appropriate for this frightful, earnest hour of his trial.

He was sitting in a corner of the witness chair. Something about him made you think he was about to take flight. Not just his face, but also his eyes gave you the impression of flight... Flying off into the gray clouds, where people did not talk about justice, where you did not hear the thundering voice and see the accusing finger of the District Attorney... Where no one cried out, “Murderer, murderer, murderer!” And you did not have a guard in a blue-coat uniform by your elbow!... And where the merciless witnesses did not follow each other so quickly bringing you nearer and nearer to the hour of judgment...

His voice was ordinary, but not in accord with his face.

“And since I learned how to save, it had become easier,” he continued, “I have always worried about the future for my wife and child, I have always been afraid that something would happen to me and they would suffer. And now, now I can't believe that I used to think like that!” A very bitter smile appeared on this bluish lips, and on his high forehead drops of sweat appeared.

“I saved twelve thousand francs, and then I allowed myself to live a little. One evening I was away with my wife and child in the theater. It was the last happy evening for all of us.” Here his eyes filled with longing. “The next day I met Edith. I liked her very much. She had her eye on me for a long time, she said. She saw me in the theater every evening. She asked me if I would take her to the theater some time, that it would make her very happy. Ach, how she looked at me then with her big, loving eyes! Soon I became her fool!” – and around his weak mouth you could see the expression that was characteristic of that sort of “fool”...

“And from that day my hard-working life was transformed into a stormy, wild joy. A joy that did not ask any questions, that did not pay any attention to the world, with correctness, a joy that stifled my conscience, and closed my eyes to the unpleasant. A joy with an insatiable thirst for the forbidden. Edith knew how to turn my head. Her every look was filled with promises, but nothing more... And if I wanted to be completely happy, she set the price – America! I forgot about my wife, forgot about my child whose slightest wish used to be law to me; forgot about everything not involving Edith.”

He put his elbow on his knee and supporting his head with his hand, he sighed deeply and continued:

“I did what Edith wanted. I came with her to America. Taking with me the money, that took me years to save. I left with my wife and child a foolish letter with a couple of hundred francs, and I came here, came here! I want you to understand. I don't want to damn Edith, she couldn't help it. Now she is dead and I will not libel her. She is only what G-d made her. G-d gave her a pair of lovely eyes, that could only smile and excite – and that is how I want to remember her.”

His eyes filled with tears, and his lips were twisted with pain.

“I want to forget the horrible days and weeks that followed the few happy months that my happiness lasted. All of my saved francs disappeared very quickly. Edith wanted a lot of things and I gave them to her...”

The tall, strong, blond man with the pale face and with the tears standing in his eyes, laid his hands across his wide chest and with a deep sigh, continued:

“When I went back to working here in America, Edith seldom smiled. Her eyes ceased to excite. I thought that she was worried because I had to work so hard. Then the horrible day came when I found out that my beloved was not true to me. That was a horrible day!”

His gray face looked frightful when he said that, twisted in pain, wet from the tears, with clenched teeth and bitten lips he stared straight ahead.

“It did not help to talk to her, no plea, no threats, no crying. My G-d, how deaf she had become! *I* no longer existed for her. Now it was my friend, my *best* friend, the fool!”

After a moment he went on:

“I left. I don't know how a man can cry as much as I cried every day. And I had always considered myself to be a strong individual! Every day I would go back to her and beg. And she laughed at me. Then I bought a revolver and sent a bullet into my head. But even that was not successful, just like everything else I did.”

“And then?” the judge asked, very interested, after the man had remained silent for some time.

“Then?” he asked as if he had just awakened from sleep, – “Oh, then, it was a minor wound and I lay in the hospital for a few weeks. When I got out, I was full of new plans, because she came to visit me in the hospital, and she smiled at me with *such* love! But when I went to her, she refused to live with me. And I bought a new revolver.”

“And then,” his advocate asked after a long pause.

“I don't know if you will believe me,” and again he crossed his arms, “But that morning I did not go there to kill *her*. No, I went there to kill *myself* in front of her eyes. But when I looked through the window and saw her in bed with my best friend, the same bed that I had a short time ago paid for with my francs from back home, I saw red, red!... They wanted to drive me away, and I forgot that I came there to shoot myself. I shot at them. My G-d, why weren't there more bullets in the revolver?! When I remembered that I wanted to die, it was too late. The revolver was empty!”

He cried the whole time that the jury deliberated.

The jury came back with a verdict of guilty, guilty of murder in the first degree.

And that should have been the end of the tragedy of the fool. But the jurors asked for mercy for him. They took pity on the unhappy fool. Maybe many of them understood? And were afraid of the future, and that they, too, could one day be as foolish?...

Bad Words

The young girl had grown tall, and developed too early. The atmosphere in which she lived was not very pure. She had heard more talk among her friends about changes to the body than to intellectual development. Yet the instinct to better herself was so strong in her that she could not stand the coarse talk that her friends engaged in.

They laughed at her. She stopped up her ears and pushed away the man who took every opportunity to utter a coarse word. And though she did not want to tolerate it, he would give out an impertinent laugh and keep talking. She threw a pair of scissors at his head – and now she is in court to answer a charge of assault.

“How old are you?” her advocate asked the usual question.

“Seventeen,” she answered with a clear voice which trembled a little. Her eyes were big, and frightened and looked around searchingly. She was afraid of every movement in the courtroom. If someone walked past her, she would change color, her nearly colorless face became even paler, and her high chest heaved rapidly, and when the passerby sat down, her breathing became lighter and she placed her thick hands in her lap.

“Tell us what happened,” her advocate asked again with an unpleasant tone. He is an unknown figure in criminal court. He is one of the little blood-suckers who call themselves advocates, one of those that the poor, uninformed masses go to. People put their fate in the hands of such advocates, people look to them like a god, and he is always unhappy because he can not squeeze a little more money out of them.

“Happened? Oh, it happened every day,” she answered.

“But you did not throw a pair of scissors at his head every day?” He was already agitated, the tall advocate with the small brain.

“No, that did not bother me. It bothered me that he had the nerve to talk like that in front of me!” the young girl answered naively.

The advocate threw up his long arms in despair, and it looked like he might soon thunder out some unpleasant words, when the judge, a younger man, very sympathetic, cheerfully asked:

“We mean the day when it came to pass that you are supposed to have thrown the scissors at him?”

“The scissors? Oh, the scissors? He was lucky that I didn't have anything heavier in my hands.”

“But that is a crime,” the judge said to her almost pleadingly.

“A crime? And talking such filthy talk is not a crime? I don't know much about justice, I say to you, *he* should be locked up, *not* me.”

“But you threw a scissors at him and split his head?”

“That doesn't matter, his tongue is still long enough to say ugly things to young children.”

For a while it was quiet in the courtroom. The judge was very sympathetic. The lawyer apparently thought that the girl's parents would think that he wasn't doing his job, and with a full voice he said:

“What did he say?”

The young girl quickly jumped up as though someone were trying to make a fool of her.

“That is something you should ask him! Do you think that I would repeat such words? I am not one of those who remembers such talk! But I know that his mouth has produced quite enough of it!”

“What do you mean?” the judge asked, a little ashamed. He was aware that his demeanor was not as 'proper' as the law demanded, but today he felt more like a human being than a judge...

“What do I mean? What? I mean the two girls from our shop who are in jail now for mischief, thanks to his mouth.”

“How did that come about?” the judge asked further.

“They were very young when they came to us to work they were still almost children. For the last five years they have been listening to his mischievous remarks. With every leaf of tobacco that they pressed, with every cigar they made, they were hit with his gross jokes. And what do you think those jokes made out of them? Then I did not understand. I was just sickened by his talk and could not stand it any more. I threw the scissors at him.”

“And what do you understand now?”

“Now, I have had a little time to think. In jail you talk to others. I was locked up for three weeks, because my parents could not pay the five hundred dollars for bail. There I became acquainted with a woman, maybe you know her? The one with the thick, colored hair. She is good. She is not as bad as you think. True, she spits a lot, but that, she says, is from smoking. When I told her about the young girls, she said that I was lucky, that I did not become a street girl like them, because, she said, he with his talk had helped the girls become wild. Do you understand? And she knows what she is talking about, you should hear how much she has experienced.”

The jurors were middle-aged, cold men who held tightly to the letter of the law, and the declared her guilty.

But the judge thought for a long time before he pronounced the verdict. It appeared as though the young girl's friendship with the lady with the colored hair who spit a lot did not please him. At first he shook his head as though debating with himself as to what to do.

In the end his conscience won out. He sent the young girl home. But first he gave her a long lecture about people who do bad things in the heat of the moment.

In the corridor a few minutes later the young girl stood silent, being held tightly to her mother's breast, and a few steps away in a group of men stood the complainant, a tall, pale man with cynical smile lines around his thick mouth, and looking brazenly at her, he remarked:

“A pretty girl can get away with anything.”

Outfoxed

The two were older people. Married for thirty-two years, happily enough until – but we will allow them to tell their story:

“Look at the cut, it still hurts. It will leave a permanent mark on my cheek,” she said as she sat herself down broadly in the witness stand.

She was a pleasant, middle-aged woman, with a cautious face and with very little gray hair. Her clothes were expensive, elegant not, loud. Above all she gave the impression of a very contented person.

“You see how deep the cut is?” she asked the judge. And her white hand cautiously indicated a hardly healed cut on her left cheek.”

“What did he use to cut you like that?” the judge asked with sympathy.

“He threw a plate at my head.”

“How long have you been married?”

“Thirty-two years, we already have some grandchildren.”

“With a man that throws a plate at your head, you are together for thirty-two years?”

“He. He never did that before,” she answered quietly and looked a little ashamed at the toes of her elegant shoes.”

The husband, who looked weaker, smaller and older than her, smiled ironically.

“And what caused him to change suddenly” the judge asked.

“He took sick and from that point on it seems that he thought I was bad,” she answered, becoming a little more lively.

Her calm eyes looked with an assured expression at the jury. Her wide shoulders squared themselves proudly and she said:

“I did not want to come and accuse him, now I am sorry. One should forgive a fool. But... but the wound was serious and in the hospital they talked to me saying that I should not let such a crime go by in silence.”

She was apparently very happy with the impression her speech was making on the judge and on the jury. She wanted to step down when her husband's advocate had, in an artificially sweet tone, asked:

“How did it come about, Madame, that you lived for thirty-two years with a fool?”

“That is my business!” she answered angrily, and her calm face became stormy.

“You have become angry already? A little too quickly, Madame. Rather, tell us what led to the climax with the plate in the cheek?”

The woman did not answer, but her face flushed deep red.

“Shall I tell it,” the lawyer asked.

“Who knows what sort of foolishness he told to you! Lately he hasn't known what he was talking about!”

“A couple of weeks ago your husband was upset?”

“Yes,” she answered short and unwillingly.

“You thought he was going to die from the operation?”

“Your Honor, I protest!” the woman yelled.

“Good. I already have my answer!” the advocate laughed, pleased with himself.

“Did he give over to you two specific houses when he was in the hospital?”

“He gave me the houses!”

“Can you remember what he said to you then?”

“No!”

“I will help you recall,” and the advocate started reading from a long blue paper: “Two houses, one is found on Eleventh Street, number ____, and the other on Thirtieth Street number ____, I sign over now to my wife Lena. She should record the deeds after my death, when the houses shall belong to her. If I survive the operation, she shall return the houses to me.” “Now,” the advocate handed the paper to her, “do you recognize the handwriting of your husband?”

“Your Honor, am *I* on trial? Is this a civil case where there is a money dispute? Or, is *he* on trial for assault?!” she asked in anger.

“But this does have to do with the assault charge,” the judge said, now he was becoming less sympathetic.

“Is that your husband's handwriting?” the advocate asked again.

“Who is protecting him? He can sign whatever he wants! Yes, it is his handwriting, but I did not sign it!”

“You are very clever, Madame, he asked you to sign and you just laughed at him and promised. Meanwhile, he was very sick and you thought he would not remember. When he recovered, you refused to give him back the houses, why?”

“Because, if he is a trusting husband, after thirty-two years of married life, then, certainly, can't he trust me?”

“And when he didn't want to you called him an old fool, and laughed at him. Denied him necessities, and surrounded yourself with luxuries. Didn't he work for his property?”

“But now he was too weak to deal with business.”

“You are a very faithful wife,” the advocate smiled ironically, “If you are so faithful, why did you leave him alone all night long? And he didn't even have anyone to bring him a glass of water?”

“If he is sick, should I have to tie myself to his bed? I still want to live.”

“That is why he wanted the houses back. When he had money you were a little more faithful.”

“Certainly, then he would pressure me and stifle me. I wouldn't have a single cent!”

“So you figured, better *him* than *me*! Very clever, Madame, but you pulled the strings a little too hard. For example, one evening in the building, a fire broke out, strangers carried your husband from his bed. He nearly burned to death, and you were at the opera.”

“I didn't know about the fire.”

“True, But couldn't you have calmed his sick, frightened nerves, instead of what you did? That night you laughed at him, and when he threw a plate, you went to the court? Shame on you, Madame!”

The little, gray defendant smiled with contentment, and his wife tried to shoot him down with evil looks.

And when he was declared free, she was very chagrined. Thirty-two years of marriage had made them enemies...

The Living Dead

In the courtroom came a man in his middle years, a short man with a yellow pinched face, small eyes which were deep-set in his head. With a quick step he went to the Captain and pushing him aside, wanting to go on.

The Captain stopped him with a question, asking him where he was going.

“I want to go to the judge,” he explained pushing himself farther on.

A lawyer who was speaking, stopped. The spectators arose from their places and there was confusion in the courtroom.

The judge hammered for order and asked:

“What do you want?”

“I can't speak to you from so far away, I must come nearer,” he answered and again began pushing forward.

The Captain stopped him again and the judge impatiently yelled:

“Talk from there. What do you want?”

“I want to come closer, I want you to feel my body.”

The murmuring among the spectators became louder, many began to look and point with their fingers. The Captain had grabbed hold of the man with both hands, even though the strict look on the judge's face asked for compassion.

Everyone was quiet and looked at the man, thinking he was out of his mind.

“I want you to tell me if I am alive, or if I am dead,” he explained looking right at the judge.

The courtroom filled with laughter, even the judge smiled.

“You laugh? It is easy for you to laugh, but for me it is very important, and I want you to answer me.”

“Who says, then, that you are dead?” the judge asked, barely holding in the laughter.

“My wife. She says that I died, do you agree?”

“Certainly not,” the judge laughed out loud.

“Then give me a warrant, I want to have her arrested.”

“Arrested for what?” the judge answered, becoming more serious.

“Because she said that I was dead.”

Noticing that everyone was laughing, he continued on:

“A few years ago I was away from her, not being able anymore to stand her curses. I did not write to her. But as you know, time heals all. I had forgotten her bad traits, and began to long for her. Yesterday I came back and found her living with another, a previous boarder.”

Here he looked around at the spectators and seeing that many had become serious, he continued with his story:

“When I came in, she began to scream that I was dead. That she was sure that I was dead! And then she chased me out. Today when I returned she started screaming again that I was dead and that got me so upset that I want her arrested.”

“You can't have her arrested for that, you can apply for a divorce,” the judge explained and gestured with his hand to get out.

“Some justice,” he, the dead man, angrily grumbled, while slowly leaving the courtroom.

Fire!

She comes to court every day, sits herself down in the same corner. In her big gray eyes there is the same hungry expression, something makes it appear as though she wants to swallow whole the judge and jury who want to convict her husband.

The trial was a long tribulation for her. It had already gone on for eleven days. The witnesses were for the most part technical, wanting to convince the jury that he set the fire in his factory.

