

SADIE

#1

I'll tell you how I handled Jim Crow. There was a shoe store in Raleigh called Heller's. The owner was a Jewish man, very nice. If you were colored, you had to go in the back to try on shoes, and the white people sat in front. It wasn't Mr. Heller's fault: this was the Jim Crow law. I would go in there and say, "Good morning, Mr. Heller, I would like to try on those shoes in the window." And he would say, "That's fine, Miss Delaney, go on and sit in the back." And I would say, "Where, Mr. Heller?" And he would say, "Back there." And I would say, "Back *where?*" Well I'd just worry that man to death. Finally, he'd say, "Just sit anywhere, Miss Delaney!" And so I would sit myself down in the white section, and smile.

#2

I got my first teaching job in New York in the fall of 1920 at an elementary school, mostly colored. This was typical for a colored teacher. But I wanted to teach at a high school because it was a promotion and it paid better. So I had to be a little clever to find ways to get around those brick walls they set up for colored folks. I applied for a high school position. I received a letter saying they wished to meet with me in person. So I sent them a letter saying there was a mix up and just showed up on the first day of classes. Child when I showed up that day – at Theodore Roosevelt High School, a white high school they just about died when they saw me. A colored woman! But my name was on the list to teach there, and it was too late for them to send me someplace else. The plan had worked!