

MADGE. (Rises, crosses to shed.) Mom, don't make fun of me.

FLO. (Crosses to above stump.) Madge, you shouldn't object to being kidded when it's well meant.

MADGE. It just seems that when I'm looking in the mirror that's the only way I can prove to myself I'm alive.

FLO. Alive?

MADGE. Yes. Lots of the time I wonder if I really exist.

FLO. Madge! You puzzle me. (Irma enters from D. R. followed by Christine and Rosemary, returning from their afternoon party. They are exhausted and bored.)

IRMA. We've brought home your wayward girl, Mrs. Owens! (Madge crosses u. on Mrs. Potts' steps and sits on steps, to avoid the teachers.)

FLO. (Turning from Madge.) Oh, hello. Have a nice party?

IRMA. (Crosses to c.) It wasn't a real party. Each girl paid for her own lunch. Then we played bridge all afternoon. (Christine stands below r. corner of steps. Rosemary crosses u., puts hat and jacket on bench, moves to above armchair on porch.)

FLO. Food's good at the hotel, isn't it?

IRMA. Not very. (Christine crosses to lean on arm of beach chair.) But they serve it to you nice, with honest-to-goodness napkins. Lord, I hate paper napkins! (Flo sits on stump. Irma scrapes some gravy off her bodice. Silence.)

CHRISTINE. I had a French-fried pork chop. Mostly fat. What'd you girls have?

ROSEMARY. (Without enthusiasm.) I had the stuffed peppers.

IRMA. (Disquieted.) I had the Southern fried chicken.

CHRISTINE. Linda Sue Breckenridge had pot roast of veal. Hm! There was only one little hunk of meat in it. All we girls at her table made her call the waiter and complain.

ROSEMARY. (Moves to D. of front door.) Well, I should hope so!

IRMA. Good for you! (There is a pause.) I thought by now someone might have noticed my new dress.

ROSEMARY. I was going to say something, kid, and then I . . . uh . . .

IRMA. Remember that satin-back crepe I had last year?

ROSEMARY. Don't tell me!

CHRISTINE. My goodness!

IRMA. Mama remodelled it for me while I was at Columbia. I feel

like I had a brand-new outfit. (Furious at the thought.) But nobody said anything all afternoon!

CHRISTINE. It's so chic.

IRMA. (This soothes Irma a bit and she beams. But now there is an awkward pause when no one can think of any more to say.) Well . . . we better run along, Christine. (She crosses u. to c. lawn.) Rosemary has a date. (Turns to Rosemary.) We'll come by for you in the morning. Don't be late. (She goes upstage and waits above the alley gate for Christine.)

CHRISTINE. (Crossing to L. of Rosemary, putting out her hand.) Girl, I want to tell you in one afternoon I feel I've known you my whole life.

ROSEMARY. (Shaking hands.) I look upon you as an old friend already.

CHRISTINE. (Overjoyed.) Aw . . .

ROSEMARY. (As Christine and Irma go off alley and out u. L.) Good-bye, girls! (As teachers disappear, Rosemary sits in armchair.)

FLO. (To Rosemary.) What time's Howard coming by? (Madge runs across to front door.)

ROSEMARY. Pretty soon.

MADGE. (Turning.) Mom, is there any hot water?

FLO. You'll have to go see, darling.

MADGE. Miss Sydney, would you mind terribly if I used some of your Shalimar?

ROSEMARY. Help yourself!

MADGE. Thanks. (She goes inside.)

ROSEMARY. Madge thinks too much about the boys, Mrs. Owens.

FLO. (Disbelieving.) Madge? (The conversation is stopped by the excited entrance of Mrs. Potts from her porch steps. She is followed by Millie who carries another cake. Mrs. Potts crosses to c. lawn. Millie follows to her L. Flo crosses to Millie, L.)

START MRS. POTTS. It's a miracle, that's what it is! I never knew Millie could look so pretty. It's just like a movie I saw once with Betty Grable . . . or was it Lana Turner? Anyway, she played the part of a secretary to some very important business man. She wore glasses and did her hair real plain and men didn't pay any notice to her at all. Then one day she took off her glasses and her

boss wanted to marry her right away! Now I tell Millie—all the boys are going to fall in love with her!

ROSEMARY. Millie have a date tonight?