The representative from the insurance company testified to the high amount of money on the policy. His employees testified that demand had been slack for quite a while. And every witness testified that the fire was set on purpose.

His defense was that the fire did not start in his place of business, but rather on the next floor.

On the last day of trial she was called to the stand as a witness. She was frightened as she answered the questions from the District Attorney.

Her chest heaved faster and faster. One could see that she was struggling within herself every time she uttered a word.

The cross-examination lasted a long time, and the whole time her body trembled.

With cast-down eyes she admitted that their finances had not been good recently.

When it seemed that they were about to stop plaguing her with questions, we heard a sudden yammering cry from her like a gunshot had passed through her, and she fell in a faint.

Her cry came as an answer to the District Attorney's question: "Do you know Mrs. Abrams?" The question came with him looking directly into her teary eyes.

Certainly everyone was surprised at her hysterical outbreak, and every neck stretched out, and every ear perked up when the District Attorney called as his next witness Mrs. Abrams. This was just after the lawyer declared that the defense rested.

Mrs. Abrams was a thick woman in her middle years. She laid her thick hands in her lap, and in an unfriendly tone recounted the following:

"I am a wait-woman, often go to help women following childbirths. Usually I hear things that people want me to forget," she gave out a cheerful laugh, "but I forget nothing."

"Eight years ago I was called to the lady. This was before she became so swell," then with sarcasm she said, "she only calls nurses now!"

"Then she was in bed after having her first child. She was young. She didn't have anyone. One day she suddenly became very weak. I knew that it was not very dangerous, but she was so frightened and so sure that she was going to die. With tears in her eyes she cried out: "With whom can I leave my child? With whom?!"

“What's wrong, don't you trust your child with your husband?”, I asked.

“I am afraid,” she explained, and in broken sentences she told me: “It was a few months ago, just after the death of my mother, it was a very bad time for me. My husband did not have a job, and I was in this situation. Our circumstances were so bad, the we considered taking our own lives. One evening my husband came home very excited. He told me that the only way out was to make a fire in the house, and the insurance money would save us.”

The thick woman looked around, straightened her hat and continued:

“I became feverish when she told me that. She became cold. I supported her and sobbing, she went on:

“I was dead, I cried. I begged him, pointed out the danger of a house with people in it, and when that did not help, I warned him that people would find out, the neighbors would know that you don't have a job, they will look and find you and arrest you. I complained and cried and nothing helped.”

“This was his plan: He would take off his clothes and sit in a tub of water. After he did that, he was set fire to a piece of furniture. When that got to burning, he would be in water and no one would suspect him. That is how it happened. I saw him in the bathroom, I was half-dead. A neighbor came in. He spoke with me about various things, I have no idea what I answered him because my whole body felt like it was elsewhere. I only heard what was going on in the bathroom. It seemed like a whole hour passed, I don't know what I said to the neighbor, but that is a time that I will never forget –“

“At this point she fell back exhausted. She begged me not to tell this story to anyone. Later she explained to me that the fire never happened, because her husband regretted what he was doing and put the fire out himself.”

The whole time the woman was talking there was total silence in the courtroom, the defendant was sitting bowed over, hiding his face in his hands, his wife was quietly crying with her head against the shoulder of a friend.

“She begged you not to say anything, and you are not ashamed to recount what an hysterical, dying woman told you, thinking it was her last minute on earth?!” asked the defendant's lawyer.

“If he did it once, it is very possible that he would do it again!” she answered, and the judge seemed to think so also, because it did not take long for him to find the defendant guilty.

Ben D. David

People called him Ben D. David, and everyone who knows anything about famous thieves knows him, or they have heard of him.

He was given the name because he was always neat and elegant. His manners were very good, and his tone was businesslike. He spoke quickly, and those who did not know him were enthralled by his courtesy.

He called all of the court employees by their name, and held strongly to the fact (?) that as a young boy he went to the same shul as one of the judges.

This time he was not handling himself according to his usual habit. He did not hurry to convince everyone of his innocence, there was something in his tone that hinted at resolve.

And meanwhile, when the lawyer declaimed to the jury:

“Gentlemen! The defendant has something very important to tell you,” smiles appeared on the faces of most of the jurors and spectators. It was easy to see that everyone was waiting to hear the usual fantastic tale that every thief recounts.

He was an average-sized man, an old criminal. With a quick step he mounted the witness stand.

And in a ringing voice he explained:

“I have sworn to tell the truth. I know and believe little in the oath of a thief. I am not what you believe me to be, judge for yourself.”

His head of curly hair, his large nose, his small, sharp eyes spoke, every aspect spoke of a proud man, not a guilty one, but a smart one.

“I grew up in a part of New York which even years ago was densely populated.

“It was a holiday. We boys were playing ball. I always loved playing ball. But, you are not interested in that,” he said with a smile.

“A fire broke out, there was a lot of tumult. My friends ran to the fire and I followed them. In the confusion one of my friends gave me a watch. I put it away. Soon there was more tumult. A man yelled that someone robbed him.

“A little girl said that she saw me with a watch. I was arrested, and since I refused to say who gave me the watch, I was sent to a reformatory.”

At that point he stood a while in silence, and crossing his legs, he continued on:

“All of that is not important to you, but for me it was the beginning of my criminal life.

“I was seventeen-years old when I got out of the reformatory and, gentlemen, I was reformed,” he

laughed bitterly.

“My parents, I did at one time have parents, parents who loved me very much, were the best people in the world.

“My father, after a great deal of effort, found me a job.

“I worked for two months before a 'friend' told the boss about my past.

“Later, three more jobs with the same result. Then several months without work and without money.

“I ran in to friends from the reformatory. They laughed at my honesty. They were full graduates.

“For my next crime I was sent to the penitentiary. Next in Sing-Sing for a few years. I was now a full fledged thief.

“From Sing-Sing I came out with a broken spirit.

“And that is where my guilty expression changed into a serious one of total self-pity.

“I had ten dollars in my pocket, earned after years of doing prison work. I saw that a life of crime did not pay, and I resolved to go straight.

“I went to one of my sisters, one who had not rejected me. She had two small daughters. They loved me very much, and I very much wanted to be a good Uncle.” Here, his serious eyes began to grow a little moist.

“Now I wanted to be truly good, but in the world there are detectives, who have the means to fabricate crimes,” and here, once again, he laughed bitterly.

“One of them pursued me and got me for a crime which I did *not* commit.

“When, after a few years, I got out of prison I gambled and worked, then I met a good man who gave me a job.

“When I was broke, I stole. I am not proud of it. No one is more sorry about it than I am!”

He had spoken in a convincing tone of voice. He had spoken about several crimes he had committed, and several that he did *not* commit, and done time in jail for them, because they did not catch the real thief.

He spoke for a long, long time and everything he said was a terrible indictment of society. It was easy to see from the expressions on the faces of the jurors that they believed him and had sympathy for him.

They did not deliberate three minutes before they returned and gave their verdict:

“Not guilty” they said with down-cast eyes.

The Coquette

He was accused of murder in the first degree. His curly head hung low on his chest and his soft, almost womanly hands lay limp on the table. From close up you could easily see that they trembled.

His eyes were cast down, but from time to time he would furtively glance at the pile of things on the neighboring District Attorney's table.

That pile of things stood as a silent witness against him. Each object told of the bloody tragedy he was now being tried for. The shirt with the large, black blood stains, is his, with his name embroidered on the sleeve. A pair of large gloves, with two blood-stained fingers were his. A torn necktie and a revolver that lacked two bullets, also his.

Not far from him, sitting to his right – his wife. From her pretty face shown her violet-blue eyes. Lush, large, sweet eyes which were always in motion. Like a light, small bird her gaze flitted from one part of the courtroom to another. Then they came to rest on the stern, older judge and looked at him with a plea for mercy. Quickly her gaze moved from one juror to another. The lovely eyes focused on each young juror with lavish charm calling to them as though to say: “You would not dare to deny me.” Meeting the blue, embarrassed eyes of her husband, the light in her violet-blue eyes went out. Ashamed, with a deep sigh, she looked down at her feet.

There were no witnesses that saw the crime with their own eyes. However, there were a lot of witnesses who heard how the accused fought with the deceased and how the accused had threatened to kill the deceased if he didn't stop visiting his wife.

And as the witnesses testified about it, the young wife fidgeted with her white gloves, and her eyes smiled at the jurors.

The star witness is a tall, very thin young man, with tiny, sparkling eyes and red hair. He had a sharp, frank expression on his face. He spoke loud and you could hear it echo, as though the high walls of the courtroom were answering him.

“I ran into him that night not far from our house. I lived in the same place as the deceased. “Why are you running so?” I asked him.

“Who?” the District Attorney asked.

“It was the accused that I met, and he excitedly answered: “I just killed him!” “Who?” I asked. “Harry,” he answered. “What are you going to do now?” I went on to ask, not believing him. “I must have Narajen, a lot of Narajen! I must wash my hands, they smell of powder!” he said and ran away.”

“What did you do?”

“Me?” (with a smile) “I shrugged my shoulders and thought that he must have gone crazy. I went home and found Harry dead.”

“Then?”

“I left and with a policeman I went to his home and found him standing there washing his hands with Narajen liquid. What an idiot! The bloody items were laying on the chair beside him. And her, Madame (pointing his finger at the pretty woman), because of whose eyes Harry now lies in the ground, she was standing there polishing her nails! You hear? She polished her nails, when her lover was laying dead and her husband was arrested!”

The young woman lowered her veil over her face and turned her head toward the window, avoiding the curious looks of the spectators.

The accused stiffened his shoulders. A yellow paleness spread across his thin face. His head sunk deeper on his chest.

Later, on the witness stand the District Attorney acquainted him with the bloody witnesses.

“Yes, they are mine,” he answered quietly. He did not deny that he shot the deceased. “He got me upset, he laughed and trod on the sanctity of my family, and I shot him,” he weakly answered.

And when the District Attorney began to dig deeper into the relationships of his wife with other men, he looked him square in the face and asked: “Did you not know that you wife flirted with other men?”

Biting his lips he answered, “She is mine, my wife!”

In the course of the trial he carefully avoided making any comment that would reflect badly on his wife's character.

And when the jury found him guilty of second degree murder, she held out a white hand, with shining fingernails to him. Her eyes smiled, lavishly, not promising a single thing...

The Mother and Children

The mother and her four children came into the courtroom dressed in their holiday best. The expressions on their faces would make you think that they were coming to a party.

With cheerfulness, even joy, the five individuals were very out of place in the court where you generally see troubled faces and broken hearts...

The children were coming to the trial of their father, a bigamist. All four together with their mother found seats on a bench near the front and they looked at the accused.

He was a small, very ugly little man with a true monkey face, from which looked out very tiny, evil eyes. He shuddered slightly when they came in, and quickly began to speak with his lawyer.

All of the children were good-looking like their mother, who had a very pleasant face even though it was covered with many deep wrinkles.

The ugly little man turned around, and his tiny eyes looked at family 'number one,' which looked back at him with five pairs of pretty, but defiant eyes.

They looked at him for a long time. On his yellowish, frightened face there slowly spread a dark red flush, which eventually worked its way down to his short, thick neck. He gave a slight shrug with his shoulders, and turned away from them.

“She” looked at him for a long time and then instinctively her eyes began to wander around the courtroom, and then, suddenly, she went completely white. Everyone looked with hate at one corner where a well-dressed woman was sitting holding a small child by the hand.

The first witness was the middle-aged woman, with the wrinkled face. She was very frightened, and when they swore her in, she raised both hands and in Yiddish repeated several times: “I will tell the truth, I will tell the whole truth!”

Quietly, while looking at her children, she answered the questions of the District Attorney.

She had been married twenty-eight years, had five children, and lived happily with her husband until...,” and here she stopped and bit her lip. She looked for a long time at the accused, who with a cunning smile on his ugly face was talking with his advocate.

Again her eyes wandered into that corner where the well-dressed young woman with the child was sitting. Slowly her troubled, pretty eyes filled with tears and the children, the two older young girls, answered their mother with their own moist eyes...

It was difficult for her to tell the rest of the story. With bowed head, shamefully, she spoke in a cracking voice. In her tone you could feel the anger and scorn with which women under similar situations speak. Not with hate, but with terrible sorrow.

“When we came here the children were still very young, that is the older three. When the youngest was born, I was in a very bad state. As a greenhorn he still did not have a business. We lived off of my

work. I was a wig maker.

“When the child was four-days old, behind closed doors I would comb stranger's wigs. I was afraid of a good eye, I kept the doors closed. My hands trembled terribly, and I was afraid to look in a mirror... But the children must eat, and I needed the quarters that I got for combing the wigs.”

She looked at the children, and with a little more courage she went on:

“But I did it all with satisfaction. The children became lovely and good. A long, long time passed before I taught my husband a little about my work, but he did not like it: “Women's work,” he complained.

“Bit by bit we work in a little store, and when the children got older they found work, and we opened our own little shop.

“Later, false hair began to be considered very modern and we were earning good money. In a short time we became rich. It's true we all worked until late, late in the night, and when the money came in we did not know how to enjoy it.”

And here a little smile came to her lips, but the smile quickly disappeared. Her eyes once again wandered to *that* corner, and the troubled expression returned.

“It is not easy to talk about that time,” she continued on with a sigh, “I try to forget, I teach the children to forget also.

“When she came to us as a servant, we were rarely at home. We treated her as one of our own, because we had not forgotten all that we had experienced and she partook in our goodness,” she broke down as she descended the witness stand.

Other witnesses testified how he married the serving-girl without being divorced from his first wife.

He denied it and Mrs. Number Two denied it. They only lived together they explained.

The judge found him guilty, and when the judge sent him away for four years, the smiles disappeared from the children's faces and their mother cried bitterly...

His Diploma

When he became a member of the Gangster College, he was very happy, because it was very hard for him to accomplish and he had to show a lot of good-youth schtick before they accepted him.

Now he is on trial for murder in the first degree. This would be the strongest indication that he was worthy of the diploma.

He did not want to talk about it. He sat silent between his advocates and listened to the horrible testimony against him.

A young man, also a gangster, was murdered. He was the leader of a big gang, a rival gang. Now every gang member and hanger-on was a witness.

The young defendant, whose nickname was 'Redy' due to his bright, red hair, was very young. His face was noble, not the face of a gangster. The eyes were deep-set, dark. His facial features were very regular, except for some thin lines around his mouth. His face was very pleasant.

His lips remained tightly pressed together during the first days of his trial.

Several times a day an elderly Jew with a steel-gray beard came to the railing, tapped him on the shoulder, and handed him a slip of paper.

After that the Jew would tip-toe away, and sit down next to the pretty, plump Jewish woman, sadly shake his head. He would look and look at the straight shoulders of his son, the gangster.

The son would reach his white hand over his shoulder to take the slip of paper without even glancing at his father. He did not read the little letter, holding it between his fingers, he turned it, played with it until his father brought another one. Then he tore the first into small pieces, and threw the unread fragments under the table, and toyed with the new one.

The father became more and more desperate, his face became more contorted, and the mother's sighs became so loud, that we could hear her even at our table.

The father realized that his son's bold indifference was being noticed by the serious twelve jurors, and, frightened by the impression it was making, he stopped writing the notes and carrying the white slips of paper with his tired, heavy steps.

However, his face still showed the deep plea which was on the slips of paper.

And that plea was that the young man should talk. That he should tell who his accomplices were, who it was who ordered him to commit this horrible murder.

I knew about this from the despairing father: "If he would talk, if he would testify, the punishment might not be so severe," the old man sobbed.

