

Vistar rose indignantly. "Is you meanin' to 'sinnate, Mis' Nesbit, that —"

"I ain't 'sinnatin' nothin', Miss Goins. I is said what I is said. An' what I is said is that Mistuh Mashby ain' nev' th'ew no money away yet an' if'n 'twas me he give that stone to I'd be pow'ful sho' 'twas ginuwine befo' I went boastin' roun' w mmin what ev'ybody knows wears the ril thing. Tha's all what I is got to say, Miss Goins. Ise busy — doin' hones' wnk. Good day!"

It was ridiculous; unthinkable; absurd! Semore would never dare. But the seeds of distrust, so cleverly planted, insisted on sprouting.

An hour later she staggered from a leading jewelry store. Tears — part of stricken pride and part of fury — trembling in her eyes. "A dollar and a half," had been the jeweller's prompt verdict. "It isn't worth a cent more than that."

She walked dizzily toward her home, groping blindly through the wreckage of her air-castles. All the venom in her nature had concentrated against Semore Mashby; Semore the hopelessly tightwad whose fervently protested love for her had proved not sufficiently strong to master the plea of the dollar.

She was prostrated, abased, made a laughing-stock in the eyes of the society set. Nor was she labouring under any delusions. Elzevir Nesbit detected her and Elzevir knew that the visit of the morning had been for the express purpose of quaffing the nectar of superiority. Elzevir would not rise to heights of mercy. Not a chance. Nor would the story lose colour in the telling. The world had become a dark, drab place for the crushed