

CHARLOTTE. (*Still not looking up*) She thinks I can't understand her because she considers me an old maid—

DELIA. (*Looking up, pityingly*) Oh—!

CHARLOTTE. (*With her eyes still on her knitting*) A ridiculous, narrow-minded old maid— What else can she ever think of me?

DELIA. My dear! (*Holds up work.*)

CHARLOTTE. (*Looking up and meeting DELIA's eyes, at last, softly*) Oh, but you needn't pity me. She's really

mine! (*DELIA resumes sewing. Then, very simply*) I do scold her. But I don't want to be hard on her. As it is, I always practise what I'm going to say to her, if it's anything important, so it will sound like an old maid relation talking; not a mother. (*Again she gives her entire attention to her knitting. Then again she speaks suddenly.*)

If you don't mind I'd like to move down into the small bedroom Tina had before Dee's marriage, now that she's moved into Dee's room next to it.

DELIA. (*With some hesitation*) Of course I don't mind; but you'll be much less comfortable there than in your big room over mine. Unless it's on account of the stairs?

CHARLOTTE. (*Bluntly, with a short laugh*) No; it's not the stairs. I'm not as old as *that*. It's because I should like to be next to Tina.

DELIA. (*Reluctantly*) Very well, as you please. But I had intended to surprise Tina by doing the room up as a sort of little boudoir where she could have books and things and see her friends.

CHARLOTTE. (*Again bluntly*) You're more than kind, Delia; but Tina mustn't have a boudoir.

~~DELIA. Then I'll give up the idea.~~

**FOR A TIME**

~~(Again they work in silence; then CHARLOTTE lifts her head and speaks again.)~~

CHARLOTTE. You see that Tina has changed, don't you?

DELIA. (*Startled; looking up*) Changed? Since when? How?

CHARLOTTE. Since Lanning Halsey has been coming here so often.

DELIA. (*Disturbed*) But it's natural for him to come often since his cousin is married to Dee. Still—if you think it's because of Tina—we must face the idea.

CHARLOTTE. (*Grimly*) I do face it.

DELIA. (*Arrested by CHARLOTTE'S tone*) And you dislike him. I mean as a husband for Tina?

~~CHARLOTTE. (*Still grimly*) Tina cannot afford to pick and choose.~~

DELIA. (*Slowly*) But there's nothing against Lanning, is there? Except that he seems uncertain as to his choice of a profession.

CHARLOTTE. (*Evenly*) Uncertainty about a profession may cause uncertainty about other things.

DELIA. Charlotte. I don't understand you.

CHARLOTTE. Haven't you heard that he thinks of studying architecture in Paris?

(*Their glances clash.*)

DELIA. (*Uncomfortably; quickly*) No. I heard only that he was thinking of traveling for a year. But if ~~he's also thinking of asking Tina to marry him.~~

CHARLOTTE. (*Interrupting; sharply*) He's not thinking of asking Tina to marry him. How could he? He earns nothing; and his allowance will be stopped if he marries against his parents' wishes.

DELIA. (*Trying to think of some answer*) But—

CHARLOTTE. (*Interrupting her, and continuing evenly*) Unfortunately, my girl has no fortune and no name; and every careful mother we know has warned her sons against becoming interested.

DELIA. But, after all, Tina's happy with us. She doesn't need to marry anyone.

CHARLOTTE. (*Passionately; rising abruptly*) Tina an old maid? Never! My child shall have her life!

DELIA. But she's not yet twenty. Wait.

CHARLOTTE. Wait? But if *she* doesn't wait?

DELIA. Charlotte! Do you know what you're insinuating?

CHARLOTTE. Yes, I know.

DELIA. But it's outrageous! No girl who is decent—  
(*She halts suddenly, confused.*)

CHARLOTTE. (*Coolly*) Even nice girls are not always what you call decent.

DELIA. I can't imagine what is to be gained by saying such things—even by thinking them. Surely you trust your own child.

CHARLOTTE. (*With a short laugh*) My mother trusted me.

~~But she was quite weary of her attitude; then changing her tone to her casual dry one,~~  
CHARLOTTE continues as she puts her knitting away)  
But you look tired. I was forgetting that you had one of your headaches last night and didn't sleep. You must go to— (*Rises, crosses to Left, blows lamp out*) bed early.

DELIA. Yes, you're right.

CHARLOTTE. I don't want to keep you sitting up (*Crosses Left*) for my foolish girl.

DELIA. But why should you sit up for her, either? She has her key, and Dee is to bring her home. (*Puts work in box on table.*) (*WARN Curtain.*)

CHARLOTTE. Yes, as you say, why should anyone sit up for Tina? (*Crosses up Right.*)

~~Light.~~  
CHARLOTTE ~~stands Center, stiffly outlined in the red glow from the fire against the darkness of the room.~~

CHARLOTTE. When I was a girl, and lived with Grandmamma Lovell, I would have been very annoyed, I know, if anyone had sat up for me. But no one ever