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No. 5 Hamilton Place, Boston, Massachusetts

An Alarm of Fire

A Comedy in One Act

By

HELEN SHERMAN GRIFFITH

*Author of "The Scarlet Bonnet," "The
Wrong Miss Mather," etc.*



BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

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An Alarm of Fire

CHARACTERS

MRS. JORDAN, *the hostess.*
MISS KATHERINE JORDAN, *her daughter.*
MISS ELOISE JAMES, *a visitor.*
MISS ANNE LANE, }
MR. AMBROSE LANE, } *from a neighboring cottage.*
MR. ARTHUR GREY, }
MR. ALFRED FORBES, *a caller (who stammers).*
KATY, *the maid.*



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An Alarm of Fire

SCENE.—*Drawing-room of Mrs. JORDAN'S seaside cottage, simply furnished with wicker and cretonnes. Entrances back and each side; entrance right side draped as a French window leading to a veranda. Curtain rises on empty stage. Bell heard.*

Enter KATY, back, ushering in Mr. ALFRED FORBES, who lays his card on the silver salver KATY carries, without speaking. Exit KATY, back, with card on salver. FORBES stands, hat and stick in hand, facing audience.

FORBES (*stammering*). I'm g-g—(*whistling*) going to pro-pro-
propose to Miss J-J—Katherine to-night if I b-b-bust!
I'm not a b-b-b—not in the least nervous, but I'll rehearse my
sp-sp-sp—(*quickly*) what I am going to s-s-say. (*Strikes atti-
tude.*) My d-d-dear Katherine, I lo-lo—(*whistling*) lo-lo—
(*quickly*) am in love with you. Will you m-m-ma— Hang
it, I've g-g-got to say m-m-m—(*whistling*) marry! (*He lis-
tens.*) I think she's c-c-c-coming. Wh-what shall I say?
Oh, I'll p-p-pitch right in while it's on my t-t-tongue. (*Hears
some one enter.*) My dear Ka-ka-ka —

Enter KATY.

KATY (*cooly*). Yes, sir, Katy, sir. Did you wish to speak
to me, sir?

FORBES (*turning*). Oh, d-d—Jiminy! N-n-no, thank you,
Katy.

KATY (*disappointed*). Oh, very well, sir. Miss Jordan
will be down right away. She says would you mind waitin'
outside, sir, as the evenin' is so warm.

[*Exit back, with a little flounce.*

FORBES (*mopping his brow with his handkerchief*). It is
rather w-w-w—hot. I'll c-c-cool off outside.

(Exit R., onto veranda. Short pause, then sounds of slight scuffle and laughter off L.)

Enter MISS ELOISE JAMES, L., backward, as if being forced on.

ELOISE. Oh, Mr. Forbes, good-evening. Katherine wished me to say — (Turns.) Why, he isn't here!

Enter MISS KATHERINE JORDAN, L.

KATH. Of course he isn't, goose. I sent word for him to wait on the veranda. It will be easier out there.

ELOISE (*sympathetically*). Yes, it always is easier on a veranda.

KATH. By moonlight!

ELOISE. There isn't any moon.

KATH. There will be. It rises in an hour. (*Dreamily.*) And with the gentle sounds of the wavelets on the beach!

ELOISE (*dryly*). Lots easier. Particularly when you have to refuse him.

KATH. (*starting*). Refuse him?

ELOISE. Katherine, you don't mean to say you are going to marry a man who stammers? Why, I'd be st-st-stuttering all the t-t-time. I can hardly help it now. It's terribly c-c-catching.

KATH. (*offended*). You need not make fun of my Alfred.

ELOISE. Your Alfred! And yet you were trying to ward off the proposal!

KATH. I ward off the proposal?

ELOISE. Yes, by insisting upon my coming in here with you to —

KATH. (*glancing off R.*). Sh-sh—he'll hear you! I only wanted your support until I—well, until I got my nerve up.

ELOISE (*moving toward door L.*). Oh, of course, if you mean to take him —

KATH. (*hastily; drawing her back*). But I don't mean to yet. Please wait.

ELOISE. Katherine, think of it. A man who stammers! What will your mother say?

