

(She is climbing the stairs as ROSALIE comes into the room. MARY, lying in front of the couch, is hidden from her. Gingerly ROSALIE sits down on a chair)

MARY (Softly) Whoooooooo. (ROSALIE jumps) Whoooooooo. (ROSALIE, frightened, starts hurriedly for the door. MARY sits up, laughs) You're a goose.

ROSALIE (Belligerently) Oh, so it's you. Well, who likes to hear funny noises at night? You could have been a werewolf.

MARY A werewolf wouldn't want you.

ROSALIE You know everything, don't you? (MARY laughs. ROSALIE comes over, stands staring at puzzle) Isn't it funny about school?

MARY What's funny about it?

ROSALIE Don't act like you can come home every night.

MARY Maybe I can from now on. (Rolls over on her back luxuriously) Maybe I'm never going back.

ROSALIE Am I going back? I don't want to stay home.

MARY What'll you give to know?

ROSALIE Nothing. I'll ask Mamma.

MARY Will you give me a free T. L. if I tell you?

ROSALIE (Thinks for a moment) All right. Lois Fisher told Helen that you were very smart.

MARY That's an old one. I won't take it.

ROSALIE You got to take it.

MARY Nope.

ROSALIE (Laughs) You don't know, anyway.

MARY I know what I heard, and I know Grandma phoned your mother in New York to come and get you right away. You're just going to spend the night here. I wish Evelyn could come instead of you.

ROSALIE But what's happened? Peggy and Helen and Evelyn and Lois went home tonight, too. Do you think somebody's got scarlet fever or something?

MARY No.

ROSALIE Do you know what it is? How'd you find out? (No answer) You're always pretending you know everything. You're just faking. (Flounces away) Never mind, don't

bother telling me. I think curiosity is very unladylike, anyhow. I have no concern with your silly secrets.

MARY Suppose I told you that I just may have said that you were in on it?

ROSALIE In on what?

MARY The secret. Suppose I told you that I *may* have said that you told me about it?

ROSALIE Why, Mary Tilford! You can't do a thing like that. I didn't tell you about anything. (MARY laughs) Did you tell your grandmother such a thing?

MARY Maybe.

ROSALIE Did you?

MARY Maybe.

ROSALIE Well, I'm going right up to your grandmother and tell her I didn't tell you anything—whatever it is. You're just trying to get me into trouble and I'm not going to let you.

(Starts for door)

MARY Wait a minute, I'll come with you.

ROSALIE What for?

MARY I want to tell her about Helen Burton's bracelet.

ROSALIE (Sits down suddenly) What about it?

MARY Just that you stole it.

ROSALIE Shut up. I didn't do any such thing.

MARY Yes, you did.

ROSALIE (Tearfully) You made it up. You're always making things up.

MARY You can't call me a fibber, Rosalie Wells. That's a kind of a dare and I won't take a dare. I guess I'll go tell Grandma, anyway. Then she can call the police and they'll come for you and you'll spend the rest of your life in one of these solitary prisons and you'll get older and older, and when you're very old and can't see anymore, they'll let you out maybe with a big sign on your back saying you're a thief, and your mother and father will be dead and you won't have any place to go and you'll beg on the streets—

ROSALIE I didn't steal anything. I borrowed the bracelet



and I was going to put it back as soon as I'd worn it to the movies. I never meant to keep it.

MARY Nobody'll believe that, least of all the police. You're just a common ordinary thief. Stop that bawling. You'll have the whole house down here in a minute.

ROSALIE You won't tell? Say you won't tell.

MARY Am I a fibber?

ROSALIE No.

MARY Then say: "I apologize on my hands and knees."

ROSALIE I apologize on my hands and knees. Let's play with the puzzle.

MARY Wait a minute. Say: "From now on, I, Rosalie Wells, am the vassal of Mary Tilford and will do and say whatever she tells me under the solemn oath of a knight."

ROSALIE I won't say that. That's the worst oath there is. (MARY starts for the door) Mary! Please don't—

MARY Will you swear it?

ROSALIE (Sniffing) But then you could tell me to do anything.

MARY And you'd have to do it. Say it quick or I'll—

ROSALIE (Hurriedly) From now on, I, Rosalie Wells, am the vassal of Mary Tilford and will do and say whatever she tells me under the solemn oath of a knight. (She gasps, and sits up straight as MRS. TILFORD enters)

MARY Don't forget that.

MRS. TILFORD Good evening, Rosalie, you're looking very well.

ROSALIE Good evening, Mrs. Tilford.

MARY She's getting fatter every day.

MRS. TILFORD (Abstractedly) Then it's very becoming. (Door-bell rings) That must be Joseph. Mary, take Rosalie into the library. There's some fruit and milk on the table. Be sure you're both fast asleep by half past ten. (Leans down, kisses them both. ROSALIE starts to exit. Right, sees MARY, stops and hesitates)

MARY Go on, Rosalie. (Waits until ROSALIE reluctantly exits) Grandma.

MRS. TILFORD Yes?

MARY Grandma, Cousin Joe'll say I've got to go back. He'll say I really wasn't—

(CARDIN enters and she runs from the room)

CARDIN Hello, Amelia. (Looks curiously at the fleeing MARY) Mary home, eh?

MRS. TILFORD (Watching MARY as she leaves) Hello, Joseph. Sit down. (He sits down, looks at her curiously, waits for her to speak) Whisky?

CARDIN Please. How are you feeling? Headaches again?

MRS. TILFORD (Puts drink on table) No.

CARDIN Those are good powders. Bicarbonate of soda and water. Never hurt anybody yet.

MRS. TILFORD Yes. How have you been, Joseph?

CARDIN My good health is monotonous.

MRS. TILFORD (Vaguely, sparring for time) I haven't seen you the last few weeks. Agatha misses you for Sunday dinners.

CARDIN I've been busy. We're getting the results from the mating-season right about now.

MRS. TILFORD Did I take you away from a patient?

CARDIN No. I was at the hospital.

MRS. TILFORD How's it getting on?

CARDIN Just the same. No money, badly equipped, a lousy laboratory, everybody growling at everybody else—Amelia, you didn't bring me here to talk about the hospital. We're talking like people waiting for the muffins to be passed around. What's the matter with you?

MRS. TILFORD I—I have something to tell you.

CARDIN Well, out with it.

MRS. TILFORD It's a very hard thing to say, Joseph.

CARDIN Hard for you to say to me? (No answer) Don't be worried about Mary. I guessed that she ran home to tell you about her faint. It was caused by nothing but bad temper and was very clumsily managed, at that. Amelia, she's a terribly spoilt—

MRS. TILFORD I heard about the faint. That's not what is worrying me.