

It was Friday night, and Maria was tired. She sat at the window watching the evening traffic go by. The sound of Carol's music wafted in from the next room, drowning out all the quiet sounds from the street.

Carol was putting on makeup, getting ready to go out. Carol Flanagan who played the guitar and wrote poetry. They never got along well. She had a boyfriend and spent maybe one night in five at the apartment. A space of time in which she managed to turn the bathroom and the kitchen into disaster zones and play records just loudly enough to be dully grating. She didn't try to be a hassle; she just was. It was simply her way.

Why had Maria come to New York? For what—for Jazz? Was that really it? The strange melodies, the thumping bass. Had that been important enough to uproot her whole life? To leave her father?

The door slammed, and Maria was all alone in the New York apartment with no hot water.

She had lived in the city for six months and not made a single friend. To be truthful, the city horrified her. She was terrified of its dark alleys, its infinite variety. She hadn't talked to her father.

Worst of all, she hadn't been to a single jazz show. She lived right in the Village but she hardly ever left the apartment. She spent all day in her room, reading or listening to music. Late at night had become the only time she ever felt like eating anything any more.

A Turkish restaurant in the village had become her sanctuary. It was open late, and she left to go there now, unsure of how she would survive hours in the apartment by herself.

A man stumbled into the restaurant at one o'clock. His clothes were rumpled. He was thin, and he had a thin mustache and long, thin sideburns. He was drunk.

"Eddie!" he cried to the man behind the counter.

The counterman turned. "Phil. What?"

"Eggs. Bacon."

Phil noticed Maria. He sat down next to her and held out his hand.

"Phil Ocks."

Maria turned away.

Phil started to mumble to Eddie. His friends were all bastards, he didn't need them, that kind of thing. Eddie paid no attention.

Phil gained interest in Maria again; he turned and looked into her eyes.

"You know, you're beautiful," he said.

She turned to face him.

"Do you really think that or are you just saying it?"

"I know it."

He left, forgetting about his food. She regretted dismissing him so suddenly. Wasn't this what she

had come to New York for? Life, free from the chains of Lincoln? Meeting strange men, dangerous men?

She walked out into the street. Phils' form was just beginning to fade from the cone of a streetlight.

"Wait!" she called.

He turned around. She ran to meet him. She looked into his eyes, and they were like a gateway to the life she had imagined for herself.

She slept with him that night. It was not how she had imagined it. He fell asleep in her bed and she found that she couldn't stand to lie there next to him. She moved to the couch in the living room. It got cold in the night but she couldn't bring herself to go back to her bedroom to get a blanket. She just lay there—she could hear him breathing—listening to him sleep in her bed.

When the morning came, he got up and came into the living room. He was hung over and very confused at first, but when he realized how Maria felt he apologized. He offered to make her breakfast.

Maria was genuinely sort of charmed by how sorry she was, and she let him. He brought a blanket out of the bedroom for her and she turned on the radio and sat there wrapped up on the couch, listening to the food sizzling on the stove.

They didn't talk. He made a big breakfast for her but he just made a fried egg for himself and sat there eating it, not rushing, with his eyes down.

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