

the rippling piano notes again she sighed about ten fathoms deep and looked sideways over at me. Her eyes were shiny and starry.

"That's it," she whispered reverently. "My number. Red-head Rhapsody. He wrote it specially for me. Isn't it just simply swell?"

"Sure," I agreed, with about as much enthusiasm as a big league pitcher being invited to turn out for the high school team. "Sure! Lovely thing. Just like yourself. Who wrote it, did you say?"

"Siggy," she breathed. "Siggy Houston. He's the trumpeter. He's out of this world!"

For me, Siggy Houston could be playing lead harp in the celestial quintet right then, and may his nails never break off. I remembered thinking that, afterwards, and I shivered. But we'll get around to that.

I finished my drink and pushed the glass over the bar into the tender care of the anonymous hands. Flame drained the last of her whiskey sour out through the floral decorations and I did likewise.

I guess it would be somewhere around maybe half past four or near five when we finally left the bar and got into my car and headed uptown on Fifth Avenue out of Washington Square towards my apartment on West 23rd. Flame asked me did I have any etchings and I told her no and she giggled. I guess maybe she'd been reading some back numbers of the *New Yorker*—far back.

But I told her I had something a whole lot more interesting and this time she didn't giggle but sighed and snuggled up a little closer in the front seat of the Packard. She was wearing one of those perfumes that goes up your nose and then peels off like a dive bomber and goes helling right down inside a guy and sets him off like a stick of incendiaries on an oil plant. I took in a lot of that perfume driving home. It didn't calm me down any. Not any at all.

There was one of those street photographers in front of my house, and he snapped us as we got out of the car and