KATH. (*glancing off R.*). Sh-sh! (*Angrily.*) Well, I'd rather marry a man with a mild defect in speech than one with a name that every one puns on. When you are Mrs. Ambrose Lane —

ELOISE (*embarrassed*). Oh, Kathie!

KATH. (*inexorably*). You will give your name in a department store and walk off under the impression that you've given the address.

ELOISE (*pouting*). You mean thing!

KATH. And I suppose you'll name your home "Wayside," and all the little Lanes will be——

ELOISE (*angrily*). I shall not stay to hear another word! You are most unkind!

(*She moves toward door L., her handkerchief to her eyes.*)

KATH. (*pulling her back*). There, there, Elly dear, I was a beast! Please forgive me! Only don't say another word against Alfred. It makes me feel raging. (*Confidentially*.) I'll tell you a secret; I've heard of a splendid specialist who has cured hundreds of cases of stam——

(*Enter FORBES, R.*)

FORBES. I b-b-beg pardon, but I thought Ka-ka——

[*Exit ELOISE, softly, L., unnoticed.*]

KATH. (*quickly, coming forward with outstretched hand*). Oh, good-evening, Mr. Forbes. Please excuse me for keeping you waiting. But my friend and I—— You have met my friend, Eloise James, who is visiting me? Eloise, this is—— (*Turns.*) Why, she has gone! She will be back in a moment. (*Nervously.*) Sit down, won't you?

(*They seat themselves, quite far apart.*)

FORBES (*nervously*). Th-th-thank you.

KATH. (*awkwardly*). It is warm this evening, isn't it?

FORBES (*abstractedly*). Yes—yes—w-w-warm. (*Short pause.*) But not too w-w-w——(*quickly*) hot for the time of year.

KATH. No, I suppose not—of course not. Has the moon come up yet?

FORBES (*restless in his chair*). Not yet. The m-m-moonlight is lovely, isn't it, Miss J-J-Jordan? So—so sentimental.

KATH. (*rising*). Yes—ah—yes. (*Hastily and abruptly.*) Shall we go into the library, Mr. Forbes? My mother is in there and she will be so glad to see you.

FORBES (*rising*). Your m-m-mother? Not just yet, pl-pl-please! (*KATH. sits, looking off L., nervously.* FORBES seats himself again, somewhat nearer to KATH. FORBES,

embarrassed.) F-f-fact is, Miss J-J-Jordan, I—I—thought I'd like—like—like—well, to s-s-say something. I—I—I'll g-g-get at it presently. It's ——

Enter MRS. J., *back.* Sees FORBES and greets him with somewhat over-impressive cordiality, frowning aside. FORBES rises to return her greeting.

MRS. J. (*shaking hands*). Oh, how do you do, Mr. Forbes? It is a warm evening, isn't it? Have you been here long? No one told me that you had called. (*Aside.*) Poor man! So sad to have such an affliction! Katherine looks quite worn out with entertaining him. I'll help her. (*To FORBES, as he brings forward a chair.*) Oh, thank you so much. This is my favorite chair. I'll sit here by the light, thank you, where I can see to knit. Mr. Forbes, will you please fetch me my work-bag? It's that green one, over there on the back of that chair. (*Aside to KATH. as FORBES crosses to fetch bag.*) The thing to do, daughter, is to do all the talking ourselves. I'll help you. (*To FORBES.*) Oh, thank you. Yes, that's just right. Sit down. I like to have my fingers busy while I talk, don't you? ah—that is, men keep their brains so busy I suppose their fingers aren't needed. That is —(*as FORBES starts to say something*) ah—it's a warm evening, isn't it? We have had such a quiet day, to-day. This morning, right after breakfast, we—ah—let me see. Katherine, what was it we did right after breakfast this morning?

KATH. (*wearily*). How can you expect me to remember, mother? Mr. Forbes won't be interested in knowing what we did directly after breakfast, would you, Mr. Forbes?

FORBES. Oh, I f-f-f-feel intensely interested, I assure you. I th-th-th ——

MRS. J. (*hastily*). Oh, of course—we waited for the postman! (*KATH. smothers a yawn.*) Don't you remember, Katherine, that interesting circular that came about the great reduction sale of ——

KATH. (*warningly*). Mother!