FLO. Yes, I'm sorry to say.

MRS. POTTS. Why, Flo!

ROSEMARY. Who is he, Millie? Tell your Aunt Rosemary.

MILLIE. Hal.

ROSEMARY. Who?

FLO. The young man over at Helen's turned out to be a friend of Alan's.

ROSEMARY. Oh, him! *(Millie exits into kitchen carrying cake.)*

FLO. Helen, have you gone to the trouble of baking another cake?

MRS. POTTS. An old lady like me, if she wants any attention from the young men on a picnic, all she can do is bake a cake! I feel sort of excited, Flo. I think we plan picnics just to give ourselves an excuse . . . to let something thrilling and romantic happen to us —

FLO. Such as what?

MRS. POTTS. ~~I don't know. That's what's so exciting.~~ END

MADGE. *(Bursting out the front door, furious.)* Mom! Millie makes me furious! Every time she takes a bath, she fills up the whole bathtub. Now there isn't any hot water at all.

FLO. You should have thought of it earlier.

ROSEMARY. *(Hears Howard's car drive up and stop off R. She moves excitedly to R. edge of steps.)* It's him! It's him!

MRS. POTTS. *(Crosses u. to u. L. lawn, looks off R.)* Who? Oh, it's Howard. Hello, Howard!

ROSEMARY. *(Sitting down again in armchair.)* If he's been drinking, I'm not going out with him. *(Howard Bevans enters from alley R. He wears a panama hat, carries a lighted cigar and is in his shirtsleeves. Madge crosses L. to shed.)*

HOWARD. *(As he comes through alley gate.)* Howdy, ladies. Mrs. Owens —

FLO. Hello, Howard. *(Mrs. Potts crosses D., sits on stump.)*

HOWARD. *(Crosses D. to L. of Rosemary.)* You sure look nice, Rosemary.

ROSEMARY. *(Her tone of voice must tell a man she is independent of him.)* Seems to me you might have left your coat on.

HOWARD. Still too darn hot, even if it is September. *(Turns to L. a step.)* Good evening, Madge.

MADGE. Hi, Howard.

FLO. How are things over in Cherryvale, Howard?

HOWARD. Good business. Back to school and everybody buying.

FLO. When business is good, it's good for everyone.

MILLIE. *(Comes out of kitchen, crosses shyly to R. of Howard.)* Hi, Howard!

HOWARD. *(To Flo, making a discovery.)* Hey, Millie's a good lookin' kid. I never realized it before. *(Flo sits in C. chair in yard.)*

MILLIE. *(Leaning over Flo, apprehensive.)* Mom, what time did the fellows say they'd be here?

FLO. At five-thirty. You've asked me a dozen times. *(A sound of approaching automobiles.)*

FLO. *(Looking off R.)* It's Alan! He's brought both cars! *(Millie runs into the house through front door. Rosemary crosses to R. edge of steps.)*

MRS. POTTS. One of these days you'll be riding around in that big Cadillac. *(Alan enters from D. R.—crosses to Flo.)*

ALAN. Everyone ready? *(Howard crosses u. on porch, u. of armchair.)*

FLO. Come sit down, Alan.

ROSEMARY. The more the merrier!

ALAN. I brought both cars. Hal's parking the Ford. *(The other car is heard stopping with a squeal of brakes.)* The trunk in the Cadillac won't hold everything. Whatever's left over, Hal and Millie can drive out in the Ford. *(To Madge, who is now sitting up on Mrs. Potts' porch railing.)* Hi, Beautiful!

MADGE. Hi, Alan!

ALAN. *(Calling off R.)* Hal!

FLO. Is he a careful driver, Alan? *(This question does not get answered. Hal comes running on D. R., tugging uncomfortably at the shoulders of his jacket. He crosses to Alan's R.)*

HAL. Hey, Seymour! *(Now he notices the crowd, realizes he was too noisy, and is more quiet.)* Look, Seymour, I'm a big man. I'm a lot huskier than you are. I can't wear your jacket.

ALAN. Then take it off. *(Hal does.)*

MRS. POTTS. Yes. I like to see a man comfortable.

HAL. *(With a broad smile of total confidence.)* I never could wear another fellow's clothes. See, I'm kinda beefy through the shoulders. *(He demonstrates the fact.)* I should have all my clothes