

ERINE comes downstairs. In her large, placid way she is growing into a dignified and almost attractive woman. She is dressed in a filmy, pale dress, a little fussy perhaps, but effective and handsome. She carries a workbag of wools, needles, etc.)

CATHERINE. (Entering drawing-room.) I have found a whole batch of colors that might do. I hope the moths haven't been at them —

MARIA. (Looks at her, surprised.) Why, Miss Catherine, you have changed into one of your Paris gowns.

CATHERINE. Yes, Maria. (Sits at embroidery frame.)

MARIA. It is very lovely, Miss. And very becoming to you. You look quite handsome —

CATHERINE. (Coldly.) It is the coolest dress I could find.

MARIA. It's such a hot night, Miss Catherine, I think Cook and I might take a breath of air in the Square. Do you mind?

CATHERINE. No, of course not.

MARIA. Thank you. (About to leave.)

CATHERINE. And, Maria—you are as free in this house as I. When you want a small favor, you need not blandish me with false compliments.

MARIA. (Surprised.) Miss Catherine! I said what I meant! You *do* look handsome. . . . Doesn't she, Mrs. Penniman?

MRS. PENNIMAN. Yes, Maria.

CATHERINE. We will not discuss it. I know how I look. (She matches the wool at her embroidery frame.)

MARIA. (Looks helplessly at MRS. PENNIMAN.) Good night, Miss. (To MRS. PENNIMAN.) Thank you, ma'am. (CATHERINE pulls her frame closer to her and settles at her embroidery.)

CATHERINE. I enjoy my sampler now. It has come along beautifully this summer.

MRS. PENNIMAN. Would you not have liked to leave the city for a while, Catherine?

CATHERINE. No, Aunt.

MRS. PENNIMAN. But you are young, my dear. Resorts were meant for girls like you. And with your enlarged income you might have taken a lovely house by the sea.

CATHERINE. I prefer it here.

MRS. PENNIMAN. It worries me that you see so few people.

CATHERINE. I see the people I like.