

later she entered a second-class downtown jewelry store. She laid the ring on the counter: "Wha's that wuth, white folks?"

The expert flipped it contemptuously. "Dollar and a half — probably."

"How much'll it cost me to delarge it to fit my finger — right now?"

He named his price and she nodded grimly. Forty minutes later she left the store with the cut glass glowing in noble camonflage from her finger. She felt slightly better. But even yet the future was drab with the sadness of irrecoverable loss, although Elzevir was concerned principally with the present and its chances of detection. For the moment she seemed safe.

If only Urias hadn't been so passionately persistent with his warnings. If only his fervid diatribes on the subject of her carelessness had been less frequent. In that event she might have dared the truth. But now she knew that at any cost he must be kept in ignorance.

She was safe socially. So often had her ring been professionally appraised in the presence of sceptical witnesses that there remained no conscientious doubters in darktown. And so she determined upon a career of deception, hoping that it might exist until it became a habit. Should Urias learn of her loss, her tenure as head of the family would be at an end. Elzevir set her lips, stifled her grief and went home to prepare dinner.

Meanwhile Cass Driggers was progressing very well indeed with Semore Mashby.

Semore doubted the genuineness of Cass's professed security. Cass conducted him triumphantly