

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

KAREN. Sit down, girls, I want to talk to you.

PEGGY. We're awfully sorry, really. We just didn't think and—

KAREN. I'm sorry too, Peggy. (*Thoughtfully*) You and Evelyn never used to do things like this. We'll have to separate you three.

EVELYN. Ah, Mith Wright, we've been together almost a year.

KAREN. Peggy, you will move into Lois's room, and Lois will move in with Evelyn. Mary will go in with Rosalie.

MARY. Rosalie hates me.

KAREN. I can't imagine Rosalie hating anyone.

MARY (*starting to cry*). And it's all because I had a pain. If anybody else was sick they'd be put to bed and petted. You're always mean to me. I get blamed and punished for everything.

(*To Cardin*) I do, Cousin Joe. All the time for everything.

(*Mary by now is crying violently and as Karen half moves toward her, Cardin, who has been frowning, picks Mary up and puts her down on the couch.*)

CARDIN. You've been unpleasant enough to Miss Wright. Lie here until you've stopped working yourself into a fit. (*Picks up his hat and bag, smiles at Karen*) I've got to go now. She's not going to hurt herself crying. The next time she faints, I'd wait until she got tired lying on the floor. (*Passing Mary, he pats her head. She jerks away from him.*)

KAREN. Wait a minute. I'll walk to the car with you. (*To girls*) Go up now and move your things. Tell Lois to get her stuff ready.

(*She and Cardin exit center. A second after the door is closed, Mary springs up and throws a cushion at the door.*)

EVELYN. Don't do that. She'll hear you.

MARY. Who cares if she does? (*Kicks table*) And she can hear that, too.

(*Small ornament falls off table and breaks on floor. Evelyn and Peggy gasp.*)

EVELYN (*frightened*). Now what are you going to do?

PEGGY (*stooping down in a vain effort to pick up the pieces*).

You'll get the devil now, Dr. Cardin gave it to Miss Wright.

I guess it was kind of a lover's gift. People get awfully angry about a lover's gift.

MARY. Oh, leave it alone. She'll never know we did it.

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

PEGGY. We didn't do it. You did it yourself.

MARY. And what will you do if I say we did do it? (*Laughs*)

Never mind, I'll think of something else. The wind could've knocked it over.

EVELYN. Yeh. She's going to believe that one.

MARY. Oh, stop worrying about it. I'll get out of it.

EVELYN. Did you really have a pain?

MARY. I fainted, didn't I?

PEGGY. I wish I could faint sometimes. I've never even worn glasses, like Rosalie.

MARY. A lot it'll get you to faint.

EVELYN. What did Mith Wright do to you when the clath left?

MARY. Told me I couldn't go to the boat races.

EVELYN. Whew!

PEGGY. But we'll remember everything that happens and we'll give you all the souvenirs and things.

MARY. I won't let you go if I can't go. But I'll find some way to go. What were you doing?

PEGGY. We came down to see what was happening to you, but the doors were closed and we could hear Miss Dobie and Mortar having an awful row. Then Miss Dobie opens the door and there we were.

MARY. And a lot of crawling and crying you both did too, I bet.

EVELYN. We were thort of thorry about lithening. I gueth it wathn't—

MARY. Ah, you're always sorry about everything. What were they saying?

PEGGY. What was who saying?

MARY. Dobie and Mortar, silly.

PEGGY (*evasively*). Just talking, I guess.

EVELYN. Fighting, you mean.

MARY. About what?

EVELYN. Well, they were talking about Mortar going away to England and—

PEGGY. You know, it really wasn't very nice to've listened, and I think it's worse to tell.

MARY. You do, do you? You just don't tell me and see what happens.

(*Peggy sighs.*)

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

EVELYN. Mortar got awful thore at that and thaid they juth wanted to get rid of her, and then they thtarted talking about Dr. Cardin.

MARY. What about him?

PEGGY. We'd better get started moving; Miss Wright will be back first thing we know.

MARY (*fiercely*). Shut up! Go on, Evelyn.

EVELYN. They're going to be married.

MARY. Everybody knows that.

PEGGY. But everybody doesn't know that Miss Dobie doesn't want them to get married. How do you like that? End ← ↖  
(*The door opens and Rosalie Wells sticks her head in.*)

ROSALIE. I have a class soon. If you're going to move your things—

MARY. Close that door, you idiot. (*Rosalie closes door, stands near it*) What do you want?

ROSALIE. I'm trying to tell you. If you're going to move your things—not that I want you in with me—you'd better start right now. Miss Wright's coming in a minute.

MARY. Who cares if she is?

ROSALIE (*starts for door*). I'm just telling you for your own good.

PEGGY (*getting up*). We're coming.

MARY. No. Let Rosalie move our things.

ROSALIE. You crazy?

PEGGY (*nervously*). It's all right. Evelyn and I'll get your things. Come on, Evelyn.

MARY. Trying to get out of telling me, huh? Well, you won't get out of it that way. Sit down and stop being such a sissy. Rosalie, you go on up and move my things and don't say a word about our being down here.

ROSALIE. And who was your French maid yesterday, Mary Tilford?

MARY (*laughing*). You'll do for today. Now go on, Rosalie, and fix our things.

ROSALIE. You crazy?

MARY. And the next time we go into town, I'll let you wear my gold locket and buckle. You'll like that, won't you, Rosalie?

ROSALIE (*draws back, moves her hands nervously*). I don't know what you're talking about.

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

MARY. Oh, I'm not talking about anything in particular. You just run along now and remind me the next time to get my buckle and locket for you.

ROSALIE (*stares at her a moment*). All right, I'll do it this time, but just 'cause I got a good disposition. But don't think you're going to boss me around, Mary Tilford.

MARY (*smiling*). No, indeed. (*Rosalie starts for door*) And get the things done neatly, Rosalie. Don't muss my white linen bloomers—

(*The door slams as Mary laughs.*)

EVELYN. Now what do you think of that? What made her tho agreeable?

MARY. Oh, a little secret we got. Go on, now, what else did they say?

PEGGY. Well, Mortar said that Dobie was jealous of them, and that she was like that when she was a little girl, and that she'd better get herself a beau of her own because it was unnatural, and that she never wanted anybody to like Miss Wright, and that was unnatural. Boy! Did Miss Dobie get sore at that!

EVELYN. Then we didn't hear any more. Peggy dropped a book.

MARY. What'd she mean Dobie was jealous?

PEGGY. What's unnatural?

EVELYN. Un for not. Not natural.

PEGGY. It's funny, because everybody gets married.

MARY. A lot of people don't—they're too ugly.

PEGGY (*jumps up, claps her hand to her mouth*). Oh, my God! Rosalie'll find that copy of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. She'll blab like the dickens.

MARY. Ah, she won't say a word.

EVELYN. Who getth the book when we move?

MARY. You can have it. That's what I was doing this morning—finishing it. There's one part in it—

PEGGY. What part?

(*Mary laughs.*)

EVELYN. Well, what wath it?

MARY. Wait until you read it.

PEGGY. It's a shame about being moved. I've got to go in with Helen, and she blows her nose all night. Lois told me.