

FLO AND MADGE

HAL. (*Turning u. l., to himself.*) Hi hi!

FLO. (*Comes out of front door onto porch, carrying an evening dress on which she works during the following scene and a sewing basket and Madge's manicure set. She crosses to armchair and puts dress on it. Puts sewing basket on floor next to chair. Returns to c. and gives Madge manicure set, who places it on floor where she sits. Then she sees Hal. As Flo enters, Millie puts out her cigarette on her heel.*) Young man, this is my house and these are my daughters.

HAL. (*Turns and crosses to c. as Flo speaks.*) They are?

FLO. (*She nods.*) Is there something you want?

HAL. Just loafin', Mam.

FLO. This is a busy day for us. You better run along.

HAL. It's your house, lady. (*Crosses l. to shed, turns to Flo.*) You're their mother? (*Flo nods. Hal shakes his head in admiration and walks off to Mrs. Potts' yard through door of shed, taking rake with him which leans against trellis.*)

FLO. (*When Hal is off she crosses d. l.*) Has Helen Potts taken in another tramp?

MADGE. I don't see why he's a tramp just because Mrs. Potts gave him breakfast.

FLO. I'm going to speak to her about the way she takes in every Tom, Dick and Harry!

MADGE. He wasn't doing any harm.

FLO. I bet he'd like to. (*Crosses to armchair on porch and picks up dress.*) Have you called Alan this morning?

MADGE. No, I haven't had time.

MILLIE. He's coming by pretty soon to take us swimming.

FLO. (*To Madge.*) Tell him they're expecting a big crowd at the park this evening, so he'd better use his father's influence at the City Hall to reserve a table. Oh, and tell him to get one down by the river, close to a Dutch oven.

MADGE. He'll think I'm being bossy.

FLO. Alan doesn't mind if a woman's bossy. (*Sits in armchair and starts work on dress. A train whistle in the distance off l.*)

MADGE. Whenever I hear that train coming into town, I always get a feeling of excitement . . . in here. (*Hugging her stomach.*)

MILLIE. Whenever I hear it, I tell myself some day I'm going to get on that train and I'm going to go to New York.

FLO. That train only goes as far as Tulsa.

MILLIE. Well, in Tulsa I could catch another train.

MADGE. I always wonder, maybe some wonderful person is getting off here, just by accident, and he'll come into the dime store for something and see me behind the counter, and he'll study me very strangely and then decide I'm just the person they're looking for in Washington to carry on an important job in the Espionage Department. (*She puts towel over face below eyes.*) Or maybe he wants me for some great medical experiment!

FLO. Those things don't happen in dime stores. (*Millie rustles her paper.*) Madge — (*She wants to get rid of Millie.*) Millie, would you take the milk in, please? (*Millie lowers paper, looks at her mother, rises slowly and crosses u.*)

MILLIE. (*As she exits into kitchen with milk.*) Awwww . . .

START (*Madge turns away d. r. drying hair.*)

FLO. (*After a moment.*) Did you and Alan have a good time on your date last night?

MADGE. Uh-huh.

FLO. What'd you do? (*She continues to work on dress.*)

MADGE. (*Trying to avoid the cross questioning.*) We went over to his house and played some of his classical records.

FLO. (*After a pause.*) Then what'd you do?

MADGE. Drove over to Cherryvale and had some barbecue.

FLO. (*A hard question to ask.*) Madge, does Alan ever . . . make love?

MADGE. When we drive over to Cherryvale we always park the car by the river and get real romantic.

FLO. Do you let him kiss you? After all, you've been going together all summer.

MADGE. Of course I let him.

FLO. Does he ever want to go beyond kissing?

MADGE. (*Embarrassed.*) Mom!

FLO. I'm your mother, for heaven's sake! These things have to be talked about. Does he?

MADGE. Well . . . yes.

FLO. Does Alan get mad if you . . . won't?

MADGE. No.

FLO. (*To herself, puzzled.*) He doesn't . . .

MADGE. He doesn't get mad.