MRS. J. (*recollecting herself*). Oh, to be sure! Ahem!—And the other circular, of the new pianola music. Mr. Forbes, our pianola is quite —— (*Enter KATY, back; speaks to MRS. J., aside. MRS. J., reluctantly.*) Oh, all right, Katy. I'll come at once. (*Puts her knitting back in bag. Exit KATY, back. MRS. J. rises and lays bag on table.*) I am very sorry, but I have to go and see the cook. It's her night

off, and she wants her orders for breakfast before she goes. Isn't it trying? I'm so sorry.

FORBES (*rising*). D-d-don't mention it.

MRS. J. (*moving toward door, back*). I'll return the very first second I can get away.

FORBES (*earnestly*). D-d-don't hurry, I beg!

MRS. J. (*at door, smiling and trying to catch her daughter's eye*). And I'll send Eloise right in.

[*Exit, back, smiling and gracious.*]

FORBES (*gloomily*). N-n-now w-w-why does she want to s-s-send M-M-M—(*whistling*) Eloise in? I say, Miss J-J-Jordan, just let me g-g-get going, won't you? I've g-g-got some—some—something awfully important to s-s-say to you! You know I l-l-love —

(*Sound of laughter and gay voices without.*)

KATH. (*rising hurriedly*). Oh, dear, I do believe a stupid lot of visitors are coming! I — (*Looks toward door R.*)

FORBES (*eagerly, looking R.*). C-c-couldn't we step out there? I—I—I w-w-want —

KATH. (*shaking her head*). It wouldn't be any use. Eloise knows that we are here, and they would all follow us out. Here they come.

Enter ELOISE, back, followed by MISS ANNE LANE, MR. AMBROSE LANE and MR. ARTHUR GREY.

ELOISE. Katherine, here are some visitors. Isn't it delightful? I met them on their way here as I ran out to post a letter.

(KATH. *shakes hands all round*. FORBES *greet*s ANNE and LANE; *they and ELOISE talk aside*.)

KATH. (*shaking hands with each in turn*). How do you do, Anne, Ambrose and you, too, Mr. Grey! (*Embarrassed*.) This is a surprise. When did you get down from town? Allow me to present Mr. Forbes, just down from town, too, for the week-end. Mr. Forbes, Mr. Grey. (*The two men bow stiffly*.) Mr. Grey, did they present you to my friend Miss James, who is visiting me?

ELOISE (*coming forward*). Oh, yes, we were introduced outside but (*archly*) perhaps I'd better let Mr. Grey have a good look at me in the light, so he will surely know me again. Introductions in the dark are sometimes apt to be embarrassing.

(*Steps forward, the centre of the group. GREY eyes her with approval.*)

LANE (*aside to ELOISE, jealously*). You'd better cut that out. It isn't safe, you know.

ELOISE (*affecting not to understand*). Not safe? What isn't? (*Turns and eyes GREY, who is talking to others.*) You mean *he* isn't safe?

(ANNE, KATH. and GREY talk animatedly. FORBES stands somewhat aloof, looking glum and out of sorts.)

LANE (*to ELOISE, attempting to be tender*). I mean that it isn't safe to invite a man—any man—to study your charms, Miss James. Any fellow in his senses would fall in love with you before you could have time to turn around.

(ELOISE laughs and says something aside.)

KATH. (*looking worried*). Suppose we all go out and sit on the veranda. It may be cooler there and—and —

ANNE (*kindly, helping her out*). And it will be so pleasant to watch the moon rise out of the water. Mr. Forbes, don't you love to watch the moon rise?

FORBES (*startled at being suddenly addressed*). I—I—I— (*Puckers his mouth for a whistle, then checks himself and says quickly.*) D-d-do you know, Miss L-L-Lane, I c-c-can talk very w-w-well when I get g-g-going. I—I—

ANNE (*kindly*). I am sure of it, Mr. Forbes. And you sing, too, don't you? Perhaps you will sing for us to-night?

KATH. (*joining them*). Yes—out on the veranda. Come.

