

**THE WOMAN'S
EXCHANGE OF
SIMPKINSVILLE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649400379

The Woman's Exchange of Simpkinsville by Ruth McEnery Stuart

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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RUTH MCENERY STUART

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EXCHANGE OF
SIMPKINSVILLE**



THE HOUSEHOLD WAS PREPARED FOR 'EM, EVEN DOWN TO TOM

THE WOMAN'S EXCHANGE
OF SIMPKINSVILLE

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I

The Woman's Exchange of Simpkinsville

SONNY'S BIRDS

"I 'VE been kissed once-t—with a reg'lar beau kiss—by Teddy Brooks." The puffs of smoke from old lady Sarcy Mirandy Simpkins's pipe came faster after she had spoken.

"But I never kissed back. Hev you ever been kissed that a-way, 'th a reg'lar beau kiss, sis' Sophia Falena?" she continued, turning toward her sister, who sat, also smoking, beside her.

"Twice-t."

"Who by?"

"Once-t by Jim Halloway, time he spoken the word fo' me to marry

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'im, an'—an' by another person for a far'well."

"An' you kep' two all these years an' never told 'em out, an' here I felt guilty a-hidin' one. Who was that various secon' smartie what done it to you, sis?"

"He were n't no smartie, Sarey Mirandy. He were Jim Dooley, an' it were time he 'listed in the army."

"Did you kiss back, Sophia Falena?"

"*Yas—I—did!* But what put kissin' into yo' head to-night, sis? It's mighty funny, 'cause I was a-settin' here thinkin' 'bout kissin' too—an' I can't tell when I 've studied about sech a thing befo'."

"I dunno. I was jest a-thinkin'. Sometimes it do me good to set an' think 'way back."

"Well, I tell you how I reckon kissin' come into *my* head. I was jest a-thinkin' *s'posin'*."

"S'posin' what, sis?"

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" Well, s'posin' all 'round. S'posin' Jim Dooley had of came back from the wah, fo' one thing."

A faint blush suffused the thin face of the speaker at the very audacity of that which her supposition implied.

" An' s'posin' Sonny had n't of taken to birds—an' died. An' s'posin' the bank had n't o' failed. Why, sis, I could set here an' s'pose things in five minutes that 'd make everything different. S'posin' time Teddy Brooks give you thet special an' pertic'lar kiss, *you* had jest—ef not to say kissed back, not *drawed away* neither. S'posin' that ?"

" Well, sis, since we got on the subjec', I 've supposedened it more 'n once-t—pertic'lar sence I see how ol' an' run-down the pore feller is. Sally Ann Jones 'ain't been even to say a half-way wife to 'im. Seem like ev'ry time she lays a new baby in the cradle fo' him to rock she gets

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fatter an' purtier an' mo' no' 'count; an' pore Teddy he sets an' rocks the flesh clean off'n his bones. Yas, sis, I 've thought o' *that* s'posin' many a time, but it 's a vain an' foolish thought—ef not a ongodly one. But the one I 've s'posed about most is Sonny."

Both women sighed. "Somehow I can't get used to thinkin' 'bout Sonny dyin', nowadays. No two girls ever had a better brother 'n Sonny. Sonny was a born genius, ef th' ever was one. Perfesser Sloane down to Spring Hill say hisself they war n't a young man in the county thet helt a candle to Sonny fo'head-learnin'—not to speak o' Sonny's manners. An' when I set an' look at this houseful o' stuffed birds in glass cases an' think o' what Sonny might 'a' been— Well, maybe it was God's will for Sonny to take to birds, stid o' drink or card-shufflin' like some brothers."