The testimonies revealed that the gang, whose leader was the murdered man, had 'protected' a certain dance hall, and that this dance hall needed a 'protector.' The testimony also made clear that the leader

of "Redy's" gang wanted the income for himself, and that is why the murder was ordered, for strictly business motives.

The prospects for the young redheaded man were really bad, yet his lips remained sealed.

Finally, on the fourth day when the eleventh witness testified that he saw the accused two strides away from the deceased, and that he, "Redy," had a revolver in his hand, he leaned over to one of his advocates and whispered a few words in his ear.

The next witness was a stenographer, who read the last words of the victim, wherein he swore just a few minutes before he died, that Redy was the one who shot him.

The crushed father covered his eyes, which he had held closed for hours at a time. He took a pencil out of his pocket, from another pocket a crumpled slip of paper. He placed them on his knee, and with a shaking hand wrote down a few words. He stood up with difficulty and walked over to his son, and tapped him on his shoulder. For the first time in all those days the young son looked at his father.

His face turned white, and he quickly took the slip of paper.

Ten minutes after he read the note, he declared himself guilty.

The expression on his face changed, when he was on the witness stand to defend himself. Gone was the good-youth expression, the usual pale complexion had turned white, deathly-white and his lips pale, his hands shook and his eyes searched for those of his mother, but she did not see him, she looked to the Almighty and in her heart she was praying for her son.

And he testified, testified about his terrible conduct in school, about his unwillingness to learn, about his other brothers and finally about the bad friends he made on the block, and about contact with the gang and about the difficulties he had before getting in.

"And then?" the judge asked.

"And then I wanted to be like them. I wanted to show that I could do heroic deeds, and that I wasn't afraid of anything, but they laughed at me. They said that I came from a too respectable stock, and could never become a gangster. That cooked my blood. I wanted to do the worst just to show them that I was no coward."

"And how did you show them?"

"First they taught me how to shoot, and then they taught me other things."

"What for example," asked the judge.

"How to be a lookout, how to get away when the police come. Then came the last test: In order to be a real gangster one must have enough courage to go and shoot a person when they send you."

"And they sent you?"

"Yes. My time came. I had to go or lose my right to be a member with them."

“You didn't want to go?” the judge went on to ask.

“Yes. I did want to go. I wanted to show them that I was their equal,” came the cold answer. His mother sobbed loudly.

And later, when he was sentenced to fifteen years at hard labor in prison, his parents were overjoyed.

The father said, “I only wanted to save him from the electric chair!”

And the mother said, “Just as well, it could have been worse. Now he is nineteen, when he comes out he will be thirty-four. Enough time to lead a respectable life...”

That is how mothers comfort themselves...

Revenge

With the expression of a dog about to be whipped, she stood before the judge. In her eyes there was a glimmer of hope.

The hand, which was holding on to the railing separating the accused from the judge, was red, burned, and under the thin new skin one could see the thick, blue veins. The other hand was limply hanging by her side of her heavy body.

The head with short, thinning hair was hanging down over her high chest, so that her red, burned chin rested on her blue coat. One was struck by the sharp contrast: Above the chin the face was clear except for a blemish on the side of one cheek.

Her face was pleasant. The red, burn wounds called forth your pity.

The complaint against her was serious: She threw a bottle of vitriol between the eyes of her false lover, breaking on his face, both ears and both hands. However, his eyes were untouched. He pushed her away and she received burns also.

The woman's advocate, an inexperienced one, whispered something in her ear. She indifferently nodded her head, "Yes." Then we heard the young lawyer's strong voice: "My client wishes to plead guilty."

To the formal question of the court clerk, she answered with a soft, perfunctory tone.

With a severe, stormy voice the elderly judge explained: "I am inclined to be very strict with you, young lady. A crime such as the one you committed should not be encouraged."

For a second the young woman's whole face flushed a dark red, her eyes lit up with a frightful hate, but only for a second. She quickly went pale again, an ironic smile came to her thin lips and she softly asked: "And for such a crime as he committed, nothing is said?" and she gestured toward the burned complainant.

"No, but you had no right to take the law into your own hands," the judge answered patiently.

"Right or no right, who can think about such things when the heart jumps out of your body from despair? When the whole shame is on your face, and your heart is ripped apart from the pain. Believe me, at such a time a woman is torn apart by desperation and fear! Fear of the present, fear of the future. I had a great fear for the not-yet-born child. What will I tell him when he asks about his father?!"

"Don't you think that you are also responsible for your misfortune?" the judge asked quietly.

"Certainly. Certainly," the woman said with emotion, tightening her grip on the railing with the long, thin fingers on her burnt hand, "Very guilty, I hate myself enough because of that. I have called myself the worst possible names since that happened. I can't look at myself in the mirror without spitting! It is true, I did it, because I loved him and believed, but how can one be such a fool?!" The last question she asked looking at the judge as though he had some part in her misfortune.

Not far from the judge's bench a young woman stood up and walked over to the judge, spoke with him quietly for a few seconds, then quickly went back to her seat.

“Miss Lorber told me that you have led a very respectable life before you met the complainant. Did he promise to marry you?” the judge asked.

“Promised! What didn't he promise? I didn't know then that he was a liar. I only began to find out when he began to find errors in my work. He is the shop foreman where I worked. Once he knew the condition I was in, he grew colder. As for marriage, he didn't want to hear it. When the others began to remark it and starting gossiping about me, he began looking for excuses to chase me out of the shop. Then he started taking home the heavy, fat girl, her with the laughing eyes who, more than the others was the one to criticize me the most. When he looked at me, I wanted him to go blind. That's how bad things were for me!” the red, burned hand covered her eyes, the other hand trembled violently.

The judge thought for a long time. When the young woman uncovered her eyes, she met the comforting, good eyes of Miss Lorber, who was speaking with the judge again.

“In your condition it is difficult for me to send you to prison,” the elderly judge thoughtfully explained. Miss Lorber, the probation officer, assures me that she will watch over you, and you will have to be good. Will you promise her that you will conduct yourself properly?”

For the first time a spark of hope shown on the young woman's face: “I will promise you everything, just rescue me, I don't want my baby to see the first light of day in prison. I beg you!”

And both hands were outstretched to the judge in supplication. One hand was thin and white, the other hand a red wound...

When the judge freed her, she left the courtroom in the arms of Miss Lorber, a sister who helps instead of pointing fingers...

Fooled

He was tall with a blond beard, with deep blue eyes, with thin red lips between which you could see beautiful, white teeth with a lovely smile. And, he was a murderer.

I remember now how curious we, the newspaper writers, were to see him, to study his gestures, to describe his appearance.

And now I go cold when I remind myself how he looked at me. I was absentmindedly sharpening a pencil and thinking about how I would start the article about the sensational murder trial, when a strange sensation shot through me. I felt as though someone was staring at me with a strange, penetrating look.

It was a very unpleasant feeling.

I turned to look at my closest neighbors, but they were all busy with their writing. I wanted to laugh at myself, when I noted that it was the deep blue eyes of the defendant who was sitting only a few paces from me. It was his eyes that were looking at me so strangely, and it frightened me.

An older writer (he is dead now), who was in the habit of joking about everything, said quietly to me: "Do you see how he is looking at you? Perhaps he wants to cut you up in pieces?"

And I gave a mild shudder.

It was a horrible murder. The defendant lived with a young girl, and when she told him that she would soon be a mother, he killed her. Cut her body up in pieces, got rid of every trace, even the mattress. He threw the body parts into a river. And the murderer was a priest!

Since every trace can't really be gotten rid of, little by little the details of the murder were uncovered. Now the cunning murderer was seeking the convenient defense of insanity.

It was an interesting day in the huge courtroom.

Everyone came to see the handsome priest. There were rich women, who had nothing better to do than run after sensational trials. Also poor women came, who had, only a few months before, gone to confession before this same priest.

And he took care that they would not be disappointed. Everyone got what they came for.

The sensation seekers heard the ramblings of a madman and smiled often. And the betrayed people who came to see their one-time priest, he didn't forget them either. Every half hour he stood up, put his pale hands together in prayer, and with his blue eyes cast up to the balcony he made various gestures.

And meanwhile his advocates fought for his life.

The testimonies in this trial were horrifying: A bloody murder, the man who found the knife, and the man who sold it to him. A bloody sheet, a meat cleaver, a bloody cushion which the deceased had embroidered with her own hand.

A doctor testified about the body parts and about the condition of the decaying limbs. They only talked about the limbs and not about the head, because the head was never found.

Then came her friends who identified the bloody rags as clothing belonging to the deceased.

It was horrible.

And among all of the bloody items, there he sat, calm and smiling at the astounded world.

And doctors, great scientific men, testified how carefully they examined the defendant, and how certain they were that he was insane.

It was so hard to connect such a horrible murder to the pale hands of the handsome priest, and with the clear blue eyes.

And yet ever tighter did the chain of testimonies close around his pale neck.

The thicker the chains wrapped around him, the more often he arose with his hands joined in prayer and looked to the balcony.

When his advocates sent him to the witness stand to defend himself, he laughed at them.

And when they forced him to sit in the big witness chair, he cried bitterly, and afterwards laughed out loud, then immediately after wiping away the tears he blew kisses at a particularly pretty woman who was sitting not far from him.

His speech was all mixed up, made no sense, and his mannerisms were those of a true crazy person.

Because of all that it did not take the twelve jurors very long to return a verdict:

“Not guilty!” they declared. How can one send a crazy person to the electric chair?

Then came the most dramatic moment of the trial:

The tall, young priest laughed to himself, and in a clear, convincing voice he cried out:

“I fooled you! I fooled you!”

Then he calmly sat down and began to correct every detail of the testimonies, began to explain exactly how he committed the crime, and how he managed to fool all of the doctors after they had studied him for weeks, and how he fooled his advocates.

Convincingly clear was his voice. In the end he spoke just like other murderers.

The pious expression had disappeared from his face. Those beautiful blue eyes went cold. Trembling and ashamed was everyone who had believed him earlier.

And his end?

His end came in the same empty room in Sing-Sing with the white walls where one finds the big chair which is encircled with broad electrical cables, and over which hangs a little electrical hat from under which no one comes out alive.

Her Inheritance

In their eyes and in every movement one could see how interested the jury was in the beautiful defendant.

And she? She did not show the slightest sign of interest. Her head hung sadly on her chest, seldom did she lift her eyes, but when she did raise them her full, innocent, blue-eyed splendor would look deep into the eyes of the well-dressed jurors.

And they took care to be well-dressed, the twelve jurors.

Every day of the trial it seemed like they wanted to outdo one another. Early, a long time before the judge showed up, they were already in their seats in the jury box.

Faces bluish-white from a fresh shave and from powder, collars of the latest fashion, suits freshly pressed with those creases which many men don't concern themselves with, and neckties in bright colors, knotted with care.

They did not watch the clock impatiently as jurors usually do. No. They sat calmly with a demeanor saying: "I am prepared to sit here for eternity."

One of the younger ones, all of them were young, but he was very young, – followed every glance of hers. When she looked at the table in front of her, he looked at her, and every time that a prosecutor's witness was on the stand, he impatiently turned his head as though to say: "Whatever they are asking you, I don't want to hear it."

There were a lot of witnesses against her: Sales ladies and detectives from a large department store. They testified that they saw her steal a large amount of costly lace which they later found in her muff.

The complaint was very serious. Many had compassion for the young girl. Impatiently they waited for the time when she would take the witness stand and defend herself, denying the shameful charges.

Many were certain that it was a fabricated confusion, and on the faces of the jury was written: "We don't believe it."

When she was finally called to the witness stand, she stood tall with lips tightly pressed together.

Her clothes were simple, from the type of simplicity that costs a lot of money, but she knew that only certain sort of men would recognize the costliness. The jurors, she was sure, would not recognize it. How did she know? Apparently, the loud colors of their neckties told her, and, perhaps, because of that she was not afraid of them?

At first she denied. She knew nothing. She didn't take anything. She was not there.

And a broad, happy smile decorated the mustachioed and clean-shaven mouths of the jurors.

The young District Attorney smiled an odd smile.

“You were not there?” he asked her on cross-examination.

“No,” she answered in a weak voice.

“How did your muff show up there?” he smiled again, holding up a muff from which he slowly pulled out the stolen laces.

She remained silent. Her innocent eyes looked toward the jury box.

“I will make a bargain with you,” the District Attorney said in a cold tone of voice, “I will not go into your background, but you must tell the truth.”

Quickly, as though afraid that he would open his mouth again, she began in a broken voice to recount:

“My mother is sick, she is a widow. An uncle in Chicago helped us out, and with the money I could go to college and things were not bad for us.

“A few months ago the uncle died. Instead of leaving us any money, he died a poor man.”

The jurors looked sadly at the beautiful face, now bathed in tears.

“Everything was difficult, I couldn't leave college, I want, I must finish my education.

“We had to pay rent, I know about expensive lace, I knew that a few yards of expensive lace would pay our rent for a couple of months. I don't know how I did it, I don't understand it myself, I did it...”

Those last words came out in sobs, and many of the jurors looked expectantly at the District Attorney.

After a ten minute deliberation, the jury brought in the verdict: Not guilty.

The teary eyes looked sweetly at the young people. She left the courtroom quickly.

They all followed her. With a light step she jumped into a big automobile, in which were sitting a woman and two men.

“Ha-ha-ha,” laughed an old court reporter, “Fooled a jury again.”

“What do you mean,” a woman asked him.

“Ha-ha-ha,” he laughed again, pointing at the fast-departing automobile, “A smart girl, totally takes after her grandmother. “Mother Rozen,” they called her. In her time she was the smartest criminal in the world. She was just as beautiful as the girl. Her eyes fooled more than one jury of honest men.”

“Who was the woman in the automobile?” someone asked.

“That is her mother, the daughter of Mother Rozen. The only one of Mother Rozen's children who doesn't take part in criminal activities. But her brothers are sitting in a lot, a lot of prisons all over the world.

“The two men in the car are her husband and her son. Her husband, a famous gambler and a faker of gold mines, a well-known swindler. And the son is a young doctor, who changed his name and works in a tuberculosis hospital. He says he wants to pay for his family's sins.”

Here and there you could hear sighs. The youngest juror was standing next to me. He, like four other jurors, had heard everything. What sort of dreams did the old reporter destroy?...

Friend

Is it not surprising? How lightly people hold human life. People can be friends, love each other, something happens, often something trivial, and soon someone is dead.

These murders are particularly frequent among men who drink. Strong drink kills all human feeling. It makes the best of people forget everything in their drunken state.

This early morning just such a fellow is on trial for murdering his best friend.

This man was pitiable. Broken in body and soul, bent shoulders, sunken chest, sunken cheeks, dull eyes and pale lips. The only lively thing about him was his very red nose, consumed by alcohol.

His movements were childish, very frightened. He cried often, wrung his hands and looked at the judge pleadingly.

In a saloon on the Bowery he and his friend amused themselves. There are still some there. They spoke about high prices, and about the high price for fish. It became a heated debate. He, the defendant, said that cod fish cost so much, and his friend was certain that it cost more. The defendant could not stand it, his friend took offense. Their minds were not clear, they began to argue, then fight, and before ten minutes passed the friend was laying dead and the defendant was shocked, suddenly a murderer standing over his friend's dead body with an empty bottle in his hand.

All of this was described by witnesses, witnesses just like them, men who were already sunken so deep that they could not turn back because they had not yet destroyed their innards, and they were outwardly broken...

They went on to say that the defendant cried bitterly, when they told him that his friend was dead.

Now he is sitting on the witness stand. His pale lips trembled, his thin hands were spread out motionless, and his eyes were filled with fear as he looked around.