(*Leads way to door R.; others follow. Enter MRS. J., back, bustling and gracious. Every one turns.*)

MRS. J. (*shaking hands all round*). Dear me, how nice! How good of you to come on such a warm evening. How glad I am to see you all! Mr. Grey (*significantly*), I am particularly glad to see *you* again. Have you come for long? I hope we shall see a very great deal of you.

GREY (*pleased by her cordiality and casting a meaning glance toward KATH.*). Your kind hope will certainly be gratified, Mrs. Jordan. You will see just about as much of me as you can bear! (*Laughs.*)

FORBES (*aside, forcibly*). D-d-d — (Whistles under his breath.) Hang it!

MRS. J. (*beaming*). Now, all of you, do come into the other room and hear my new pianola records. They came only this morning.

KATH. But, mother, we were just going out to sit on the veranda.

MRS. J. No, no. It is much better sitting around the piano. Then we can all listen to the music and no one need bother to talk on this warm evening. (*The young people move good-naturedly toward door L., except FORBES and GREY. MRS. J. takes FORBES'S arm.*) Mr. Forbes, I particularly want you to hear them; you are such a musician. Come.

(*Exit L., leading FORBES, who is reluctant. The rest follow except GREY and KATH.*)

KATH. (*nervously*). Come, Mr. Grey, Anne is waiting for you.

GREY (*looking off L.*). No, she isn't. She is in there, sitting quite contentedly beside Mr. Forbes.

KATH. (*starting*). Sitting contentedly beside Mr. Forbes? What do you mean? (*Looks off L.*)

GREY. Never mind. Miss Jordan, don't you know why I have come back here? Why I come back for every week-end that I can possibly manage to get an invite?

KATH. (*demurely, edging toward door L.*). Why, to visit your old college chum, to be sure, and his charming sister.

GREY. Miss Lane is charming, I admit—so will our friend, Forbes — (*Enter FORBES, L., hurriedly; collides with KATH., stammers and apologizes. GREY, aside, crossly.*) Speak of—you know who!

FORBES. Oh, I'm s-s-so sorry—m-m-most awfully s-s-sorry, I assure you. I—I—I —

KATH. (*laughing and adjusting her hair*). Oh, Mr. Forbes, is mother's new music so bad that you had to run away from it?

FORBES. N-n-no—no. Miss L-L-Lane dropped her han-handkerchief —

KATH. And you have come to look for it? I'll help you. Mr. Grey, do go in without waiting for us. Mother's feelings will be really hurt if so many of us stay away.

GREY (*stiffly*). Very well. But I shall see you later.

[*Exit, L., with dignity.*]

KATH. (*pretending to hunt for handkerchief*). I wonder if Anne really dropped it here?

FORBES. At l-l-last! Miss J-J-Jordan, I—I——

KATH. (*nervously*). Oh, Mr. Forbes, I'm so afraid some one will come—— I mean—do you suppose they would miss us very much if—if we went out and sat on the veranda? I should be so sorry to miss seeing the moon rise.

FORBES (*with alacrity*). The very thing!

(*Fairly springs across room and off R.*)

KATH. (*soliloquizing*). Oh, what shall I do? Shall I say yes? People seem to pity Alfred so! The hateful things! Why, I have often talked to him for whole evenings at a time, and he hardly stammered a bit. It is only when he's embarrassed or—or worried. (*Looks off R.; whispers.*) I love him! Oh, what will mother say!

MRS. J. (*heard without*). Katherine! Katherine!

(*KATH. listens in dismay, then tiptoes toward door R.*)

Reënter FORBES, R.

FORBES (*eagerly*). We shall be in time for the m-m-moon-rise. Come!

MRS. J. (*heard without*). Katherine—Ka-the-rine!

KATH. (*disappointed*). Oh, dear, mother is calling. I'm afraid I shall have to go. Oh, dear!

FORBES (*desperately*). C-c-can't we hide somewhere?

Enter MRS. J., L., followed by GREY, ANNE and ELOISE. They seat themselves in various parts of room. ANNE crosses to FORBES; they seat themselves side by side. MRS. J. seats herself beside table and opens her work-bag.

GREY (*crossing to KATH.*). You missed a very choice selection, Miss Jordan. Did you find the handkerchief?

ELOISE (*to KATH.*). Mr. Lane has gone home to fetch his banjo. We are going to sing some glees.

