

HARRIET: Good morning, darling. How are you this morning? Up late last night filibustering? Where's Mother?

CONGRESSMAN: She's having her tray. What do you want, my dear?

HARRIET: I want two tremendous eggs fired immediately. I'm going to conquer a young man at golf this morning. What I'm having, however, is orange juice. Must do what we can for the figure. (She picks up the newspaper and scans the headlines.) H'm. Jimmie Walker again. One wing on the Fisher Body plant turned into a flop-house for the destitute. (She looks off into the distance.) That's not bad. "Bodies by Fisher". How respectable the *New York Times* is. Couldn't you start taking a few tabloids, Father—at least while I'm home for the weekend? Vice investigation continues—more drought suffering. Why don't they do something about the drought, Father?

CONGRESSMAN: (Tolerantly) What should you suggest doing, my dear? The bishops have prayed for rain, I believe.

HARRIET: I mean seriously, Father. The Red Cross is a fine, upstanding institution. Why don't you give it a break? If you'll excuse my saying so, the members of the respected body which you adorn are doing as fine a job as I've ever seen done in my life, of parking on their tails and doing absolutely nothing.

CONGRESSMAN: I'll excuse your saying so, my dear, because you don't know what you're talking about. Congress is a body of wise, elder men who have the country's good primarily at heart. It's true we're in the grip of a severe crisis, but just for that reason we have to proceed with caution. We can't rush headlong into things.

HARRIET: Well, personally, if I saw a guy starving I'd rush headlong for a loaf of bread.

CONGRESSMAN: Don't bother your pretty head about it, dear. It takes an economist to understand a crisis as wide in its national import as the drought.

HARRIET: They've got more sense in Russia. When the farmers go on the rocks there, they've got something solidly back of them—they don't have to sit around for the Red Cross to dish them out charity.

CONGRESSMAN: My dear child, what do you know about Russia? Who's been talking to you?

HARRIET: Come out of the fog, old dear. I'm one of the country's educated women. I go to college. I take a course in government and one in charities and corrections.

CONGRESSMAN: College professors—impractical dreamers! Can't even secure an adequate living wage. What do you think they know about world affairs?

HARRIET: I thought it showed a lovely spirit in a young woman to try to get the low-down on what the great ones of her father's profession were doing.

CONGRESSMAN: But my dear child, I didn't send you to college to acquire biased, radical ideas about Russia and collective farming.

HARRIET: (With a delightful smile but an edge of steel in her voice) What did you send me for, darling?

CONGRESSMAN: Why, why—that is—of course—I wanted you to have the best education that money could buy. I wanted you to be as beautiful and cultured as your mother is—so that you could do the same credit to your—social position and family, my name—or your husband's name—that your mother has always done.

HARRIET: You mean you wanted me to learn to be a lady?

CONGRESSMAN: Exactly.

HARRIET: They don't have those anymore, dear. If that's what you wanted you should have sent me to one of those emporiums of culture for young ladies. There are a few of them, I believe, left over from the last century, tucked away in the hills.

CONGRESSMAN: Harriet!

HARRIET: I'll never be an ornament to society, Father. You might as well give up the idea by now. By the way, speaking of ornaments to society, Mother said I was to chat with you about this burst of glory were having on Christmas Eve, to introduce me to society.

CONGRESSMAN: (Expanding with pride) Yes! Well! Your mother and I have talked a good deal about it, and I told her I wanted to talk to you about it a little.

HARRIET: Sounds like a carnival, from what Mother said. It's very white of you, Father.

CONGRESSMAN: Well, my dear, we wanted our little girl to have the best of everything. Of course it's going to be rather expensive—those things get more and more expensive as people give more and more of them.

HARRIET: How much?

CONGRESSMAN: Well, I haven't figured exactly—I should say—upwards of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

HARRIET: Good God, where does it all go? I'm only a simple college girl.

CONGRESSMAN: We have been extremely fortunate in securing the Arden Park Hotel for that night and the services of Mr. Joseph Durban.

HARRIET: Durban? What's this going to be—a musical show? Doesn't the Arden Park satisfy you?

