



"She had suddenly realized that Jack was right."

meant a paradise, that she was secretly longing for the things that I'm going to enjoy. Maybe I should try to have that happiness for her—partly."

The bullfrog was back again, watching the swaying ripples. The lily nodded over his head.

"Marcia, I want you to have that happiness, with Jack, more than anything in the world, if it's there for you. But—I'm afraid it isn't . . . ."

The girl sat upright. She challenged him with hurt alarm: "What can you mean, Vinny?" She was looking directly at him, her eyes piercing cold.

His voice took the soft tone he used while repeating the christening ritual. "I just believe—my sweet—that the founda-

tion that could have made that happiness possible is gone. You see, your biggest dream was that of being a surgeon. This other, this intellectual life, was just incidental to the real theme—only you've never realized it.

She protested. "But I've always wanted the richness of that kind of life, Vinny. I've wanted to lose the memory of these repugnant small-town jealousies; I've wanted to drown them in a new passion. It's impossible for me to study surgery. Every chance is gone. But I can have this smaller part of my dream anyway. Maybe I can suppress my old ambition into a passion for Jack's success. I hope so—I owe him . . . . that much."

The boy covered her left hand with both of his. "But my dear Marcia, this intellectual life would be too rich for you now. In your dreams you were a great surgeon, renowned and admired by the intelligentsia, but, as you are, only the people of this little town even know you.

"New York is a city for artists, and for people born there. It has drama and excitement—it throbs with life. And, it accepts all kinds of people. But it classes its people, Marcia, and you, I'm afraid, would be second-class. Second-class! Marcia." He felt her shiver.

"Nor could you accept that classification. All your life, in this little village, people have been looking up to you. They've fed your ego ever since you were born. To move, my dear, from throne to peasantry is more than you could stand. No—you've nursed here too long, and you're too old to wean."

Marcia flashed. "My place is with Jack, Vinny!" Her eyes smouldering, demanded that he believe her right. "It's my place to love him, spur him on. He needs the energy, my love will give, and I need the life he offers."

The boy sobered for a moment, and then vented, "Marcia, my dear, you and Jack both could live much more richly right here. Neither of you are artists. Jack will be a fine vignette writer, but his work will never bespeak genius."

"You are both simple intellectuals, with enough depth to enjoy the real soundness of life—not its ornaments. Oh! why do you have to go?" Vainly.

Vincent closed his eyes, completely spent—he could say no more. He felt so futile, so ineffective, when he tried to talk to Marcia this way. His words were impotent to her brain. She had always neutralized him somehow—something in her eye, the tilt of her head, the timbre of her voice, that thrust a numbing, sickening arrow into the thickened spirit of his feeling. And he had loved her so long—so hopelessly. That she respected him—enjoyed him—was for a time some compensation, but now even that was beginning to sicken. He was no more than a male sister to Marcia! He wanted love—complete, with no strings tied. Holy! couldn't she see that?

If she could only enjoy the little town like Penelope. Or if Penelope were only attractive like Marcia! Those caustic remarks about Penelope wasting her time in college! How literally awful she tried to make Penelope's keeping the Weir baby appear! Holy, didn't she know that there was only tenderness in that?

Oh! he wanted to tell her where she was wrong—but he couldn't. He wanted to open her eyes to the little families, living so harmoniously within themselves, to the shadows among the elm-cloistered walks, and to the beautiful sanctity of brightly-dressed children in Sunday School—all that she unconsciously loved, he knew, in spite of all protestations to the contrary. He wanted to tell her of the small-town Marcia that—instead of drowning in a sea of inactivity—would live and flourish, evolve ideas and carry them out for the good of the little city, and her own happiness. But—no use! She loved Jack . . . . so futile to argue . . . .

The days flew by swiftly, quite unnoticed by the people of

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