

would. This is the last night of the week, and there won't be another in town for an age."

"I don't care; I'm not coming," she answered, snatching her hand away as he pulled at her wrist coaxingly. "Leave me alone!"

"Why, Ida!" exclaimed the boy, looking in wonder at her flushed face, "I didn't mean—honest, I didn't—say! You aren't mad at me?"

But the girl had flung into the house, leaving him standing outside and gaping after her. He could not understand what was the matter with her. As he stood there Mrs. Norris came out with the big watering can. She had a box of asters, which she was raising from seed; or, rather, it had been Ida's but she had ceased to care for the tender shoots.

"Say, Mrs. Norris, Ida's all right, isn't she?" asked the boy.

The old woman looked at him, pursing her lips. "I guess there's nothing wrong with her," she answered, and began sprinkling the plants. There was a wise smile on her lips, and her face was faintly flushed.

"They're too young, Jim," she said that night to her husband, when the old couple were alone.

Outside, at the Barton end of the piazza, Frank was waiting. He had meant to go to the picture show alone. He had wished that he had some other girl to take with him. They would stroll past the double house together, their voices slightly raised, and Frank laughing. The thought pleased him; but he only sat sullenly at the end of the piazza, his chin on his hands, staring out into the dusk.

Ten yards away the girl sat by the window in the living room. She was alone, too; her father had gone out upon some errand, and her mother was making up accounts in the kitchen. From the corner of the window she could just see the Barton end of the piazza. She had a book in her hand, but she was not reading.

She had been trying hard not to cry, and was exceedingly angry, because it was not about Frank Barton—and yet it was, too, in a sort of way. But what had he done? Nothing. That was just it; he was only a boy and couldn't understand. But what was there to understand, except that she hated him.

She went up to her room at last, and then she crouched down by the window and cried in earnest. Presently a slight squeaking sound inside the chimney made her tiptoe over to the stove. It had not been lit since the warm weather began, a month before. Something like a mouse was squeaking and scurrying behind the place where the stovepipe entered.

Frank Barton, at the end of the piazza, saw the girl's shadow thrown on the lawn. He was not going to look up at her. But he looked up, and saw that she had pulled the stovepipe from its place and was bending over something.

"She's found a mouse's nest," he thought, and a wave of disgust surged over him. He had heard the little beasts scurrying to and fro at night. He had thought of pulling out the pipe and drowning them. How like a girl!

He almost hated Ida then. He hoped she had not been angry with him because—because she guessed! The shame of that would make him hang his head the rest of his days. He saw Ida clearly again, a pale young woman whose twin pig-tails had changed into fluffy, straw-colored hair. He did not even want to take another girl to the picture show now.

"Aren't you getting cold, Frank? It's turning quite chilly," said his mother, from the window of the living room.

"I guess not," he answered. "Shall I light the fire in the stove?" she asked.

He hesitated. "Yes, it might warm up the house," he answered.