ANNE (*kindly, aside to FORBES*). And you can join us.

KATH. (*aside, crossly*). That sounds like Ambrose!

MRS. J. (*complacently, knitting*). Why don't you young people play some sort of game? When I was young we always played round games in the evening.

ELOISE (*seating herself beside Mrs. J.*). And just what is a round game, dear Mrs. Jordan?

KATH. (*aside*). Oh, can't I think of something to get them away? Anywhere—anything! If only there was an eclipse of a star or fireworks at the Casino! Mother is trying to keep Mr. Forbes and me from being alone together, but instead of breaking off the match she is helping me to make up my mind. I just will have Alfred, now! (*Aloud.*) Oh, mother, I've just thought of a jolly plan. Why can't we have a taffy pull? It's the cook's night out and it would be such fun! (*Moves quickly toward door, back.*) I'll start the taffy boiling at once, and call you all when it is ready to pull. Come, Mr. Forbes, and help me lift the heavy kettle.

(FORBES *moves toward door eagerly.*)

MRS. J. (*rising hastily and putting down her knitting*). Stay right where you are, Katherine, and entertain your guests. (*Gaily.*) I'll be "Polly" and "put the kettle on."

(*Exit, back, in a bustle. FORBES reseats himself gloomily beside ANNE.*)

ANNE (*sympathetically, aside to FORBES*). Dear Mr. Forbes, I see how the land lies, and I'll help you all I can.

(FORBES *smiles and gives her hand a grateful squeeze. KATH. sees.*)

KATH. (*aside*). Well, upon my word! Can I have been mistaken all this time? (*She crosses to GREY, her head high in air.*) Mr. Grey (*gushingly*), it was most awfully good of you to come all the way down to our quiet little cove, just for a week-end! I hope we can make it pleasant for you!

(*They talk aside, GREY earnestly, KATH. with nervous gayety.*)

Enter LANE, back, carrying banjo, followed in a second by Mrs. J.

MRS. J. (*heartily*). Now that is very nice, Mr. Lane. We'll just have time for one or two pretty little songs before the taffy boils. All you young people gather about in a circle and I'll be the audience.

(Reseats herself by table and takes up knitting. ELOISE and FORBES cross to LANE and seat themselves beside him. KATH. joins group.)

ANNE. Do you sing, Mr. Grey?

GREY (*crossing to ANNE*). I can come in strong on a chorus, but I am not much on solos.

(ANNE and GREY talk aside.)

LANE (*tuning banjo*). What shall it be?

ELOISE. Something rollicking to start off with. Don't you think so, Kathie?

KATH. (*to FORBES*). What sort of things do you like, Mr. Forbes?

(KATH. and FORBES talk aside.)

LANE (*in low tone, to ELOISE*). I wish I might sing the song that is in my heart.

ELOISE (*softly, dropping her eyes*). What would it be?

LANE (*tenderly*). There is only one song worth singing, Miss James—Eloise! "Love's Grand Sweet Song."

ELOISE (*glancing about apprehensively*). Hush, some one will hear you!

LANE (*softly*). But may I sing it some time—to you?

ELOISE (*shyly*). Oh, I—I—

MRS. J. (*briskly*). Aren't we going to have any music? Mr. Lane, if you want to take your banjo in to the piano, one of the girls will strike notes for you to tune it by.

LANE (*embarrassed and strumming at his banjo*). Oh, thank you, Mrs. Jordan, I think it is in tune now. (*He sits erect in chair.*) Now, everybody, what shall we sing first?

(*Every one is attentive.*)

ANNE. Some college song; something that all of us know.

GREY. How about "Co-Co-Che Lunk"? That is a good shouter.

(FORBES whistles:—"I was seeing Nelly home.")

LANE (*approvingly*). That's a good one, Forbes. Come on, we'll start off with that.

(*He plays a few chords on banjo. Every one commences to sing. KATY appears in doorway, her hair dishevelled and her apron half off.*)

KATY (*trying to speak calmly*). Oh, Mis' Jordan, please mum, I don't want to startle any of yez, but I think the old red barn's afire!

