

she . . . she didn't want other men. She never had wanted them. She wanted——

She stopped.

Yes, she wanted Jay. She wanted him. She wanted the feel of his hands on her; she wanted to hear his voice. She wanted the physical joys he had taught her and given her—she who had only longed for freedom!—and she wanted them from him. She knew just what he was. She realised just how mean and how petty and how low-down he had been. But he was her husband. She had gone to him a girl and he had made her a woman . . . and she knew that if she could have a child she would want him to be its father.

How inexplicable! “Are all women made like this?” she asked herself. “Are we all cursed with this foolishness? Must we all be bound to one man—and to him only?”

She looked down at her finger. She had discarded her ring with the rest. She was Miss Ella Hume—no ring, no man, no anything. And as she sat there she longed passionately for her ring, for her married name, for her wedded life—that wedded life that had been such a cataclysm of failure and disgrace.

Down at the office where she worked they didn't even know she had been married. She passed as a single woman and she ranked as a single woman—and in her heart she despised single women; she who had taken such pains to be in all appearance one of them again. “What do *they* know?” she would ask herself impatiently. “What's life to *them*?” And she would have to bridle her tongue lest she should catch herself dropping out the word to betray her