His speech was good, his voice warm. In just a few words he testified to the crime. He was sorry, very sorry. He would never do such a thing again, he assured the judge in a child-like voice. He uttered the words just as a child would: "I will be good."

He appearance gave the impression of an old man, only from time to time there shown a little fire in his weary eyes, which told of youth and wasted years.

His name was John, but gave a second name, and later he explained that the second name was a false one, and that he did not want to give his real name even to save his life.

I do not want to draw my family into this. I don't want them to know that I have sunken so deep, and that because of the price of fish I killed my best friend, he resolutely declared. And nothing made him tell who he was.

When the jury declared him guilty of murder in the second degree, and condemned him to life in prison, he laughed bitterly: "Because I was drunk, I don't get death. If there is a such a thing as fools,

you are it, I was sure that I would get the electric chair, oy, what fools you are!”

He shook his large head in despair as he left the courtroom.

The Strict Law

It was a very lively trial. Even the normally, indifferent courtroom employees, who are always on the verge of falling asleep, opened their eyes wide. In front of the judge, who was elevated as though on a stage, were grouped the combatants.

A pale, tall man with a pair of angry eyes, with a red mustache that hung down in his mouth and with deeply sunk cheeks.

Three children aged from ten to four.

They were pretty and well cared-for children. Their clothing was very tidy, but their little eyes look around full of fear and panic.

At the complainant's table a young, pretty woman, a typical mother. Everything – her eyes, her facial features, the half-smile, everything about the woman indicated that she was created to be a mother. In her arms lay a six-month old who looked up at the mother with a sweet childish smile.

This child was the cause of this tragic legal performance.

The man said:

“I won't give a single cent. You can send me to prison forever!”

“But why”, the judge asked.

“Because I don't want to!” he said with an angry jerk of his head.

The judge looked at the man for a long while, at the woman and at the children. The young woman had turned deep red in the face, then pale then red again.

“Do you have something to tell me Madame?” the judge asked in severe tone.

“Me... me...? No!” she answered.

“You had better come to the witness stand. Under oath, I will get to the truth sooner!” the judge said in a severe voice.

The young woman arose very heavily. The buttons on her shoes were not laced properly, and her clothes were too summery for this wintry day.

On the witness stand she held the little child even closer to her breast, as though she were afraid someone would take it from her.

The judge said:

“What do you have to say about your husband's accusations?”

“He has made a lot of accusations against me.”

“About the child.”

“The children are his!” she said and looked down on the tiny child.

Furious, the husband asked:

“All?!”

She did not answer.

“All?” the judge asked.

The young woman cried.

“She has to tell you, she has to swear if the children are all mine. Make her swear!” the husband yelled.

The young woman pointed a trembling finger at the three older children.

“I swear by G-d that they are his.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” the husband laughed wildly. And the little one, the little one in your arms, that is also mine? Will you also swear on that one? Say it, will you swear?”

The wife remained silent.

“You see, Your Honor, she won't talk? Ask her, if that isn't the child of her beloved policeman?! Ask her!”

The wife's crying became so hysterical that all three children began crying also.

And when she calmed herself a little, she pleaded, “Let me go home.”

“Aha, now she wants to run away! You see how guilty she is, she is afraid!” The husband was getting heated and his face turned the same color as his red hair.

“You are more guilty than I! Who tread me underfoot? Who didn't give me enough to eat? Who made my life so miserable, that it became apparent that I could no longer live, who? Not you? Answer!,” she cried out with ferocity.

“What does that have to do with it?” he asked.

“A lot. You with your brutal behavior pushed me into the arms of another. When another came to me and spoke to me with friendship, I was surprised. I wasn't used to kind behavior. When he saw how much the children and I suffered from hunger, he brought us food. The bare feet of *your* children didn't bother you, but him, a stranger, it *did* bother. *He* bought them shoes! Naturally, I became his lover. I was like a dog, that one chases away. No one even throws it a bone, then suddenly, along comes a

master who gives it something to eat, and even pets it sometimes! I was so oppressed, so hungry, that I didn't consider anything. And when the child came along, what could I do? Should I have smothered it?"

"Where is your lover?"

"He... he has a wife and a child! But I did not know that before."

"So, now you want me to give you money?!" the husband taunted her.

The judge thought for a long time, then he asked the husband:

"Will you care for the older three children?"

"Yes."

"Them, I will send to an institution, and you will pay for it at the rate of six dollars per week."

The oldest girl, who understood something of what was going on, began to cry, and the other children followed her.

"Why do you want to take the children from me?"

"Because your morals are not high enough to raise them. And if you keep on talking, I will see what we can do to take the little one from you. Women like you have no moral right to be mothers!" the judge said severely.

And the young woman with the motherly appearance, left the courtroom with a broken heart.

The One-Time Author

A frightful yellowness covered his face. The deep-sunk cheeks looked like holes, the eyes were glassy, they looked at the judge with fear as he was about to be sentenced.

The charge against him was that he had taken morphine.

He was a well-known person in court. Many of the employees knew him and felt sorry for him. He had already been sent there multiple times for the same charge.

His bowed body was supported by a pair of wooden crutches, his feet were paralyzed.

He was dressed very modern, although somewhat flamboyantly, which made him a little comical. It was a stark contrast with the crippled, worn out body.

His sad life story had been heard in many courts, and was well-known to the judge.

Fifteen years ago he was one of the best journalists in New York. He was young, full of life, in spite of the fact that success did not come to him until after many years of hunger and suffering.

As a child he was orphaned, and raised by an Aunt who had nine mouths to feed of her own. Naturally, he was always half starved.

After he grew up he became stronger, strong in body and spirit. He was industrious, ready to learn and in the end became a good man.

His colleagues knew him as a man who was seldom upset by anything. Instead of a heart, they used to say, he had a piece of ice.

But those who knew him more intimately knew that at the same time that he was not upset by tears and heartrending cries, he could hand out money when it came to suffering, true suffering.

He was very happy and contented for several years. He earned good money, and was in love with a young lady.

His only passion was smoking. He used to sit for hours, writing fast, and smoking even faster his short, thick pipe.

He married the young lady. A few months later he decided that he wanted to write a play, and that play was the cause of all of his misfortunes.

The play was a wild success. Five companies put the play on in two year's time, and he became quite rich from it, and his head was turned by the wealth...

It took him more than a year to get used to a life of luxury, but when he did get used to it, he began to "live," live passionately....

Everything, smoking, writing, everything he did with passion, but loving he did calmly, for as long as

he loved his quiet wife. The wife who was always silent.

“That she was always so quiet, was the cause of my fall,” he told the judge the third time he was pulled up in court.

“I was living, and she was silent, silent until a few days before the birth of her son. Then she took poison.

“I received the news in a summer hotel, where I was staying with a young chorus girl.”

He fell sick, very sick and spent several weeks on the verge of death.

He never fully recovered. When he got up from his sickbed, he was a shadow of his former self, – he told the court.

The unhappy chorus girl spent his money in the months following the incident, then ran away with a racetrack gambler, taking with her the largest part of his fortune.

That last blow shattered him.

For several months he hid from the world. He sat alone for hours furiously smoking his short, thick pipe.

His terrible pain could only be halted with morphine. The drug intoxicated him and for while he was content.

But up to that time he had only taken the drug occasionally.

At this same time he started writing, he wanted to write again, he had to write, because his money had run out and he had no other way to make money.

“I spent terrible hours at my desk. My hand cramped from holding the pen. However, my ideas had flown, it was impossible for me to put words on that blank piece of paper, words which previously had brought me fortune, words which I needed now to bring comfort to my broken heart...”

In these long hours he often turned to morphine. Under its influence he soothed the pain, and in the end, after a long struggle, he began to write some colorless pieces, which his former publisher sent back to him explaining they “did not feel him” in the stories...

“That hurt very much, because I knew how right they were, I also did not 'feel' it.

“My stories were accepted and published in cheap magazines. I got paid a third of what I used to get. But it was enough to live well, or good enough for my wants at the time.”

The horrible drug slowly crippled his body, paralyzed his feet, bent his spine, and turned his face yellow. It turned him into a living dead-man...

The judge was well acquainted with these facts. The Captain of the court hammered for order, and the judge sent the accused to prison for several months.

A Bride from the Underworld

She was a witness for the prosecution in a murder trial, and those who wondered at her beauty, the deep blue, childish eyes and the innocent expression around the sweet lips, were greatly surprised when the lawyer for the defense, during cross-examination, asked her the following questions:

“How long had you lived with the deceased?”

“Why did you leave him at this time?”

And when she answered the first question with, “Two years,” and remained silent on the second, the lawyer, pointing his finger at her, asked ironically:

“Not because you drank too much and he beat you?”

The pretty face winced, a cloud passed over childish eyes, which moistened for a second. But her face quickly changed. Her look turned defiant, and wiped away the earlier innocence...

“I and if I do drink, whose business is it? Certainly not yours!” her sweet lips yelled.

“How many times a day did he beat you?”

She did not answer the question, but there was a terrible fire in her eyes.

The lawyer thumbed through a book for a long time, then with a smile he turned to the accused and whispered to him.

The young girl on the witness stand became very agitated. No despair, but a wild anger built in her. The beautiful face changed, something about her grew older, and something under her expression read fear...

“And how long did you live with the defendant?” the lawyer asked with a calm smile.

“A few days,” she angrily answered.

“How long have you known him?” “Three years.”

“You met him through his wife, she is your friend?” “Yes.”

“That is a fine way to use her friendship,” and the sarcasm in the lawyer's tone made the young woman even angrier.

For hours he asked her similar questions, how many days did she live with Shorty? How many days with Blakey? And many, many other names of known members of the underworld.

The young woman answered with pursed lips, with convulsive hand wringing, with feverish hate in her eyes she answered, and slowly, unwillingly, chapter by chapter she revealed her shameful past...

This one she left because he drank more than she did, that one did *not* drink and she didn't like that, one, because he stole too much, another because he was a coward, one more because he was always involved in shootings, yet another because he beat her brutally, and another because he was wildly jealous.

She had left the deceased many, many times and come back to him. “He had a terrible power over me,” she explained shamefully, and the childish expression around her lips returned.

One could hear gasps among the spectators. Many could not believe their ears...

They observed the goddess-like beauty, the deep, deep-blue childish eyes, the sweet lips with the innocent expression on the diaphanous face on which even the most unfriendly critic could not find a trace of her horrible life - and no one could believe it.

“He threatened to shoot Shorty so that I would not go to him,” she quietly began her testimony, but the advocate strongly protested that she should not testify about the circumstances of the shooting which came about because of her. The defendant turned red, thick veins throbbed on his temples and on his thick, a little too thick, neck which was heavily ringed with gold. His typical gangster face displayed a phony smile the whole time the pretty young woman spoke.

“And your child? Who is the father of your child?” the lawyer asked.

A frightful sorrow shown on the beautiful face, and she broke out weeping painfully.

Later she testified that when she was seventeen-years-old she became 'deathly' in love with a boy of the same age who died several months after her child was born. A friend of hers who 'comforted' her, promised to take on the responsibility himself. The friend forced her to become his lover and later she did come to love him.

When she was forced to tell her mother, she told her a lie, saying that they were married.

The 'friend' got worse and worse every day after he became the leader of a gang. He began drinking and made her drink too.

“Little by little I began to like drinking also, particularly absinthe. It gave me courage. It was easier to bear the pain, easier to tell lies to my Mother when I came home to her and the child. And it did not hurt so much when he hit me.”

The 'friend' was Shorty the dead gang leader whose hands she escaped to go to another and many others only to return to him, “Because I loved him.”

No trace of the drinking, no trace of the horrible life – A beautiful, sweet young lady told us all of that.

When she left the courtroom, I followed her. In the corridor she met a small, blond young girl and gave her the sweet smile. The young girl leapt into her outstretched arms with a cry of joy.

Later when I came out of another courtroom, where another tragedy had played out, I heard the silver laughter of the beautiful Mother and child...

The Truth

An unusual number of very elegantly dressed women came to court this early morning.

Pleasant aromas from expensive, imported perfumes, gently cloaked the seriousness of the room, bringing Springtime with them. But the faces accompanying the aromas were dead serious. From under the beautiful hats, looked pale, frightened eyes.

The visitors were divided into two groups: On the right were seated the friends and associates of the accused. On the left were the complainant and her friends.

She was a woman of over fifty years with lightly made-up cheeks and a well-nourished, artfully maintained youth.

Her face with the hidden wrinkles which talented hands smoothed out every day, were covered with a light, rose color, which you could see under closer observation was false, and the small pearly teeth smiled with such love that you could forgive their dead flatness. Only the shiny black hair cried out: "I am dyed." Everything else harmonized and appeared to be real...

Her tasteful clothes neatly clad her thin figure. Only her eyes with their sad expression pleaded: "Help, give me back my youth, give me my youth!"

Her charge against the middle-aged defendant was that she had given him a lot of money to invest in business. He had promised a big profit but in the end she had not gotten back a single cent.

Right from the beginning one knew that the trial would be sensational, because the defendant and declared that he would tell things about her that would make her rue the day that she filed the complaint.

And he kept his word. He testified that the older woman had become his lover for the last few years, that he had left her several times, but she always called him back.

The man spoke in the tone of one who had lost everything and looked for a way to save himself and was doing it in the most disgusting fashion.

"She loved me very much. Every time I left her, she wanted to take her own life," he explained, looking brashly at the woman's two daughters who were sitting like their mother with bowed heads.

"I don't know how a woman in her years can live like that," he went on with a proud smile, "She loved me that much! I think she would have sold her children if I told her to."

Feeling strong, he continued:

"She gave me the money without a word. I was her best friend. I needed money, she helped me out. When I get it, I will give it back to her."

The District Attorney called the woman back to the witness stand and everyone was certain that she would deny her shameful guilt.

Her children looked nervously at her as she slowly climbed onto the witness stand.

“What do you have to say about the defendant's testimony?” the District Attorney asked.

“It is not true!” she answered angry, but weak. The defendant let out an ambiguous cough, and with a slight shudder, she bit her painted lips.

The courtroom was quiet for a moment. The looks from the defendant's side of the courtroom were full of hate. They looked like they wanted to shoot the woman. Her friends looks were encouraging. Her pretty daughters looked with hope and pleading at her, and she remained silent.

For a second her gaze encountered the defendant's gaze, and in that moment her whole body changed. All at once she looked her real age, the color on her face looked garish – she became old...

Without speaking, her lips moved. It was difficult for her to speak. Her fingernails dug into the wood of the chair, her whole body shuddered and told of a violent inner struggle.

Her voice became weak as though from far away:

“I will tell the truth.”

This time her fingernails dug into the white flesh of her hand. She exhaled purposefully as though she were tired, and in a broken voice she said:

“When I was hardly seventeen-years old, I married for money, people from our circles need money. If you don't have money you have to sell yourself. My mother was a widow, and she raised me the way one would in order to marry a rich man.

“I had money, but my life was miserable, full of sorrow, without a glimmer of love or happiness,” and her eyes looked pleadingly at her children.

“My life was the usual story for a woman who did not love her husband. I searched for love. When I met *him*, I struggled with myself for a long time. In the end I became his lover.

“When my husband died in an automobile accident, I waited a few months and then asked him to marry me. My life had become a terrible lie! It didn't bother me that I had deceived my husband, he was unfaithful to me a few days after our wedding... I was worried about my children, I was afraid for them.”

Her eyes searched for the eyes of her children, but they did not look at her.

“He answered that I was too old for him even though I was only three years older than him. But he had tricked me out of my money.”