CONGRESSMAN: As a hotel, yes. On this occasion, no. Mr. Durban is going to do it over for your party, a temporary redesigning of the whole lower floor in silver and black. Then your Mother will dress in black shot with silver, and you in silver shot with black.

HARRIET: Shot with black—God!

CONGRESSMAN: Mr. Durban sent the designs yesterday. I thought them a little extreme, but your mother liked them, and as she pointed out, I don't understand these things as she does.

HARRIET: Strikes me I'm nothing but the corpse.

CONGRESSMAN: You don't seem particularly pleased, Harriet. It isn't the attitude I should have expected from a young woman who is having everything done for her.

HARRIET: Well, frankly, I'm not turning handsprings. What do I get out of it? This Durban guy for a preposterous sum of money turns the lower floor of the Arden Park Hotel into a night club; you and Mother glad-hand around with the legislative body and wives; there are pools of champagne in the corners and bathtubs full of hard liquor in the hall; attaches neck debutantes in the foyer; thousands of Harvard and Yale freshmen get drunk and I have to hold one up after another when they dance with me; a few horrid old fat men snuffle amorously down my neck; I get pulled and hauled and slapped on the back; and tossed from hand to hand like a bag of meal; somebody spills gin on my new dress and everybody steps on my feet, and what with too much liquor and caterer's lobster eaten at two in the morning, I'm sick the next day. Personally, the whole thing almost completely feeds me up.

CONGRESSMAN: But my dear, I thought you liked parties. You like to dance, don't you?

HARRIET: Sure, I love to dance. But you don't call that free-for-all dancing, do you? I like cocktails, too, but I know when to stop, which is more than you can say for most of your friends. I like to go places with some of my friends, and I like to dance and I like to drink, and I like a little love-making—nicely done. But this organizing everything on an automobile factory basis—big business in the debutante world—I don't think it's so hot. Sorry to seem unappreciative, but I thought I'd better let you know how I felt before you went ahead and blew yourself on this Roman orgy.

CONGRESSMAN: I'm frank to say, Harriet. I'm very much surprised. I had hoped we were giving you something you would appreciate—would always remember. I understood from your mother that a girl's coming-out party was something she was looking forward to all her girlhood, and treasured the memory of all her life—like her wedding day. Why your mother has a scrap book with all the clippings relating to her coming-out party in it. She had more flowers than any debutante in town ever had.

HARRIET: Mother came out in 1900, Father. An introduction to society meant an introduction to society, then. But I've smoked and drunk and necked with these same boys for five years—or others just like them. Where's the kick?

CONGRESSMAN: But, my dear, society demands of people in our position a certain formality, a certain duty in the graces of living...

HARRIET: The three graces—drinking, cursing, and necking...

CONGRESSMAN: (Rising outraged) I'm very sorry, Harriet. If I had realized how you felt about it I should never have gone ahead with it. I'm frank to admit that your attitude still seems quite incomprehensible to me. I feel worried about the education you are getting. It's expensive enough, heaven knows. I should be disturbed if I thought that all you were getting out of it was to become maladjusted to the life you were born to. But to get back to the question of the party—considering your peculiarly unsympathetic attitude I should throw the whole thing over, but we can't—on account of your mother. She's set her heart on it. Why, she gets almost as much pleasure out of it as if it were her coming-out party. We couldn't disappoint her like that.

HARRIET: Allowing for differences in phraseology, that's exactly what she said about you.

CONGRESSMAN: What? Oh, well, yes—doubtless she doesn't admit it to herself.

HARRIET: (Facing him, putting her hands on his shoulder, and looking squarely at him) Look here, Father, if I have to set this in a bigger type I will—doesn't it seem a little incongruous to be giving parties with the country in the state it is? With people standing in bread lines and dying of hunger? I don't suppose 250 thousand would be anything but a drop in the bucket, but it ought to feed a mouth here and there. Sounds like Louis XVI as Versailles to me.

CONGRESSMAN: On the contrary, my child, this is just another case of your inability to understand these great economic problems. While this depression affects us all, I feel that it would be selfish to retrench—the thing to do is to keep money in circulation—

*Black out.*