(*General excitement and confusion.*)

LANE (*dropping his banjo*). The old red barn on fire! And there's not a fire engine within ten miles!

GREY (*jumping up*). Then we must form a bucket brigade.

ELOISE. Oh, a fire is a terrible thing!

(*Covers her face with her hands.*)

KATH. And the red barn is so near the gardener's house!

MRS. J. (*wringing her hands*). And there are three little new-born kittens in that barn! They'll never be able to get out!

ANNE (*distractedly*). But why are we all standing here doing nothing? We must help put it out. Come, all of you! (*She moves toward door, back.*) Ambrose, you and the rest find all the buckets you can.

KATH. I'll fetch the buckets from the kitchen!

(*Rushes off, back.*)

LANE. I'll go to our house for more. Come along, Arthur, it's a short cut this way.

(*LANE and GREY rush off, R.*)

FORBES. I—I—I think a f-f-fire-extinguisher the best!

(*Rushes off L., unnoticed.*)

ANNE (*at door, excitedly*). Come on, Eloise!

(*ANNE and ELOISE rush off, back.*)

MRS. J. (*laboriously gathering up rug from floor*). I've always heard that it was a good thing to smother a fire. This will help.

(*Exit back, panting and breathless as she carries rug. Short pause.*)

Enter FORBES, L., carrying a large, heavy fire-extinguisher. He does not notice that he is alone.

FORBES. H-h-here, you f-f-fellows, lend a hand. This'll p-p-put out any fire on record if it's w-w-worked right. I — (*Looks around.*) Why, they've all g-g-gone!

Enter KATH., back, carrying a bucket in each hand.

KATH. (*excitedly*). Here are two buckets, and Katy has run on ahead with two more. I—oh, Mr. Forbes! Why, where are all the rest?

FORBES. They m-m-must have g-g-gone.

KATH. (*advancing and eyeing fire-extinguisher*). Where in the world did you get that?

FORBES. I remembered s-s-seeing it in the d-d-dining-room and took the l-l-liberty of f-f-fetching it. No one else s-s-seemed to have th-th-thought of it.

KATH. (*fondly, aside*). How well he talks when he is not thinking of himself! (*To FORBES.*) That is the very thing for putting out the fire. How very clever of you to have thought of it! Come, let us use it.

FORBES (*placing fire-extinguisher carefully on floor*). Oh, Miss J-J-J-Jordan, not just yet! W-w-wait a second, I b-b-beg. I have waited ye-ye—weeks for this moment. I—I—I must speak!

KATH. (*looking toward door over her shoulder*). Oh, Mr. Forbes!

FORBES (*drawing a deep breath and speaking very fast*). I l-l-love you; will you m-m-m—hang it—marry me?

KATH. Oh—Mr. Forbes! (*FORBES moves toward her; she retreats.*) Look out for the buckets. I—I thought you cared for—were interested in—in Anne Lane.

FORBES (*in astonishment*). I interested in M-M-Miss Lane? Wh-wh-whatever m-m-made you think that?

KATH. (*coldly*). The proof of my own eyes, sir. I saw you together just now.

FORBES (*puzzled and upset*). Saw us together? Saw us w-w-what?

KATH. (*trying to be angry*). If you will have the truth, sir, why, I saw you take her hand and squeeze it, here in this very room, sir!

FORBES. I? S-s-squeeze Miss L-L-Lane's h-h-hand? W-w-why — (*He suddenly remembers.*) Oh, I—I—I—why, Katherine, she was g-g-giving me hope! She s-s-said she'd h-h-help us! (*He holds out his arms.*)

KATH. (*hesitating*). Is that really so?

FORBES. On my h-h-honor! I l-l-love you pas-pas—tremendously, darn it!

KATH. (*going close to him*). Oh, Alfred! (FORBES *embraces her, buckets and all, and stumbles against the fire-extinguisher*. KATH. *draws back*.) Oh, dear, don't you think we'd better be going to the fire? The rest will wonder what has become of us.

FORBES. And they may be needing this. (*Picks up heavy extinguisher with an effort*.) I am ready to go to the e-e-ends of the earth now, my darling.

KATH. (*archly*). You mean that you will go through fire and water for me? (*She picks up her buckets*.)

