

MARTHA : It's cold in here.

KAREN : Yes.

MARTHA: What time is it?

KAREN : I don't know. What's the difference?

MARTHA : None. I was hoping it was time for my bath.

KAREN : Take it early to-day.

MARTHA (laughs) : Oh, I couldn't do that. I look forward all day to that bath. It's my last touch with the full life. It makes me feel important to know that there's one thing ahead of me, one thing I've got to do. You ought to get yourself something like that. I tell you : at five o'clock every day, you comb your hair. How's that? It's better for you, take my word. You wake up in the morning and you say to yourself, the day's not entirely empty, life is rich and full : at five o'clock I'll comb my hair (They fall back into silence. A moment later the 'phone rings. Neither of them pays the slightest attention to it, until the ringing becomes too insistent. Then Karen rises, takes the receiver off, goes back and sits down).

KAREN : It's raining.

MARTHA: Hungry?

KAREN : No. You?

MARTHA : No, but I'd like to be hungry again. Remember how much we used to eat at college ?

KAREN : That was ten years ago.

MARTHA : Well, maybe we'll be hungry in another ten years. It's cheaper this way.

KAREN : What's the old thing about time being more nourishing than bread?

MARTHA : Yeah ? Maybe.

KAREN: Joe's late to-day. What time is it?

MARTHA (turns to lie on her side) : We've been sitting here for eight days asking each other the time. Haven't you heard ? There isn't any time any more.

KAREN : It's been days since we've been out of this house.

MARTHA: Well, we'll have to get off these chairs sooner or later. In a couple of months they'll need dusting.

KAREN : What'll we do when we got off?

MARTHA : God knows.

KAREN (almost in a whisper) : It's awful.

MARTHA : Let's not talk about it. (After a moment} What about eggs for dinner?

KAREN: All right.

MARTHA : I'll make some potatoes with onions, the way you used to like them.

KAREN : It's a week ago Thursday. It never seemed real until the last day. It seems real enough now, all right.

MARTHA : Now and forever after.

KAREN (suddenly) : Let's go out.

MARTHA (turns over, stares at her) : Where to ?

KAREN : We'll take a walk.

MARTHA : Where'll we walk?

KAREN: Why shouldn't we take a walk? We won't see anybody, and suppose we do, what of it? We'll just hide.

MARTHA (slowly gets up) : Come on. Well go through

the park.

KAREN : They might see us. (They stand looking at each other] Let's not go. (Martha goes back, lies down again) We'll go tomorrow.

MARTHA (laughs) \ Stop kidding yourself.

KAREN : But Joe says we've got to go out. He says that all the people who don't think it's true will begin to wonder if we keep hiding this way.

MARTHA : If it makes you feel better to think there are such people, go ahead.

KAREN : He says we ought to go into town and go shopping and act as though

MARTHA: Shopping? That's a sound idea. There aren't three stores in Lancet that would sell us anything. Hasn't he heard about the Ladies' Clubs and their meetings and their circulars and their visits and their

KAREN (softly) : Don't tell him.

MARTHA (gently) : I won't.

KAREN : (After a moment} Martha, Martha, Martha

MARTHA (gently) : What is it, Karen ?

KAREN : What are we going to do ? It's all so cold and unreal and awful. It's like that dark hour of the night, when half awake, you struggle through the black mess you've been dreaming. Then, suddenly, you wake up and you see your own bed or your own nightgown and you know you're back again in a solid world. But now it's all the nightmare; there is no solid world. Oh, Martha, why did it happen? What happened ? What are we doing here like this ?

MARTHA: Waiting.

KAREN: For what?

MARTHA : I don't know.

KAREN : We've got to get out of this place. I can't stand it any more.

MARTHA : You'll be getting married soon. Everything will be all right then.

KAREN (vaguely) : Yes.

MARTHA (looks up at the tone) : What is it?

KAREN : Nothing.

MARTHA : There mustn't be anything wrong between you and Joe. Never.

KAREN (without conviction) : Nothing's wrong. (As footsteps are heard in the hall, her "face lights up)
There's Joe, now.