

Synopsis

The story opens with the fury of battle of the children from the Rum Alley and Devil's Row. The children are throwing stones and cursing in challenge to each other. Jimmie, the small warrior of Rum Alley fights with the children from Devil's Row. His head and chin are bleeding and the blood stains his shirt. The battle turns to the fights between the children from Rum Alley. Jimmie fights one of his own gang Billie. His shirt is torn in shreds. The children of Rum Alley become more excited. They form a circle about the pair and shout in excitement. At last the coming of Jimmie's father, Mr. Johnson, stops the fight. Jimmie is stricken and dragged home by his father.

The story then continues with the description of the poor life of Rum Alley. The Johnson family stays in an up stairways apartment of a gloomy and cold tenement in dark region. Their living place shows that the Johnson family lives in poverty.

Mr. Johnson and Jimmie are welcomed by the drunken mother, Mary, with anger. Mary beats Jimmie for fighting. She blames the father because Jimmie's shirt has been torn in the fight. The parents quarrel. The children, Jimmie, Maggie, and little Tommie are hiding under the table because they are afraid seeing their parents' quarrel. Mr. Johnson leaves home. Mary draws

herself into drink as usual. Mr. Johnson comes home drunk at night. He and Mary start to fight again.

Then, the children grow up without any attention and control from their parents. Maggie grows up into an innocent beautiful girl. She goes to work with little pay in a collar and cuffs factory. The little Tommie dies. After Mr. Johnson dies, Jimmie takes over his father's position as the head of the family. Jimmie goes to work as a truck driver. He grows up by his ignorant and distrust. He likes to fight, drink, and make affair with women.

One day, Jimmie brings his friend, Pete, a bullying neighborhood bartender home. Pete's good looking attracts Maggie. She starts to go out with Pete for enjoyment. She is very happy because it is her first experience to be cared by another person. Maggie and Pete continue their dating after the first one. She begins to enjoy the nightlife. She allows herself to be seduced by Pete. Unfortunately, her dating with Pete arouses her neighborhood's dislike. Her neighbors start to talk about their affair. They consider Maggie to disgrace their environment. That fact makes Mary drives Maggie away from home in order to calm down the gossip about her family. Maggie, having no option, surrenders her to Pete. She chooses to live together with Pete.

Soon, Pete feels bored with Maggie and abandons her to chase another woman. Maggie, tries to return home. Unfortunately, her mother does not want

to accept her anymore. She rejects Maggie because Maggie has stained the reputation of the family by living together with Pete.

Rejected by her mother for the second time, Maggie has to go back to Pete. But, Pete does not want her anymore. In order to keep alive, Maggie becomes a prostitute. She sells her body to any man she meets in the streets. Being a prostitute, she survives for a while, but finally, she is unable to make a happy living. Helplessly, Maggie decides to end her life by drowning herself into the river. The novel ends with the cry of Mary.