When the jury declared him guilty, she went to her children with the slow step of an old woman and left the courtroom. Her eyes, which were red from crying, looked at him with pity.

The Doctor's Wife

“She must go to prison, Your Honor!”

“But why?” the judge asked with a good-natured smile.

“Because she is a thief!”

“What did she steal?”

“What? What?” and suddenly the woman on the witness stand became very sad. She let out a deep sigh and in a quiet voice she said, “She stole from me the bronze statue from the bookcase. I found it myself in her pocketbook.!”

“Do you know her?”

“No, I am not acquainted with such persons!” the woman answered with a proud jerk of her head. It was a pretty head, with thick curly hair, but the brown silky locks were mixed with gray. Her face was careworn, but it had attractive features. She was tall, elegant and with a very proud bearing.

“Did she come to your house?”

“I had seen her several times in the office. My husband is a doctor. But from the first time she came, she did not please me. She came around too often. When she came the third time, she spent a long time with the doctor. Meanwhile, another patient came who stayed in the waiting room. One thing I noticed right away, that the statue (I had paid eighty-five dollars for it), the statue was not on the bookcase shelf. I searched for it, looked everywhere, but I could not find it.”

“What happened next?” the District Attorney asked.

“When she left, my husband accompanied her. “Have you seen the statue,” I asked. He said, “No,” and then I saw how *she* grabbed her pocketbook and wanted to leave. Then it occurred to me that she might have it? And when I asked her to open the pocketbook and she refused, I forced it open and there, in her pocketbook was *my* statue. I tell you, she *must* go to prison.!”

The defendant's lawyer, with a very polite smile, began his cross-examination:

“Madame, is it not true, that for the last several years, you have been very jealous about your husband, the doctor, and that you have made various scenes in his office?!”

“What does that have to do with this case?” the woman flushed red with anger.

“Quite a lot, Madame! Is it not true, that every time the accused came to your husband in his office, you looked at her with very suspicious looks?”

“Who asked her to come so often?”

“And every time a pretty patient comes to your husband, you act the same way?”

“You call her pretty?!” the proud woman laughed spitefully. Red cheeks and dark eyes you call pretty? She doesn't have even one pretty feature in her ordinary face. No, you can not convince me that I could be jealous of *her*.”

“So, can you tell me, Madame, why on numerous occasions you found excuses to be in your husband's office in spite of the fact that you knew that one did not do such a thing, and that your husband had forbid it?!”

“Because I wanted to!” she said in a stubborn tone.

“Perhaps you can tell me how you knew to search in my client's handbag?”

“Because... Because I did not like the way she looked!”

“I'm afraid, Madame, that you do not like her at all, and that you were afraid that your husband liked her *too* much, and *therefore* your statue fell into her handbag. Am I correct?”

The advocate accompanied that question with such a penetrating look that the woman turned red. But she quickly regained her composure and strongly protested, reviling the advocate who calmly smiled at her.

Among other patients who were in the office at that time was a man who confirmed the woman's claim that the statue was in the other woman's handbag.

The doctor was very nervous when he was called to testify.

He was a young-old man of over fifty, strong build with a handsome, lively face.

“You also saw the statue in the young woman's handbag?”

“No, I did not see anything. When I heard my wife yelling, I went back in to my office. I hate scenes.”

And he had nothing else to say.

All that was left was the woman with the red cheeks. She was very upset when she was called to the witness stand for the defense.

“Such audacity! I am a nurse. I go to a lot of doctor's offices, but I have never met such a jealous wife!”

“And do you sit on the lap of every doctor you visit?” the woman screamed wildly. Her face flushed with blood. Even the whites of her eyes turned red. Her hat tipped to one side, and she bit her lips in anger.

The doctor looked out the window and swallowed hard...

The accused woman laughed out loud:

“For that she wants to make a thief out of me?! Has she no shame? Why doesn't she ask her husband

for a divorce if she is so jealous? Her statue was in my handbag! Not a bad plan, Madame. Only a jealous woman could come up with such a crazy idea. My G-d, how did you dare?!”

The woman became so wild that she ran toward the complainant. It was difficult for her to control herself. The courtroom fell into a tumult.

The judge threw the case out. “Not enough evidence,” he explained.

The middle-aged woman remained seated with her half-gray head in her hands, and those around her could hear her quiet sobbing.

When the now-free young woman walked past her, she angrily said: You will pay dearly for this, Madame, dearly! Not only with money – with more and more!”

The doctor left the courtroom alone...

The Liars

Telling a lie in court is nothing new. True, everyone who has something to say there must do so under oath that he will tell the truth. And yet, a lie is a common occurrence on the witness stand.

One tells a lie in order to save themselves, many tell lies for money, and many others because their fate and their life hang in the balance.

This trial involved a one-time state bureaucrat charged with taking bribes from disreputable houses.

He was a tall man, nearly fifty, his hair around his ears was very white. The stern eyes were half shut and his broad shoulders were bowed.

A short, fat woman was the main witness against him.

She humbly held the bible in her hand and clearly repeated the clerk's words of the oath to tell the truth.

She is thirty-eight years old, and until last month she was the owner of a disorderly house. She knew the accused for more than twelve years, and she paid him a monthly sum so that he would close his eyes and not report to anyone how she made a living.

She testified to all this in a cold, low voice. Her eyes lit up somewhat with hate, when she continued talking.

“He didn't consider hard times. He didn't want to know about business falling off. At the end of the month he sent his collector, and I had to pay up. It didn't bother me so much as others. There are some poor women who in certain months hardly make rent, and yet he cut them no slack,” she said with a compassionate expression on her face.

“Tell us about the twelfth of April,” the Assistant District Attorney said.

“Oh, the twelfth of April! That evening I, myself, placed the money in his hand.”

“Where did that take place?” he continued the questioning.

“In my house.”

“Did he come to you other times?”

“Yes,” the answer came slowly.

“For money?”

“No,” she thought for a while, looked around the courtroom, and looked at the defendant. From him her penetrating eyes wandered to the corner where four sad women were sitting, the defendant's family. She looked at them for a few seconds. The expression of pity on her face dissolved slowly. On her full, red lips lay a sarcastic smile, an evil, revengeful smile which spread over her fat, painted face. When the smile reached her eyes, she said: “He was my lover.”

The defendant covered his face with one hand, with the other hand he supported his white head.

The oldest of the four women, a bent-over, withered, vigorously shook her head “no.” The next youngest beside her covered her face with both hands. Her hands were white, with a lot of diamonds. The two youngest numbly stared ahead.

“Did he spend every night with you?” the District Attorney continued with his questions.

“Certainly, he came to me very often, but that did not stop him from collecting from me. He would not even speak about that. His collector came every month and that is why I came to hate him, and I decided that I had to do something, and I did it!, here she laughed out loud.

“What did you do?”

“I asked the collector to come that evening to collect the money. The poor boy did not know that his boss would also be there. I held out my hand with the money to the young man, then I drew back my hand and gave it to the defendant. Apparently, he forgot himself, and stuck the money in his own pocket. When I said to him, “It is all the same to you which way you receive the money,” he did not answer.”

With that, her testimony ended.

The defense called the four women. Through them they wanted to convince the court that everything the old woman said was a lie. They wanted to establish that at the time in question he had spent all of his time at the sickbed of his brother-in-law.

First, they called a young woman, his daughter. She stood proudly with the bible in her hand and swore to tell the truth. And she testified:

“My Uncle became sick. My father was together with us that night by his bedside.”

“You are sure?”

“Sure.”

The next witness was a sister who swore that her husband was sick, and the defendant spent the night at her house on that night.

The pretty younger-woman was his wife. She pressed the bible tightly to her heart, and in her eyes were to be seen two un-spilled tears.

“It is not true, not true. That night he was with us and did not leave the bedside.”

The older bent-over woman cried loudly when she swore to tell the truth:

“He is my child. I am certain that he can't do anything bad. How can you believe such a loose woman?”

She stuck her arms out to the jury. And when the District Attorney asked her with a sarcastic smile, if

she also saw her son that night, she shut her eyes for a while. On her face you could see blue, straining veins. She slowly opened her eyes and with a weak voice answered:

“Ya.”

The District Attorney's closing statements were full of irony:

“Certainly these women are honest, good people, but what good woman wouldn't tell a lie for a person they loved?”

The jury believed the woman of the streets, and when they delivered the verdict, the four 'good' women cried loudly.

A Love with Punches

She sat herself down in a corner of the huge witness chair. At first she stuck her feet right out in front of her, looking down at them, something seemed to frighten her and she quickly hid them under the chair.

Her red, rough hands held on tightly to the sides of the chair. The strongly-built body was a little drawn as though she were frightened. And the eyes, blue, sparkling, looked with fear at the curly head of the defendant.

“You are his fiance?” the District Attorney asked.

“Ya,” she answered fearfully.

“Tell us about it.”

The woman lowered her head, put a finger to her mouth, raised her eyes furtively, and when she encountered the sharp look from the defendant it scared her and she looked toward the judge with a silent plea in her eyes.

“Tell us!” ordered the judge with a not-too-friendly tone. And the young woman began:

“We met fifteen, let me see, indeed, fifteen months ago. He quickly fell in love with me.” Here she became ashamed. A mocking smile flitted across the cunning face of the defendant. She cast another pleading look at the judge and continued:

“We became engaged. He wanted to go into business, and I gave him my three hundred and fifty dollars. But first, I said, let's go and take out a marriage license, and we did so. He agreed to everything.

“We delayed the wedding until after Passover. He wanted to work on it first, he said, good. I was happy. I gave him the money, and he, he left me.”

Here she broke down crying. The red, rough hands trembled, wiped away the tears and trembled.

“What happened next?” the District Attorney asked.

“Next? He was gone and I moaned and complained. It had taken me so long to save that money, and love, I had also loved him!” and she broke down again in tears.

The defendant whispered to his advocate. She looked at him for a moment, and not receiving an answer to her silent look, she resolutely continued:

“I cried and complained. Nu, what's gone is gone. I forgot about it, and started anew to save my money. And what happens to me? I go walking on the street with my sister, and what do we talk about? Usually about him and the money. Then my sister grabbed my hand, I thought she was going to tear my arm off. “What is it?” I screamed, and she didn't say anything, she just pointed her finger at a man with his hat pulled down low. I recognized him immediately. We both ran across the street, he

knew us right away. He ran into a hall, and we after him.

“Fiend, give up the money!” my sister screamed. I was silent. I grabbed him tight around his arm. Suddenly, he began to tear away from me. He wanted to run away. With his free hand he punched me between the eyes and things went dark for me, but I held on. My sister ran for a policeman. He fought with me, hit me, but I still held on to his arm.

The defendant, with his little, pen-point eyes gave the young woman a piercing look. Frightened, she recoiled farther into the big chair.

The jury was made up of gray, almost entirely old men. They looked gravely at the frightened young woman with the rough, red hands.

The defendant looked from the young woman to the jury, then started speaking with his lawyer quietly, but very animated.

The advocate came forward and dramatically exclaimed:

“The defendant will be pleased to marry the complainant.”

A happy “Oh” emerged from the woman's breast.

The judge consulted with the District Attorney for a few seconds. It appeared that the woman was the only witness, that he did receive the money from the woman, and it was possible that the woman would not be believed. So, one could not convict him on the testimony of just one witness without collaboration from a second.

But first, he turned to the woman:

“Are you willing to marry him?”

“Ya,” she said with a barely audible groan.

A few minutes later they left the courtroom together. Her red, rough hands were once again around his arm, but now her eyes shown with joy and with love. One could easily see that she had even forgotten the punches.

Little Sisters

The two little sisters had become enemies.

In separate corners of the courtroom they were seated and they cast evil, hateful looks at one another.

They had pretty eyes, large and dark, from *which* should have come an innocent childhood, not the angry expressions we were seeing.

Their little faces were very different. The one on the right side of the courtroom had a weary expression on her face. Her eyes showed signs of crying. Her mouth was small, with a very charming smile. Her nose was pretty and straight. She looked so young, so childish, that it was hard to believe that she was already 15-years old.

But then there was the one who was two years younger, who was sitting on the left side. She was the opposite of her sister. She had a short little nose and that gave her whole face an impudent, but attractive appearance. Her lips were thickish and told of mysteries that the little girl would not yet know about...

She was dressed very elegantly like her older sister, and she smiled often with a contented, unguarded smile.

That smile became brighter when she sent it with a insolent look to her father at the defendant's table as though she wanted to irritate him.

You would shudder to look at the accused. Something about him was unearthly and contrary the heart.

His chin looked like a black brush. His face had not been shaved for weeks, and that gave him a terrible wild look. Under that weeks-long uncut hair, the soft almost lovely appearance of his mouth, the dreamy blue of his eyes got lost.

And he was being charged with murder in the first degree. He had shot his wife, the mother of the two young girls.

His bearing in the first days of his trial was so unpleasant, so stark, and in keeping with his face.

Not a muscle moved when people testified to the horrible crime he had committed.

A policeman testified that in the early morning after the murder he entered the defendant's room. There on the bed with a bloody hand on the floor, and with the face half-hidden by the pillow, he found the murderer sleeping. When he awoke him, he said: "Is she dead?" And when the policeman answered, "Yes," he happily replied, "So, that's good, from now on she will remain pure."

The main witness against him was his thirteen-year-old daughter, Nelly.

"Nelly, since you have sworn to tell the truth, do you understand what that means?" the judge asked.

"Yes, if I tell a lie after I have sworn, G-d will punish me."

“Good, now tell us what you know about your mother's death.”

“Mama? Mama? Daddy shot her!” the girl sobbed loudly. They gave her a little time to collect herself, then the judge asked:

“You saw it?”

“Yes, yes I saw it!” she answered quickly wiping her tears with her sleeve, and looking angrily at her father. He hid his face with both hands. The older girl on the right side of the room shook her finger threateningly at her sister. She saw it and defiantly said: Because Eva is so fresh, I will tell everything!”

The judge shook his big head sadly and said:

“Not because of that, my child, only because you have sworn to tell the truth, because of that tell us, but only the truth, because G-d in heaven hears all!”

The girl was a little afraid, and said quickly:

“He came home and Mama turned very pale. He was very upset and pulled a revolver from under his overcoat and yelled: “Take that, and that, and that!” He shot three times. We were very afraid.

“Mama fell, and he ran down the steps, and Eva ran after him. That's all I know!”

“And what did your Mama say?” the defendant's advocate asked beginning his cross-examination.

“Mama? Mama? Nothing!”

“Nelly, you have sworn to tell the truth!”

“Mama said, “Get out of here!” and she started pushing him.

“How long has it been since you have seen your father?”

“I saw him every day!”

“Yes, in the last two weeks, but before that? Tell the truth, Nelly!” the advocate said quietly.

“Before then, more than five years. I hardly recognized him. Mama said that he had gone bad, and that is why he didn't come home!”

“And you were living with your Mother?”

“Yes, all alone, all alone!”

“Nelly, didn't Mr. Martin live with you?”

“Yes,” she said with a very weak voice.

“How long?”

“A few years.”

“And since he was away?”

“Not no one, not no one!”

“Nelly, don't question the truth! Didn't several men come to your mother? And didn't several of them stay for weeks at a time with you in your home?”

“Yes,” barely audible.

And Eva, the older sister was called by the defense for her father.

She held herself very stiff at the beginning, one could easily see that she was trying very hard to hold back the tears.

“Eva, you lived with your Mother?” the advocate asked.

“No, I lived with my Father's sister, not far from her.”

“What do you know about the murder, Eva?”

“Yes, he did it, but I am sure, that he meant nothing bad! If she would have come down when I asked her to, he wouldn't have done it!”

