

and steps came up the first flight, steps and a broom trailing over the hard wood. The blood returned violently to its function, and Patty's feet were given wings. She turned and sped up the few stairs and into her own room as softly as a bird might have one, locked the door and dropped limply to the edge of her bed, staring around her room with its familiar objects as if to assure herself that she was really alive and the world was going on as usual.

She tried to rehearse to herself the dialogue she had heard on the stairs and to make out what it could possibly mean. Always had she known there was a barrier between herself and her mother, and of late she had suspected it extended to her sister also, but never had she thought it anything serious like this. Once when she was a little girl she remembered asking her father why her mother was not more "motherly," and he had smiled –

smiled with a sigh she remembered now – and said that it was just her undemonstrative nature, that she must not think because the mother did not kiss and fondle her that she was not loved; and she had always treasured that and tried to be satisfied with the cold formalities that had passed between them. But now – *this* – and Evelyn, too! It was beyond grasping! The only thing that seemed clear to her bewildered, hurt soul was that she must get away. Evelyn hated her and thought her trying to get away her lover. The only way to prove to her sister that this was not true was to go away and show them that she did not want any such thing. And she must go at once, quickly, before any one saw her.

Afterwards she could think what to do. Perhaps she could write to them and explain. She would have to think it out. But now she must get away.

She arose cautiously and gave a wild glance

around the room. Her pretty patent leather suitcase lay open on the window-seat half packed for a weekend house-party to which she and Evelyn had been invited. They were to have gone that afternoon. Now with a pang she realized that all the pleasant anticipations were impossible. She could never go and meet the friendly faces and know all the time that her own life was broken, degraded, unloved.

She caught up a few things that lay scattered about the room, tiptoeing about with no lighter tread than a butterfly would have made, and giving about as little heed to her packing. Anything that came in her way went in, and without much ceremony of folding. When it was full she shut it and hurried to the door. Her handsome silk umbrella lolled across a chair and she snatched that and went softly down the hall toward the back stairs, cautiously working her way to the second, and then to the first

floor, pausing to listen when she heard a servant coming, lest anyone should see her. She let herself out of the servants' side entrance and walked swiftly down the side street, turned the corner for a block and then took another side street, putting herself as quickly as possible out of her own familiar neighborhood, and reflecting that it was fortunate that she had been home so short a time that she would not be recognized by many, nor her absence seem noticeably startling. She could just slip away and leave the home and the whole field to Evelyn and they could say she was away and nobody would think anything about it. There would be no shame or disgrace for her father to face when he returned. She felt like a little mouse that had suddenly been dropped from a great height, so hurt and stunned that all she could do was to scuttle away and hide under a dark wall. That was what she wanted now, a dark

place to hide, where she might close her eyes and sob out the hurt and perhaps by and by think out the meaning of this terrible thing that had come to her.

Her own frank nature would have prompted her to go straight to her mother and sister and have a thorough explanation, perhaps be able to convince them that she had no such sinister designs as they were attributing to her, and that all she wanted was their love and a closer understanding. But there had been something so final, so irrevocable in the shock she had received that it seemed that there could be no mending, no possible explanation. There was nothing to do but get away as quietly and quickly as possible.

The crisp, clear air brought back a faint color into Patricia's cheeks, and took away a little of the bewilderment. She was able to summon a passing taxi and give directions to