FLO. Do you like it when he kisses you?

MADGE. Yes.

FLO. You don't sound very enthusiastic.

MADGE. What do you expect me to do—pass out every time Alan puts his arm around me?

FLO. No, you don't have to pass out. But it seems to me you could at least —

MADGE. (*Turning to her.*) What?

FLO. (*She rises.*) Hold this dress up in front of you. (*Madge rises, holds dress. Flo sits u. l. of her in beach chair and continues work.*) Madge, it'd be awfully nice to be married to Alan. You'd have charge accounts at all the stores—automobiles—trips. You'd be invited by all his friends to parties in their homes and at the country club.

MADGE. (*Uncomfortably.*) Mom, I don't feel right with those people.

FLO. What do you mean? You're just as good as they are. My father was in the State Legislature and my mother's family was one —

MADGE. (*She gives dress to Flo and crosses l. to c.*) I know, Mom, but all of Alan's friends talk about colleges and trips to Europe. I feel left out.

FLO. You've just got to get over those feelings. Now, Alan will be going back to school in a few weeks. There won't be many more opportunities like the picnic tonight. You better get busy.

MADGE. Busy what?

FLO. Madge, a pretty girl doesn't have long—just a few years when she's the equal of kings and can walk out of a shanty like this and live in a palace with a doting husband who'll spend his life making her happy.

MADGE. (*Turning away.*) I suppose, but —

FLO. Because once, *once* she was young and pretty. If she loses that chance, she might just as well throw all her prettiness away.

MADGE. I'm only eighteen.

FLO. And next summer you'll be nineteen, and then twenty, and then twenty-one, and then forty. (*Crossing with dress to Madge who holds it against her again. Flo squats in front of her. Millie enters from front door with sketch pad and charcoal, looks at new dress then sits on r. edge of steps.*)

MILLIE. Everyone around here gets to dress up and go places except me. (*Looking off r. sketching.*)

MADGE. Alan said he'd try to find you a date for the picnic tonight.

MILLIE. I don't want Alan asking any of these crazy boys in town to take me anywhere.

MADGE. Beggars can't be choosers!

MILLIE. You shut up.

FLO. (*Pinning up hem.*) Madge, that was mean. There'll be dancing at the pavilion tonight. Millie should have a date, too. (*She moves d. l. a bit and looks at hem line.*)

MADGE. If she wants a date, why doesn't she dress up and act decent?

MILLIE. 'Cause I'm gonna dress and act the way I want to, and if you don't like it you know what you can do!

MADGE. Always complaining because she doesn't have any friends, but she smells so bad people don't want to be near her! (*Flo covers Madge's mouth. Madge gives dress to Flo and picks up her towel.*)

FLO. Madge!

MILLIE. La-de-da! Madge is the pretty one—but she's so dumb they almost had to burn the schoolhouse down to get her out of it!

MADGE. That's not so!

MILLIE. Oh, isn't it? You never would have graduated if it hadn't been for Jumpin' Jeeter.

FLO. (*Crosses to the steps.*) Who's Jumpin' Jeeter?

MILLIE. Teaches history. Kids call him Jumpin' Jeeter 'cause the pretty girls in his classes make him so jumpy. He was flunking Madge till she went in his room and cried: (*An imitation.*) "I just don't know what I'll do if I don't pass history!"

MADGE. Mom, she's making that up.

MILLIE. Like fun I am! You couldn't even pass Miss Sydney's course in shorthand and you have to work in the dime store!

FLO. Millie!

MADGE. You are a goon!

MILLIE. Madge, you slut! (*She starts for Madge who shrieks and runs around stump to kitchen porch. Millie follows to porch.*) You take that back or I'll kill you!

FLO. Millie! Madge! (*She puts dress on porch armchair and runs u. s. after girls.*) Girls! Girls! Stop it! What will the neighbors say! (*Millie grabs Madge's hair and pulls it. Madge swats Millie with towel. Millie lets her go. Madge crosses to shed door.*)