“What did your Mother say when you came to call her?”

“Tell your father to go to the devil.”

“Did you say that to him?”

“No, he was already upset enough. I said that Mama could not come down. He sent me back and she said that I should go hang myself along with my father. I told him again that she could not come down.”

“And then?”

“Then he asked me to show him which apartment was hers. And then, and then she started pushing him out. If she hadn't have done that, he wouldn't have shot her!”

The District Attorney sternly asked her:

“Ah yes, you despised your Mother?!”

“I don't know if despised. But I did not like the way she behaved,” the girl answered with a deep sigh.

“What do you know about her behavior?”

“Nelly would tell me about it. She would tell me about all the men, and I knew that is why Papa left.”

Now it was very quiet in the courtroom. When the defendant climbed onto the witness stand, his demeanor did not change. It was very difficult to draw a word out of him. Finally, after a number of questions he quietly said:

“I did it so that she would not sin any more.”

“Tell us about it,” the judge said.

“I can't. But the necessary is this: Five years ago I decided to travel in the West. The behavior of my wife with a certain Martin had driven me to drink. But I was used to being a respectable person. I thought it better to leave. During those five years I made some money. I didn't go back home, because my sister advised me to stay where I was. I understood what she meant. Three weeks ago I came back, and I met her on the street. She looked me in the face and with her insolence she said: “I will be your wife for a few hours. You can buy me like the others do!” After that I went back to drinking. And I did not want her to sin any more!”

And when he was found guilty of murder in the second degree, the older girl tenderly stroked his wildly overgrown face, and the younger one became angry: “You are only going to prison for twenty years, and my Mama is dead!”

The Charitable Lady

She was still almost a child. Very small and very frightened. On the witness stand she wrung her hands in despair and looking pleadingly at the judge she said:

“But I didn't do anything wrong, I didn't do anything wrong.”

“How is it you went to her house?” the judge asked.

“She took me on as a servant, she took me on.”

“Who took you to her?”

“Took me? No one, I read the advertisement in the newspaper.”

“What was written there?”

“Wanted: a young woman for housework. A good home.”

“But you are a local person, how is it that you wanted to do housework?”

“I wanted very much to leave my house. My father got married, and things were not good for me there, I did not know any other work, no one taught me anything else. Except standing in a candy store and selling soda water. A shop I wanted to avoid, because I knew that I couldn't earn enough to live on. I thought it would be better to go and do housework, if I could find a good house,” she quietly explained.

“How old are you?” the judge asked with a penetrating look.

“Seventeen years.”

The judge leaned in closer, he pushed his glasses back on his high forehead, and with a searching gaze he looked at the young girl.

Finally, the stern expression on his face changed. He replaced his glasses. He was convinced that the girl was telling the truth, and he went on to ask her:

“And how was it in this house?”

“She hired me for twenty dollars a month. That seemed like a huge sum to me. But one of my friends, that I told everything to, explained me that serving-girls were hard to come by and that is why the pay is good.”

“And then?”

“She gave me my own room, everything was neat and clean, and I was happy until... until... But I assure you, I didn't do anything wrong.”

“Until when?”

“Until the third week. And then I got a little scared. There was something I didn't like in the way Madame was talking. That a pretty girl like myself should get her hands dirty with hard work. Something about it wasn't right, because she reminded me of a certain woman in the movies, who also talked to a young girl like that, but that one came from the country and the Madame wanted to do with me what the other one did.”

“Who was living in that house?”

“The Madame and her two daughters, so she said. Very pretty girls.”

“Did you notice something in the house?”

“No, not at first. She said that the two girls were actresses, and that is why they left the house every night. I didn't bother myself much with their business. But one early morning I found a lot of empty wine bottles in the dining room, and the Madame said with a smile: “If you don't act foolish, you can also drink some wine.” At that moment the doorbell rang, and I went to open it. After that she didn't say anything until that evening.”

“What did she say then?”

“She came into the kitchen. It was nearly ten. She had a package with very pretty clothes in it, and with a smile she asked: “Are you busy right now?” “Yes,” I replied. “I really feel sorry for you, such a pretty girl like you was not born to be a servant. Service is for the fools, those who aren't smart enough to do anything else. But those like you are entitled to the same good things as the rich.”

“I was afraid, but I didn't want to say that to her, and I quietly asked, “How does one get them?” She came very close to me and stroking my cheek, she said, “You have such nice skin, you are truly a beautiful young girl. A girl like you has only to ask, and men will give you anything.” By then I was so frightened that I couldn't believe that she did not hear the chattering of my teeth. “Here, put on these pretty clothes, and I will introduce you to my guests,” she said, not noticing my upset. As soon as she left the room, I grabbed a coat and ran out. But I assure you, I didn't do anything wrong.”

Once again the judge gave the girl a long, searching look, but the look on her face was so respectable, her speech so convincing that when “Madame's” advocate began interrogating her with a hostile voice, the judge almost reprimanded him and ordered him to handle the girl with respect.

Then came the Madame's defense.

She approached the witness stand with a sure step. Her shoes scraped loudly on the floor and everything about her was loud. Her form was straight, drawn and her made-up face screamed, “See how beautifully I am built, even G-d himself would fall in love with me!”

She was in her forties, with a very attractive face and too much color on her cheeks and lips. Her eyes were large and too sparkly. On nearly every one of her fingers she had diamond rings, and now on the witness stand she had apparently thought that all her ornamentation would make a good impression, because she punctuated every word with her fingers.

And when her advocate asked her if she knew the young girl, she hardly paid attention.

“What do you want from me? I wanted to do something bad to her? Such a foolish girl! Have I done something wrong to her?”

“What do you mean?” the judge asked sternly.

“I wanted to help her out. Tell me yourself, Your Honor, did G-d make such a beautiful girl to be a servant?”

“How did you want to help her?”

“What do you mean, how? Do you think I meant something bad? Lord protect me, how could I do something bad to such a poor child who doesn't have a mother!”

“You did not answer my question!” the judge warned her.

“You see, I was so very interested in her that I even forgot that I came here to defend myself. What was I saying? Yes, I remember! Did I want to do her harm? Believe me, as I look around at our world, I don't understand how G-d in heaven can allow it. People swim in all sorts of material goods, live in comfort, and others, like this young girl, has to work hard and not even have the necessities. I didn't want to do her any harm, you can believe me! I had only figured that if I introduced her to some of the wealthy young men who came to visit my daughters, perhaps one of them would fall in love with her and make her happy. Today just imagine how good I would feel, if I could make another person happy.”

In the cross-examination the District Attorney lept toward her very excited, his eyes nearly shot through her.

“And you want me to believe that?!” he asked.

“Certainly I do. Don't yell like that, I am afraid you want to eat me alive,” she laughed.

“I would not want to soil my teeth, Madame!”

And when she lifted a pudgy hand to protest, he stopped her with the following words:

“Don't think, Madame, that you can fool us. We know all about you. We know what kind of a house you are running. We also know that the two young women living with you are *not* your daughters.”

That surprised her so much that she could not utter another word.

And when the jury found her guilty, she yelled:

“That's for my good deeds, for my good deeds. But, G-d, You know the truth!”

Freed

The trials on this Friday were not very interesting. On the whole this day would normally see the sentencing of forty-two people – and that is on a slow day – because most of the sentencing during the week is put off until Friday.

I studied the court calendar for a long time. An old court reporter joked: I'm not going to part three: just petty thieves; I don't have any respect for petty thieves. They get in trouble for almost nothing, feh!"

"Not interesting, not at all interesting," grumbled the reporters, reading further.

"There's a case for you!" one of them said to me pointing at a woman's name. "You women can't get through without tears. She will certainly cry, go there and write a story about a crier."

"I'm going with you! I want to see if she is pretty," the youngest one of us said, taking the pipe out of his smiling mouth.

And off we went. The courtroom was packed, in spite of the heavy Autumn rain which was beating nastily against the windows.

Eighteen men were to be seen in a long row. Eighteen pairs of eyes looked hopefully at the judge, who, with short-sighted eyes, was studying the mass of papers laid out before him.

On a chair – after the long line of prisoners, was sitting a woman. Her face was supported by two white, well-formed hands. Her clothes were simple, but modern and one could easily see the wrinkles of prison "comforts."

An eighteen-year-old had received a long lecture and a short term in a reformatory institution. Two old thieves were sentenced to long terms in Sing-Sing. A pale, young man was sent to Dannemora prison, where feeble-minded arrestees enjoy the mountain air. A young pickpocket promised to be a "good boy."

Then the clerk called "Mary R."

The woman's form slowly arose from the chair. The white hands fell helpless by her sides revealing a young, interesting face. With an uncertain step she walked over to the railing where the accused stood to receive their sentences. She held on to the railing with both hands, and lifted a pair of interesting gray eyes to the judge and with a nervous, trembling voice gave her age and address.

The young reporter whispered to me:

"It was worth coming, she is as beautiful as a goddess."

"Shut up!" I quietly warned him.

The judge's short-sighted eyes looked at us in the corner of the courtroom.

“Mary, you are guilty of taking a bribe,” the judge stated in a loud voice. Straightening his thick glasses he continued: “You pleaded guilty, and therefore and in recognition of your youth I am inclined not to be severe with you. Above all, my handling of your case will depend upon *you alone*. If you tell the truth you will have nothing to be afraid of.”

With a weary step she mounted the witness stand. Nervously, she repeated the old court employee's words of the oath to tell the truth, and looked hopefully at the judge.

“You have confessed that you took from your boss three hundred dollars 'hush money',” the judge put forth, “You are a bookkeeper there. He had 'fixed' the books before he went bankrupt, and you agreed to keep quiet about the changed figures that your boss wanted to use to trick his creditors. Why did you do it? After all, three hundred dollars is not a giant sum.”

The whole time the judge was talking, the young girl twisted her fingers. When he stopped a bitter smile appeared on her thin lips.

“Your Honor, you are mistaken. Three hundred dollars is a very big sum when one is in terrible need,” she noted.

“So? You did it for the money and not out of good will toward your boss?,” the judge said somewhat agitated.

“You don't understand me, Your Honor! I would have kept quiet without the money. It never even occurred to me to say anything. I was too occupied with my own troubles.”

“What troubles? Were you afraid that because of that you would have to go without pretty clothes until you got another job? You young girls only worry about such things.”

For a few seconds she just looked at the judge. In the courtroom everyone was quiet. Once again the bitter smile shown on her lips, and with a sigh she said:

“I don't belong, unfortunately, in that group of lucky young ladies. I am the oldest of five children. For the last two years my father has become weak, and the yoke of the house has rested mostly on my shoulders. When Mr. Rosen offered me the three hundred dollars, I thought about the prayer of my father, who is laying in a charity ward in City Hospital, that we bring him home. But we can not afford the private doctors. Now that I have lost my position at work, what will I do until I can find another? Three hundred dollars is a huge sum when one is in such need, Your Honor, I did not realize that I was committing a crime.”

“You spent three weeks in Tombs prison. How did you like prison, and what you experienced there?”

“I could send you away for several years among such women,” the judge ended with, “but, I think from this point on you will be good. Go home, Mary.”

The Notebook

When he was tried, no one heard much about the trial because he was poor, and his wife, who was the cause of him committing the murder, was not an “enchanted beauty.” Naturally, the newspapers wrote very little about it.

They were simple, ordinary people. But their love tragedy was as “interesting” as the illegal stories of the rich.

He murdered his wife's lover.

He is a tall, thin man, with a staid expression on his pale-yellowish face. With thin, rough hands and with a bitter feature around his lips.

Everything was clear to him, there was only one thing he did not understand: How did his wife, so weak, so sickly, with so many worries about slack times and busy times, and with so much work around her two tiny children, how she managed to have a lover.

And when his wife, who was sitting in a far corner of the courtroom heard his question (He was sitting on the witness stand and asked the question as to the thin air), her eyes flashed with anger at his question. It was clear that she thought that *she*, too, was entitled to some happy moments in life.

He answered his advocate's questions with total indifference. His voice was so cold, as though everything warm had been extinguished in his life.

“And when did you learn about your wife's impurity,” asked the advocate.

“Learn? It never even occurred to me to suspect her. I knew that she had enough troubles on her without a lover,” he answered with a half-wry smile.

“But how did you find out?”

“Find out? I didn't find out anything. When business got slack, I stayed at home more. Every Wednesday the collector came. I didn't even look at him. He came to collect for the furniture that my wife wanted last year. I am a poor workman, but a woman always wants something new. Truth is, the table and chairs that I bought four years ago, were already broken, and a dollar a week was not a dangerous debt. And a one must give into a wife sometimes, so I bought it.”

“Tell us about the collector,” his advocate interrupted him.

“The collector, if only he had known the this black year instead of me! He came, and I said that work was slack, and that he shouldn't come back for a few weeks. That same week on Friday I ran into him coming out of my house. “What do you want now?” I asked him. “I thought you already had the money.” he answered. I gave out a good laugh. The next week he came back again. That made me annoyed and I got angry with him. A few days later I ran into him on the same block where I live, and to my question as to whether he was coming to see me again, he said with a laugh: “There live here the same sort of wealthy people as you.” I didn't like something about his face, and I said to my wife that

if he comes next week, throw him out. At that my three-year-old girl begged me: "Papa, don't throw him out. He is a nice Uncle. He brings candy for me and for Mama. Isn't it, Mama, he is a nice Uncle?" I looked at the child with surprise. My wife carried her into the kitchen, and I forgot about the child's words. But a few days later, when I met the handsome collector again on the steps of the house where I live, and he answered me again some witticism, I remembered my little girl's words and I began to think about them a little. When I asked my wife if the collector had other customers in our building, she figured out what I was driving at about the collector. She had so much to say about my few words that even *I* understood that something was not right."

"What did you do next?" the lawyer asked.

"What could I do? I hid in a hallway opposite my apartment and waited for the collector. He came around mid-day. I quickly followed him, but before I had time to catch him, he disappeared in a door. I did not want to go into my apartment. I did not want to incriminate my wife. It seemed that she always remained a respectable wife. I left and took a long walk. I didn't want to be near the house. I did not want to run into the collector again, my heart was beating fast. I walked quickly and soon arrived at the Bowery. Do you know how many pawn shops there are there? That day it looked to me as though in every pawn shop window there was nothing but revolvers. I laughed at myself, felt very nervous and I kept walking. Before I realized what I was doing, I had bought a revolver, dropped it in my pocket and headed home. Later I asked my little girl who it was. She answered: "The collector." The next day I had work, but I didn't go, I waited. He did not come. The third day, it was a Friday, I waited in the street, hiding. In the afternoon the collector arrived. I followed him and saw him go in my door. A few seconds later I heard someone lock the door from the inside. My heart beat so hard, it sounded like a whole regiment going up the stairs. I slowly opened the door with my key, and what I saw justified me shooting. You would have shot too! Believe me, you would have shot too!"

Later he testified that he also wanted to shoot his wife, except that she assured him that she only became the collector's lover because he had scared her, saying that he would tell her husband after the first time. And that first time happened in a day when she was not feeling good, she was feeling very bitter. He suddenly took her in his arms, and for a second she forgot herself, and for that second she would pay for the rest of her life. He believed her, and after all, the children needed a mother.

But in the rebuttal, when the prosecution brings its witnesses, his face turned bright red and on his lips were curses against the mother of his children.

In a little brown book, the collector's notebook, the following was written: "The woman R. who lives in number __ on Eleventh Street, won't leave me alone, she is in love with me, she says. I have to laugh when I think of the first day several months ago when she fell into my arms and begged me to make her awful days a little livelier. She is not ugly, but she bores me already."