FORBES (*ardently*). Again and again! And through all the o-o-other elements! (*Sound of voices outside*. KATH. and FORBES *look at each other in dismay*.) That s-s-sounds as if they were c-c-coming back!

KATH. Can the fire have been put out already? Have we been here as long as that? Oh, what will mother say?

(*Moves close to FORBES's side*.)

FORBES. I'll explain to your m-m-mother, dearest. D-d-don't be afraid.

KATH. I'm not afraid, only—only—— (*Enter MRS. J., back, carrying a garden watering pot; she is out of breath and hot looking. Enter ELOISE and LANE, each carrying a bedroom crockery pitcher. Enter GREY and ANNE, he carrying the rug Mrs. J. had carried off, and ANNE carrying a small glass pitcher. KATY brings up the rear of this melancholy procession with a kettle in one hand and a broom in the other. All are silent and sheepish looking, KATY, in the background, the most abashed of all. KATH., embarrassed*.) You don't mean to say that you've put it out already? We were coming with this (*pointing to fire-extinguisher which FORBES still holds*), only it is terribly heavy and we had to walk slowly——

ELOISE (*demurely*). How very slowly you must have been walking, Kathie, not to have started yet.

FORBES. Is the f-f-f—(*whistling, then quickly*) the conflagration out?

MRS. J. (*wearily, sitting down in chair*). There wasn't any fire.

KATH. } (*together*). No fire!
FORBES }

(*Every one shakes their heads, shamefacedly. Then ELOISE begins to laugh.*)

ANNE (*coming forward*). The fact is, Katherine, Katy saw the moon, quite big and red, rising behind the barn and she thought it was a fire. Tell them about it, Katy.

KATY (*injured*). Sure, an' it had every appearance of a fire, mem. It happened this way, ye see. I was settin' on the kitchen step, lookin' at the fine night an' thinkin' I'd soon be havin' to go in an' stir the candy, when all of a sudden somethin' takes my eye. The old red barn, over to the lift of us, ye all know, kinder took on a look o' bein' redder 'n it should be by rights. Well, thinks I to meself, what's come to the old red barn, thinks I, an' before I could think any farther there was a red light blazin' out through the windys of it. I was allus one fer actin', I was; no settin' still an' thinkin' fer me! So I ses to meself, "Bless my petticoat if the red barn ain't a-fire!" ses I. So I comes in, quiet like, and give the alarm. I'm rale sorry it wa'n't a rale fire, ladies an' gentlemen. Sure, an' I meant well.

FORBES (*heartily*). It's the b-b-best mistake you ever m-m-made in your l-l-life, Katy!

(*He and KATH. smile at each other. Others exchange significant glances.*)

KATY. Thank you, sir. (*To Mrs. J.*) I think if you'll excuse me, mem, I'll just step out to the kitchen an' see if the candy's b'ilin' over. [*Exit, back.*]

MRS. J. (*springing to her feet*). Oh, my stars, I forgot all about the taffy! (*Moves toward door, back.*)

FORBES (*aside to KATH.*). I'm all r-r-right now, I've g-g-got g-g-going. (*To Mrs. J., detaining her.*) M-m-madam, allow me to m-m-make a little s-s-speech. I'm not much g-g-good at t-t-talking until I get g-g-going, but Mrs. Jordan, your d-d-daughter has made me so h-h-happy this evening, that I f-f-feel as if I could t-t-talk forever! (*Wipes his forehead with his handkerchief.*) It is a w-w-w-hot evening, isn't it?

(*KATH. crosses to her mother and whispers. The men shake hands with FORBES, the girls cluster around KATH.*)

KATY (*appearing at door, back*). Please, Mis' Jordan, the candy's all b'iled down to nothin' and the cook'll scold some-

thing awful fer spoilin' her saucepan ; but oh, my, the moon's shinin' out over the water somethin' grand !

LANE. Hooray ! Come on, all. Let's go out and take another try at putting out the moon.

(He and ELOISE move toward door, R.)

FORBES *(taking KATH.'s hand)*. You have already put out the m-m-moon and all other l-l-light for me, except your own d-d-dear eyes !

MRS. J. *(in dismay)*. Well, upon my word ! *(Tableau.)*

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