



The Kingdom of Lost Youth

First Prize Story—by "Viviette"

A GIRL, elbows on window ledge, chin in palm, gazed out over the sunlit garden with brooding eyes. She was a slight little thing with a sad little face, a half bitter twist to her lips, and an incongruous name — Joy. Her only beauty lay in her hair — masses of gold-red curls which she had pinned up primly into an ugly knot and which had since loosened prettily about her temples.

"Joy Thurman, where are you?" someone called, but the girl did not stir. The searcher walked down the hall and Joy raised her head and looked anxiously toward the door, but the footsteps passed and died away and she turned her eyes to the garden again.

Presently she rose and walked with dragging steps across the room. At the door she paused, cast one glance back through the open window to the fragrant company beyond—one wistful glance, like a farewell—then she opened the door and stepped into the hall.

In her bedroom she sank into a chair. A little room with ugly wallpaper covered by cheap prints of fine old pictures, it was the only place in the city

she could call her very own, the only spot in which she could be as lonely, as whimsical and as queer as she wished to be and not attract comment. It had been her only home for seventeen years. She picked up a battered book from the table and hugged it close; "Mother Goose's Rhymes and Tales," said the letters on the cover. Joy opened the book and gazed with unseeing eyes at the writing on the inside, "To my little Joy," it said, and there followed the date and year, "On her fifth birthday." "Joy, Joy!" sneered the girl, "What a name."

"It's a nice boarding house, Joy," she told herself as she returned the book to its place beside Ibsen and Shakespeare. "It has a garden—," then she laughed the cynical, amused chuckle that was peculiarly hers; she was half-startled sometimes by the length and growing frequency of her conversations with herself. "Loneliness will drive me mad some day," she thought. "Only old people are lonely and I am not—," she paused, for a sickening thought returned to her, "I AM old," she whispered, "Thirty—