And when the jury declared him 'not guilty,' with clenched teeth he shoved his wife away.

Sister

When her trial for assaulting her husband began, everyone knew that she shot him. She, herself, had admitted that she aimed the revolver at his chest, and she was really sorry that the bullet didn't kill him.

A lot of people were curious about the details of this sensational tragedy which would be uncovered in this trial. Because of that, there was a lot of disappointment in the courtroom when, after the selection of the last juror, she suddenly plead guilty.

Her lawyers were very unhappy. They were sure that when she was tried and testified as to why she committed the crime, the jury would surely free her.

But the young woman held fast to her decision.

The resolve had called forth a new expression on her young, indifferent face so changed by sorrow.

The many spectators were disappointed, because the young woman was rich, and everyone wants to know about the scandals of the rich.

She quietly gave her name, age and address. And in an even more quiet tone such that only the people closest to her could hear her, she recounted to the judge the most tragic chapter of her life.

To begin with she stumbled through a description of her unhappy married life, about her husband and his many betrayals of her. Little by little her expression of resolve grew and her speech became more firm and she spoke more rapidly.

"I knew that he was betraying me. I knew it in the first weeks of our marriage. I kept silent, in the first place because... because I loved him very much."

At that point her sad eyes, for just a second fell on the pale face of a tall, young man, who was sitting in a far corner, his face half-hidden in both hands, and with only a half ear which was red as though from a fresh wound.

"And in the second place?" the judge asked politely.

"In the second place, because I wanted to avoid a scandal. Most of my friends had warned me against him, but I didn't want to hear it, when I still had time to. And then, after I was already married, I didn't want them to know how unhappy I was."

"And because of that, you were content to live in sorrow for the rest of your life?" the judge continued to question.

"A lot of married women do just that," was her short answer.

"And then?"

"Oh, and then every day became worse."

“And you never thought of a divorce?”

“At times, yes. It was becoming unbearable for me to watch how he made a fool of me with almost every woman he met.”

“Then why didn't you turn to the law?”

“Because as soon as I decided to turn to a advocate, that same day I found him in my own house in the arms of... another woman.”

“And you shot him because of that?”

“No, I only went wild.”

“And then you got the revolver? Where did you get the revolver?”

“In the drawer of the table in the library. I knew that my husband kept his revolver there. I got the revolver with the intention of killing myself.”

“And you never thought about shooting him?”

“No, I swear to you, no. Even when I was in the room for a few seconds, I did not think of that. Only when she begged me not to make a scandal, when she threw himself at my feet, only then did I shoot.”

“Because of that?”

“Certainly... She... was my sister!”

The last words came out as a sob as she leaned closer to the judge.

The judge thought for a long time, then ask a short question:

“That's all?”

“Yes.”

Again, a long pause.

“Do your parents know?”

“Yes. My mother is near death, and my father was paralyzed by the blow.”

“Go home to them.” the judge said after a long pause.

Advocates and friends warmly shook her hand. But on her face was not a trace of the resolve or interest. It was extinguished as though questioning: “What was the point of it all?”

A “Murder”

When the “murder” occurred, the newspapers were full of a police scandal that captured the attention of almost the whole country.

Because of the sensational big news, and, perhaps, a little bit because the main characters in this tragedy were poor, after the “murder” nothing was written about it.

Several weeks later, when the woman came to trial, everyone was heated up about a rich lawyer who was going to trial at the same time.

Below the courtroom was packed with wealthy, elegant ladies with writers, with artists and well-known actresses. Also as witnesses were two famous opera singers and a lot, a lot of friends.

And above in the same building in a equally large room, but which was nearly empty, except for the judge, the advocates, a few court employees, some strangers and the jury – the woman was tried.

There was a very unpleasant feeling in the big, nearly empty room. Newspaper reporters and others came to the high doors, glanced at the shabbily-dressed, poor woman, shrugged their shoulders and walked on.

In this big, empty room the woman recounted an unusual, but heartrending tragedy:

“Why did I kill my husband?” she said with a half-smile, studying her white, wasted hands.

“Yes, why did you do it?” the judge asked in a sympathetic tone.

“Because I promised him.”

“Promised to kill him?” the surprised judge asked, leaning in closer to the woman and looking her right in the eye.

“You probably won't believe me, I can't help that. I kept my promise.”

“Tell us about it.”

“What for?” the woman said with an indifferent shrug of the shoulders.

“Because you need to defend yourself.”

“But why?”

“Because you are still young, and you need to save yourself from the electric chair.”

“But why? If I don't care?”

“For your child,” an advocate said quietly, an elderly, fatherly man who was assigned by the court to defend the woman.

“Uh,” It came out as a groan, and her forehead wrinkled deeply. A few seconds later she asked, as though speaking to the thin air:

“Do you know what my promise was? A terrible promise that plagues me day and night?”

“Tell us about it,” the judge said softly.

“Oh, there is so much to tell! About the promise I mean, when he was healthy and we were happy, but no, you would not be interested in that. He became very sick, it was due to an accident, a wagon ran over him and the driver ran away. We could not get a cent out of it. He, my husband, laid in the hospital for several months. My child and I lived from the money that I had in the bank! Yes, before this my husband was a good worker, a very good worker.”

She remained silent for a while, as though she were waiting for someone to contradict her, and since no one said a word, she continued:

“When he came out of the hospital, he was not like he was before, something had broken in his body. And in spite of his bad foot, that he had from his accident, every day he became more sick, but he continued to be able to work. Two years passed. He knew that his whole body was affected, but he did not realize how terribly serious his condition was, until that evening.”

Here, she covered her eyes for a long time was silent. Her advocate prompted her softly:

“What happened on that evening?”

“Oh, it was terrible that evening! A doctor told him that he could expect the worst.”

“What?”

“That in a short time his whole body would be paralyzed, and there was nothing that could be done! His suffering, his fear! It was about two o'clock in the morning, and he just sat by the table crying. Suddenly, he got up and quickly came over to me and lifting my head and gave me a long and penetrating look. Finally, he softly asked:

“Mary, will you promise me something?” His voice was so pleading and so frightened, it scared me.

“And then?” the judge asked when she had fallen silent again.

“And then he asked softly: “Mary, when it comes, when it happens, you will not allow me to suffer long?” – “What do you mean?” I asked. “I mean, when that terrible time comes, you must promise me that you will make an end to it all. I would do it now, but I want to work for you and for the child as long as I can. You must promise me!” – “But what?” I asked again. “That when the time comes that I am helpless, that you will give me a little pill from these pills and that will make an end to it!” He so frightened me with the box of pills and the wild look in his eyes, that I promised... I promised to do the terrible thing which was shown to me, it was a page torn out of a book, a page that talked about a person, and I did not find myself there.”

“And later?” the judge asked.

“Later? Oh, later came the horror. One early morning his limbs were unable to move. Only his big eyes moved and they looked at me with such sadness! Then I went to work. I brought neckties home to sew. I left him alone with the child, when I carried the piecework back. We had no one, only distant friends and everyone had their own troubles. And every day his eyes grew more and more frightful with more bitter reproaches. I carried him everywhere by myself, but about my promise I did not even want to think about it, until... Until that horrible early morning.”

“What happened then?”

“It is so hard to talk about,” Breathing heavily the woman continued – “I set him in a tub and gave him a bath. How I found the strength to do it, I don't know. With the exception of this morning, I don't know. It was very difficult for me. He followed my every movement. He sat in the bath for a few hours, it turned cold. I couldn't get him out. I let the water out and wrapped him in a warm blanket. Then he looked at me with such intensity, as if giving me an order. An hour later I gave him the pill.”

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That same evening the grim jurors with tears in their eyes declared her “Not guilty.”

Dowry

Completely calm after a day of bitter disappointment, she told the jury how the two accused had crushed her greatest hopes.

She was made ugly by these men who awoke little sympathy. Her sharp facial features were not friendly. From such a face, soured by time and cold from disappointment and absence of love.

Several times the lawyer for the defendants interrupted her, but she wouldn't hear it. She spoke very softly with determination.

Her father, an elderly man, with a white, square beard was sitting in the front row and nodded his head energetically with each word she spoke.

With a naive smile she began with the following words:

“For as long as I can remember, I have always heard my parents talk of a dowry. When my older brother got married, there was a lot of talk about the dowry. And, indeed, he married a young girl that he did not love because she had more money than the one he did love.

“Always Mama and Papa talked about dowry. A young girl, they said, must have a dowry. Without a dowry a young girl can not have a marriage contract. They always told me that I must help them put together a dowry for me. I certainly did help them.

“But it is difficult to save money doing small jobs,” she sighed deeply, “More than once I cried myself to sleep over it when I wanted a dress or a new hat. My father would not allow me to buy it. We have to save for the dowry, he would always say. And once when I stood up to him and said that I would prefer to dress in prettier clothes, and that with pretty clothes one could sometimes obtain a better marriage contract, he laughed at me and said that in our family we don't have such luck.

“I am telling you all of this to show you how hard I worked to save that money. And those bandits took it from me.”

The father vigorously nodded with his big beard and the old wrinkled mother who was sitting next to him, rocked her body back and forth.

Her face appeared sharper, her chin longer when she continued:

“We had another stroke of luck. They came and told my father about the good luck. I wasn't in the store. When I came home, my father told me that two fine men had been there. They had a machine that could make five-dollar bills. I was frightened. I knew that one shouldn't print money. I couldn't sleep the whole night

“I started to calculate: Already so much work and hardly able to save four hundred and twenty dollars. Matchmakers came, they spoke of matches, but the good ones wanted more money. I was getting older, Mama cried and Papa worried. Many times I became fed up. And those who get married, is it then good? I asked them. But Papa said that a Jewish daughter should not talk like that.

“One didn't do that, but I decided that I would let the 'fine people' make me the dowry. With a lot of money what can't you buy? I wanted very much to be happy.

“They came the next morning. By the curtained windows I saw the machine. Him, the blond, (pointing at one of the defendants), placed a five-dollar bill there and turned the crank a few times and out came a second five-dollar bill. I took the newly made bill and exchanged them. They told us not to ask questions. I went flying back. They asked us for three hundred dollars to cover expenses. I gave it to them. My money was in the house, because Mama did not trust banks. As a pledge they left the machine with us, and we have not seen them since.

“Gone is my dowry! What can I do with a hundred and twenty dollars?! Before I can make back the three hundred dollars I will be so exhausted that no one will want to look at me.”

In the courtroom no one smiled. The tragedy of the young woman with the dowry could be felt in the atmosphere of the room, in each of her movements, and in the sharp features of her face.

The two swindlers were convicted. The young woman cried, her father sobbed loudly, and the mother asked:

“And my child's money? What will she do now without a dowry?”

A Doctor

The doctor was accused of murder in the first degree, his trial lasted several days. The feelings for him and against him were easy to see in the faces of the spectators. On the face of the District Attorney you could read hate. Only the pale face of the elderly defendant had nothing to tell us.

A brawny, red-faced detective, who proudly displayed his badge in the lapel of his coat, chewing his chewing gum at a furious pace, testified to the charges against the defendant:

“I sat by her as she was dying, and what I am going to read to you is what I asked her and what she answered:

“You went to Dr. F?”

“Yes.”

“And when you became ill, what did he tell you to do?”

“Go to the hospital.”

“You were pregnant with your what number child?”

“With the sixth.”

“You knew that the medicine could kill the child?”

“I did not get an answer to that question, because the woman died,” the witness concluded his testimony.

It was very quiet in the courtroom. Most of the eyes in the courtroom were looking at the bowed head of the elderly doctor.

In the front row of seats among the public, very near the jury, sat a thin, pale man with a small caved-in chest. Next to him were four children dressed in black. The black mixed with the beams of sunlight coming in through the high windows of the courtroom. Together they, the sun and the sad blackness, threw shadows across the sickly children's faces.

Often after that, when a witness for the prosecution said something against the defendant, the eyes of the Assistant District Attorney would look sorrowfully toward the jury box, and from there with knitted eyebrows to the row of children clad in black.

A great number of eyes looked with contempt and hate at the old doctor, when his meager form came to the witness stand. When he had sworn to tell the truth, people smiled.

In a clear, calm voice, holding his head high, he told the following:

“I knew the deceased when she was still a little girl. She became my patient. She was delicate. When she got married she begged me not to tell her husband. I also knew him – he was also delicate.

“When they were married for three years, only one month short, I delivered their third child. He was not working very much, the house was empty, the furniture and bedding mostly carried away.

“We doctors are used to such scenes,” he said with a sigh, “We are used to seeing how everything is new, shiny, at the birth of the first child, and everything is worn out, like the delicate mother, when the third baby arrives.

“I warned her then to be careful. She had become sick, but then the fourth and fifth babies came in hardly three years.

“By the time the fifth child came, she was terribly weak. She had two hemorrhages. She nearly lost her life. We only saved her with great effort. – It left her skin and bones.”

He thought for a moment. Then he began to speak more slowly, staring into the distance as he spoke, he continued:

“For about three years I did not hear from them, they used the dispensary. For the most part he was not working. Getting sick and doctors were a luxury.

“I was very surprised when last September an elderly lady showed up, with gray hair and thick eyeglasses and asked me if I didn't recognize her... Only when she took the glasses off did I recognize the dull, dim eyes of the once beautiful Mrs. Glatzman.

“She told me that she was going to work, he husband was now very sick and stayed in the house with the children, and she could hardly make a miserable living from her jobs. All of the children were sickly, she said. When I reproached her for not coming to me – She could always pay me when things got better, she cried bitterly and threw herself at my feet and frantically begged me: “Help me, Doctor! You have always been my friend! Help me now, don't let another cripple come into the world, we will all die of hunger if I can't work, help me!”

“It took me two weeks. I thought about her a great deal. She came to me everyday with heartrending tears and begged me. I didn't want to do it, but in the end, I did help her. But she was too weak, and the great loss of blood killed her.”

The testimony had ended. Slowly the children, accompanied by a person from the orphan's home, left the courtroom. On two of the children, their hands were paralyzed. One was blind in one eye, and the two youngest had the same feeble-minded appearance as their father.

The hate had disappeared from the spectator's eyes. They now looked with pity at the children and the old doctor. But the jury only took twenty minutes to declare him guilty.

Apollo's Lover

It happened on a Winter afternoon. In the courtroom they had long since lit the lamps, and through the high, curtain-less windows a cloudy, gray-black sky looked in.

There was unrest. Most of the spectators looked at the clock every few minutes, which hung indifferent and proud on the high wall as though he wanted to emphasize how important he was at this moment. Even the judge swiveled his chair impatiently administering the law.

I came into the courtroom after a not very interesting day in this serious institution. There in a 'Police Court' is where most of the complaints are born, and often such truths come swimming out that shock us, and which are later cleaned up in the newspapers.

And there today it was ugly. I was on the verge of going home, when through the high doorway came a policeman, dragging behind him what first appeared to be huge packet of clothing.

But on closer look, by the light of the lamps, the package of clothes revealed a face, and a frightening face it was, a face that I will never forget:

Raw, sickly flesh flecked with blue skin which was so thin that it hardly covered the sharp bones underneath. A pair of gray eyes with such a wild expression, that they frightened me. Filthy, thick hair of an ambiguous color that might once have been bleached bright blond, and now the yellow-blond was mixed with a dirty grayness in great disorder, shaggy. It had the appearance of a gray frame for the scary face.

I could not tell how tall the woman was, because her body was almost bent in three, and gave the impression of a package, a package of dirty clothes. The shoes used to be white, with high twisted heels and were untied. From the worn out clothes hung long strings and you could see a pair of bright green silk stockings. Her chest was very caved-in and covered with a torn coat. The sleeves were too short, and the hands, small, blueish-red, cracked from the cold and the wind. She was not wearing a hat, only a bright green silk band was bound around the sickly forehead.

