

# THE LAST LEAF

A Dramatic Reading

by  
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A Dramatic Reading

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From the story, "The Last Leaf."

At the top of a squatty, three-story brick in Greenwich Village Sue and Johnsy had their studio. "Johnsy" was familiar for Joanna. One was from Maine; the other from California. They had met at the table d'hôte of an Eighth Street cafe; and found their tastes in art so congenial that the joint studio resulted.

That was in May. In November a cold, unseen stranger, whom the doctors called Pneumonia, stalked about the colony, touching one here and there with his icy fingers.

Mr. Pneumonia was not what you would call a chivalric old gentleman. A mite of a little woman was hardly fair game for the red-fisted, short-breathed old duffer. But Johnsy he smote; and she lay, scarcely moving, on her painted iron bedstead, looking through the window-panes at the blank side of the next brick house.

One morning the busy doctor invited Sue into the hallway. "She has one chance in--let us say, ten. And that chance is for her to want to live. Your little lady has made up her mind that she's not going to get well. Has she anything on her mind--a man, for instance?"

"A man? No, doctor; there is nothing of the kind."

"Well, it is the weakness, then. I will do all that science, can accomplish. If you will get her to ask one question about the new winter styles I will promise you a one-in-five chance for her, instead of one in ten."

After the doctor had gone Sue went into the workroom and cried a Japanese napkin to pulp. Then she swaggered into Johnsy's room with her drawing board, whistling ragtime.

Johnsy, lay, scarcely making a ripple under the bedclothes, with her face toward the window. Sue stopped whistling, thinking she was asleep.

Johnsy's eyes were open wide. She was looking out the window and counting--counting backward.

"Twelve," she said, and a little later "eleven"; and then "ten," and "nine"; and then "eight" and "seven."

Sue looked out of the window. What was there to count? There was only a bare, dreary yard to be seen, and the blank side of the brick house with an old ivy vine climbing up the side. The cold breath of autumn had stricken its leaves from the vine until its branches were almost bare.

"What is it, dear?" (asked Sue.)

"Six. They're falling faster now. Three days ago there were almost a hundred. It made my headache to count them. But now its easy. There goes another one. There are only five left now."

"Five what, dear? Tell your Sudie."

"Leaves. On the ivy vine. When the last one falls I must go, too. I've known that for three days. Didn't the doctor tell you?"

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