

KAREN (enters Right) : Did you get Joe?

MARTHA (nodding): What happened to her? She was perfectly well a few hours ago.

KAREN : She probably still is. I told her she couldn't go to the boat-races and she had a heart attack.

MARTHA : Where is she ?

KAREN : In there. Mortar's with her.

MARTHA : Anything really wrong with her ?

KAREN : I doubt it. (Sits down at desk and begins to mark papers) She's a problem, that kid. Her latest trick was kidding your aunt out of a sewing lesson with those faded flowers we threw out. Then she threatened to go to her grandmother with some tale about being mistreated.

MARTHA : And, please God, Grandma would believe her and take her away.

KAREN : Which would give the school a swell black eye. But we ought to do something.

MARTHA : How about having a talk with Mrs. Tilford?

KAREN (smiling) : You want to do it? (Martha shakes her head) I hate to do it. She's been so nice to us. (Shrugging her shoulders) Anyway, it wouldn't do any good. She's too crazy about Mary to see her faults very clearly and the kid knows it.

MARTHA: How about asking Joe to say something to her? She'd listen to him.

KAREN : That would be admitting that we can't do the job ourselves.

MARTHA: Well, we can't, and we might as well admit it. We've tried everything we can think of. She's had more attention than any three kids put together. And we still haven't the faintest idea what goes on inside her head.

KAREN : She's a strange girl.

MARTHA : That's putting it mildly.

KAREN (laughs) : It's funny. We always talk about the child as if she were a grown up woman.

MARTHA : It's not so funny. There's something the matter with the kid. That's been true ever since she first came. She causes trouble here; she's bad for the other girls. I don't know what it is it's a feeling I've got that it's wrong somewhere

KAREN : All right, all right, we'll talk it over with Joe. Now what about our other pet nuisance?

MARTHA (laughs) : My aunt the actress ? What's she been up to now?

KAREN : Nothing unusual. Last night at dinner she was telling the girls about the time she lost her trunks in Butte, Montana, and how she gave her best performance of Rosalind during a hurricane. To-day in the kitchen you could hear her on what Sir Henry Irving said to her.

MARTHA : Wait until she does Hedda Gabler standing on a chair. Sir Henry taught her to do it that way. He said it was a test of great acting.

KAREN : You must have had a gay childhood.

MARTHA (bitterly) : Oh, I did, indeed. God, how I used to hate all that

KAREN : Couldn't we get rid of her soon, Martha? I hate to make it hard on you, but she really ought not to be here.

MARTHA (after a moment) : I know.

KAREN : We can scrape up enough money to send her away. Let's do it.

MARTHA (goes to her, affectionately pats her head) :  
You've been very patient about it. I'm sorry, and I'll  
talk to her to-day. It'll probably be a week or two  
before she can be ready to leave. Is that all right?

KAREN : Of course. (Looks at her watch) Did you  
get Joe himself on the phone ?

MARTHA : He was already on his way. Isn't he always  
on his way over here?

KAREN (laughs) : Well, I'm going to marry him some  
day, you know.

MARTHA (looking at her) : You haven't talked of  
marriage for a long time.

KAREN : I've talked of it with Joe.

MARTHA : Then you are thinking about it soon ?

KAREN : Perhaps when the term is over. By that  
time we ought to be out of debt, and the school  
should be paying well for itself.

MARTHA (nervously playing with a book on the  
table) : Then we won't be taking our vacation together.

KAREN : Of course we will. The three of us.

MARTHA : I had been looking forward to some place  
by the lake just you and me the way we used to at  
College.

KAREN (cheerfully) : Well, now there will be the  
three of us. That'll be fun, too.

MARTHA (after a -pause) : Why haven't you told me  
this before?

KAREN : I'm not telling you anything we haven't  
talked about often.

MARTHA : But you're talking about it as soon, now.

KAREN : I'm glad to be able to. I've been in love with

Joe for a long time (Martha crosses to window and stands looking out, her back to Karen. Karen finishes marking papers and rises) It's a big day for the school. Rosalie's finally put an "1" in could.

MARTHA (in a dull bitter tone, not turning from window) : You really are going to leave, aren't you?

KAREN : I'm not going to leave, and you know it. Why do you say things like that? We agreed a long time ago that my marriage wasn't going to make any difference to the school.

MARTHA : But it will, you know it will. It can't help it.

KAREN : That's nonsense. Joe doesn't want me to give up here.

MARTHA (turning from window) : I don't understand you. It's been so damned hard building this thing up, slaving and going without things to make ends meet think of having a winter coat without holes in the lining again! and now when we're getting on our feet, you're all ready to let it go to hell.

KAREN : This is a silly argument, Martha. Let's quit it. You haven't listened to a word I've said. I'm not getting married tomorrow and when I do, it's not going to interfere with my work here. You're making something out of nothing.

MARTHA : It's going to be hard going on alone afterwards.

KAREN : For God's sake, do you expect me to give up my marriage ?

MARTHA : I don't mean that, but it's so... and look at your little cousin.