With his thick hands, the policeman tried to straighten her out, but she appeared to be quite strong and like a wild tiger, she resisted.

Once when he got her standing straight, I noticed a small bottle in her hand of a bright brown liquid. She pressed that bottle tight to her sunken chest.

In a few short words the policeman gave the charges against her:

“She has poison in her right hand. I followed her, because I did not like her looks. People had told me about her. I am new to Broadway, this was my third night there. When I saw her, I followed her. When we were by the Metropolitan Opera House on Thirty-ninth Street, she moved so close to the wall that I couldn't see what she was doing. Suddenly I noticed that she took the bottle from her bosom, looked at it, took a few more steps, stopped, looked at the bottle again, like she had done a few times before. Finally, when I saw that she was going to drink it, and when I saw how determined she was, I arrested her.”

The outward appearance of this creature had awakened the judge from his contemplations, and while the policeman was talking, he looked at the woman with a measuring and penetrating look.

“What is your name?” he now asked.

“What is your name?” he sternly repeated in a louder voice.

The woman answered in an indifferent tone:

“I forgot a long time ago.”

“Don't play the fool, and tell me the truth,” the judge's voice was a little softer.

“The truth? I don't have any lies to tell.” Her voice was clear, almost sweet, very different from her appearance.

“What do people call you?”

“It has been such a long time since anyone has called me anything, and I forgot a long time ago,” she answered with a smile. Lord, what a smile! The sickly skin drew up into countless wrinkles, and her eyes grew bigger, wilder.

“How did you come here?”

“The policeman brought me here. His worry is that I would die, it seems, he didn't want to lose anyone, and he took the trouble to come to me. Who would it bother if I did kill myself?”

“But why would you want to die?”

She laughed out loud. It was a pleasant laugh like someone was ringing fine, little bells. Everyone looked at her, by now everyone had forgotten to look at the clock on the wall.

“For sure I don't want to die, because everything is going good for me.”

Apparently the judge realized that the woman once had better days behind her, and he did something that he rarely did. He very sympathetically asked her to tell about her past.

“My past?” she asked with a smile, and her body instinctively straightened. The rag-clad body became tall and graceful. “I, too, have a past like all of the street people.”

“But how did you come to this state?” the judge asked.

“Dancing, leaping and in my dreams accompanied by music.”

“I don't understand.”

“Ah, in my situation there is something original. I found no pleasure like others in money. I was first seduced by Apollo, the god of music.”

“I have to say it again, I don't understand,” the judge said.

“Then, I didn't understand either, what a false seducer that god can be, but now I can look at it with clear eyes.”

“And yet you want to die?”

“I must.”

“Why?”

“Because now everything has gone to hell,” she answered softly and her eyes now became beautiful.

“And who came after the “god”?”

“The God of Music lured me away from home with his false promises. I had wonderful dreams. And there in New York, a man helped me dream more, more castles in the air, because I loved him so much.”

“Who was he?”

“A fat man, crude inside and out. I think that if he were cut open you would find, instead of a heart, a big lump of fat. He had that which all professional seducers have to have, money, money, money. He also had a wife, who made a scandal, but a little too late. All of his promises to make me a world-famous prima donna came to nothing. After him were others, they also made promises. They made a fool of me, I fooled myself, and now I am here.”

She recited all of that in an indifferent tone of voice, as though she were speaking of some other person.

“The whole time I would go to the opera. Instead of a good meal, I would spend my money to buy a ticket to the opera, hear great singers then late at night bemoan my fate.”

“And why didn't you stop?”

“It was too late. I flew so quickly, that I forgot. I only had one goal: Music. And, so, very quickly I became what you see now.”

Again her body deflated, collapsed almost in three, and the bright green silk socks along with the band around her forehead looked so ugly, somewhat ironic, as though laughing at the other rags.

The judge took pity on her, and sent her to a home for the indigent.

Interrupted Careers

In the early morning when their trial started, the courtroom was almost empty. Aside from the relatives of the young defendants, there was hardly anyone else. Who would be interested in the trial of a couple of little thieves? The curious spectators come in order to see the 'hero' of a sensational murder, a seducer of women, or even a great thief who had tricked Fifth Avenue ladies out of their jewelry. But who cares about the fate of two little thieves?

A little later things became a little more cheerful in the courtroom. The intelligent, childish faces of the two guilty youngsters interested certain older men – men who kept at a distance, because by the afternoon of life, and on one's later life the tragedy of the two youngsters can have no effect... You have to start young...

A tall Detective with small, sharp eyes testified about the series of crimes that the defendants had committed.

“There were some large thefts in the Wholesale District where gold teeth were sold and other dental materials. I searched for the thieves, but there was no trace of them until a few weeks ago. It was night. Someone robbed a business. The watchman had heard something and went to take a look. But, suddenly, he heard a shot and his right hand was wounded. Looking in the direction from which the shot came, he saw two small men running away, almost children, with black masks. He cried out, but the thieves disappeared. The case was given to me. I began investigating the schools, in the high schools, and in the end I found out that two boys from a certain high school talked a lot about stealing. They bragged about being the greatest thieves in the world. I began spying on them and found out that one of them worked in one of the businesses that had been victimized. I continued investigating until I discovered that these two boys were the masked bandits and I arrested them.

“Where and how did you arrest them?” the District Attorney asked with a smile.

The Detective looked in his notebook and then continued:

“The small one, Sam Levin is his name, was arrested in the Forty-Second Street library. He was reading a book about French criminals.

“The tall one with the short pants, his name is Leon Weis, I found in his home. When he realized who we were, he put on airs like he was an actor and ordered us: “Gentlemen, I will go with you, but don't rush,” he yelled in a loud voice. Then he smoked a cigarette, sat down by the piano and played a popular song. After that he bowed deeply and declared that now he was ready to go with us.”

In the court, everyone smiled, even the stern judge. Everyone, that is, except for a few crying women who were sitting on benches near the back of the courtroom, and the two young boys. Their eyes had expressions of fear and desperation.

More witnesses were heard from, and the tighter the net of guilt became, all the more frightened the boys became. Their flatly-combed heads often bent to hear the words of their lawyer as he gave them advice.

Finally, their advocate stood and declared that the two boys wanted to plead guilty and place their fate in the judge's hands.

Both cried bitterly. The biggest one cried freely with big tears running down his handsome nose, over the red, childish lips and off his attractive chin. He could not control himself. His shoulders shook, he sobbed loudly. His theatrical bearing had disappeared. He stood before the judge as a guilty youngster.

The smaller boy wiped the tears from his face with his delicate, white hand. He patted his friend on the shoulder and with measured steps he mounted the witness stand.

“Where did you two meet?” the judge asked.

“In public school,” the youngster answered, then he went on: “I will tell you everything. We went together to the moving pictures, and once we saw a picture about a great thief. The next day we talked about the clever thief. From that point on we only sought out that kind of picture. We really liked the heroic thief, how he rescued a young girl and fooled the police. Later we resolved to become that kind of thief. We began to study that in earnest. We read books about crime. In the meantime we decided to only steal a little, only as much as we needed to go to college. We wanted to become educated men, in order to become great, world-class thieves.

“When we got to high school and I got to wear long pants, we began to carry out our plan, and at first we robbed from my boss.”

When the boy fell silent, the astonished judge looked at him for a long time then softly said:

“And what do you have to say about that now?”

The youngster began to quietly cry.

“I... we... didn't know that it was wrong. Now we are very sorry. I have feel sorry for my Mother and I am afraid of jail. In the Tombs it is not like in the movies. I am afraid.”

The judge gave them a long sentence. Finally he rendered his verdict: “You will go to a reformatory.”

I am afraid that there is where they will learn how to continue their interrupted careers...

The Little Witness

A quiet excitement was evident in the court house this early morning. One said to the other: "Today an eleven-year-old child will send his father to the electric chair! Today a child will testify before a judge how his brutal father murdered his mother."

These remarks shot through the courtroom. Hundreds wanted to get in, and among the 'lucky' who, after a lot of pushing got in, were not only the usual curious court spectators, but also a number of old court employees.

They were only interested in the little witness. With impatience they looked toward the high doorway that he would have to come through. They seldom looked at the defendant who was sitting with bowed head next to his lawyer.

The defendant had a frighteningly mournful appearance. On his thin, white neck one could see a freshly healed, deep wound. His wavy hair was half gray and fell in disorder over his short forehead, reaching his short-sighted, weak eyes which looked with disinterest at his flat, thin hands. The straight nose and the mild mouth gave the face an almost attractive look, only the short, little chin spoiled the whole impression. When you looked at the chin it reminded you of something weak, foolish, without confidence, a man that allows himself to be led..

Calmly, shocked neighbors testified how they had heard the screams of his wife, how they broke down the door and found the woman dead. Blood ran slowly from multiple wounds. Not far from her was the defendant with a slit neck.

No one knew how the horrible crime happened. No one saw it. The children were sleeping quietly, as only children can.

One neighbor remembered that a few minutes earlier they heard the defendant knocking at the door. Right after that everything was quiet, until they heard the terrifying screams of the murder victim.

"I wondered about the stillness, because lately because there had been a lot of fighting next door," she ended her testimony with a smile.

"Only lately?" the defendant's lawyer asked springing to his feet.

"Yes, for the last few months."

"Why, do you think, they were fighting?" the lawyer continued with his questioning.

"I don't know, but Mrs. Lerner had been sickly. Since she gave birth to the third child, she went very often to see doctors. Several times she complained to me that all their income went to doctors and the drug store. She was very nervous and fought often."

Slowly, word by word, the sharp-minded advocate tried to show that the woman was ill. By clever turns he drew out subtle testimony from the witnesses.

The Coroner's doctor who performed the autopsy on the dead woman had to admit that the woman was

severely anemic.

From that testimony and from the advocate's questions, one could easily see that the defense would be that the weakened woman had become deranged and committed the crime herself.

Soon, soon a suspicion crept to mind. One was quickly coming to believe that it did happen that way, when the high door of the courtroom opened and the most important witness for the prosecution came in, the eleven-year old son.

When the tall doors opened everyone usually looked with excitement toward them. Through those doors come those who help the law create justice. Those who believe in "A hand for a hand, and an eye for an eye." The words from such witnesses bring the unfortunate to the house of death where they agonize between hope and bitter despair.

Through these doors came the young boy. His face was pale, his red eyes covered by a pair of thick glasses, his even, newly-cut hair falling over his small forehead. He bit his lips and his head was lowered.

His thin feet trembled. The color in his little face quickly changed, as though too much blood had flooded his sorrowful little face.

In the gray, dead stillness of the courtroom it seemed like one could hear the heavy breathing of the young boy. The hiss of his breath from the little chest harmonized with the constant light rain that softly beat against the windows of the courtroom...

When I hear such a rain now, I think back to that day and on the young boy and his heavy breathing... All the constant rains since then can not wash that memory away...

The always stern judge became a thousand times more stern when he asked the boy:

"Do you know what the word 'truth' means?"

"Yes," came the hoarse reply.

"What does it mean?"

The overly frightened boy swallowed several times. His thin little neck had closed up on him, and when he answered, his voice was thin, scratchy and the tone was like sad, rehearsed melody.

"We must tell the truth, if not, G-d will punish us."

Many of the spectators nodded their heads in agreement.

"Israel, what do you know about your Mother's death?" the judge asked.

Israel slowly lifted his short-sighted eyes and for the first time in court he looked at his Father.

The desperate, unhappy eyes met his child's gaze. The half-gray head fell heavily on the table...

The childish eyes looked strong and he answered mechanically:

“I know a lot.”

“Who killed your Mother?” came the judge's question.

For a few seconds it was quiet, you could hear the excited breathing of the spectators.

Slowly the young boy, whose thin little body one could hardly see in the deep witness chair, stretched out his thin, trembling finger and pointing to his Father he excitedly sobbed:

“Him!”

The mass of spectators let out a collective sigh. The silence in the courtroom had been broken. Shocked whispers were heard among many of the spectators and the old judge rapped his little hammer calling for order.

“Israel, you are telling us a terrible thing. Your words can send your Father to his death. Be careful and tell us only the truth!” thundered the judge's excited voice.

The boy was frightened and began to cry quietly.

The District Attorney questioned him for a long time about the family's life together, about this Father and Mother and the quarreling between his parents.

“What happened at that last meal you had together?” the District Attorney asked.

“Papa didn't say anything during dinner. It was very hot. The food was not very good and when Papa made a remark about it, a terrible fight started. Mama cried and Papa yelled: “I will kill you!””

“And then?”

“Then Papa left. We went to bed. Mama was sitting by the window. That is where I saw her for the last time.”

Again the child began to cry and many of the spectators wiped tears from their own eyes.

“And then?”

“Then I woke up when I heard the terrible screaming. At first I thought it was a dream.

“There were a lot of people in the room. Everyone had forgotten about us children. When I saw the blood in my Father's cut neck, it pained me. I wanted to go to him, but I bumped into something. It was the bread knife. It was bloody. Then I remembered how Papa had said to Mama “I will kill you,” and I started screaming, “I know, I know who did it!””

His exhausted little body sank. His thin little hands covered his eyes as if he wanted to push out the horrible image that his memory had brought back.

His Father's lawyer questioned him for a long time.

“Why do you think your Father committed this crime?”

“Because he said he was going to kill Mama.”

“Hadn't your Father said that many times before? Didn't your Mother say it? Don't many Jewish mothers say that to their children? Don't you know, that with the word 'kill' people for the most part means 'hit'?”

“No, no!” the child answered, holding fast to his interpretation. In his little child's head, there was no room for arguments...

The frightened defendant testified that he was a tailor, worked eight years in the same place. After the last child was born, she had become very nervous. She had become weak and had had two hemorrhages, and was always fighting. She wanted things that he could not give her on his small salary...

On that evening it was terribly hot in their two rooms with the low ceilings in Rivington Street. His wife fought with him. He didn't remember, but perhaps he did say, “I will kill you.” but this was nothing new. After dinner I got out of the house. For a long time I wandered the streets not thinking of anything.

“When I came home, she was silent and I got ready to go to sleep. The heat was awful. My wife was sitting by the window. I was taken with a great pity for her. If she had of married a rag peddler it would have been better for her. She was once very beautiful. I am just a tailor, and it always bothered her that I was sitting in the same place for eight years. Perhaps I could earn more elsewhere, she used to say.

“That is what I was thinking when I felt the cold steel of a knife against my neck. When the hot blood began running and my eyes were swimming with blood, all I saw was the figure of my wife.”

He spoke slowly and haltingly:

“When I awoke later in the hospital, they told me that *I* did it,” he said with a bitter smile.

When the jury found him guilty of first degree manslaughter, for which he was later sentenced to ten years in prison, many were pleased. I could have been worse, because a lot of jurors would not have wanted to be put in the defendant's situation.

So the tailor, who sat for eight years on his bench, certainly did not give the impression of a murderer, and yet they found him guilty. Not totally guilty, just a little...

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Years later I ran in to him in Sing-Sing prison (when I was there for a visit). Physically, he looked better than he did during the terrible days of the trial. Mentally, perhaps, also. He worked in the tailor shop of the prison, and hoped to once again be happy with his children.

“And your oldest son, the witness against you, have you also forgiven him?” I asked.

“Certainly, he is after all my son!” he answered. In his voice there was no trace of bitterness toward the little witness.

* * * *

For me to this very day the murder remains for me a psychological riddle.

Who is guilty?

The End