

'I can't help her,' the doctor said. 'She is very sad. She doesn't want to live. Someone must make her happy again.

What is she interested in?'

'She's an artist,' Sue replied. 'She wants to paint a picture of the Bay of Naples.'

'Painting!' said the doctor. 'That won't help her!'

The doctor left the apartment. Sue went into her own room and she cried quietly for a few minutes. Then she picked up her drawing board and some pencils. She started to sing a happy song and walked into Johnsy's room. Johnsy lay silently in her bed. Her face was thin and white. She was looking towards the window.

'Johnsy is asleep,' Sue thought.

She stopped singing and she sat down in a corner of the room. Then she started to draw a

THE LAST LEAF

BY O. HENRY

- 1 -



picture for a magazine. Suddenly, Sue heard a quiet sound. She went quickly to the side of the bed. Johnsy's eyes were open. She was looking out of the

window and she was speaking quietly.

'Twelve,' Johnsy said. A little later, she said 'eleven'. Then she said 'ten'. Then 'nine'. And then she said 'eight' and 'seven' almost together. She was counting backwards.

What was Johnsy looking at? What was she counting?

Sue looked out of the window. Outside the window, Sue saw the brick wall of the next house. An old vine grew against the wall. There

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In the 1890s, many artists lived in Greenwich Village, in New York City. Sue and Johnsy were artists. The two girls met each other in the month of May, at a restaurant in Greenwich Village.

‘I’m from the State of Maine,’ Sue said to Johnsy. ‘I draw pictures for stories in magazines.’

‘I’m from California,’ Johnsy said to Sue. ‘But I want to go to Italy. I want to paint a picture of the Bay of Naples!’

The two girls talked happily for an hour – about art, about clothes, about food.

Soon after their first meeting, Sue and Johnsy

moved into a studio apartment together. Their rooms were at the top of an old brick house in Greenwich Village.



In December, it was very cold in New York. Snow fell and there was ice in the ground. Many people in the city became ill. The illness was called pneumonia. The doctors tried to help the sick people, but many of them died.

That month, Johnsy had pneumonia. She was very ill. She lay in her bed and she did not move. A doctor visited her every day. But Johnsy was not getting better.

One morning, the doctor spoke quietly to Sue outside Johnsy's room.