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BAKER'S EDITION
OF PLAYS

AN OPEN SECRET.



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BOSTON

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AN OPEN SECRET

A Farce in Two Acts

BY

MARIAN D. CAMPBELL

BOSTON:

Walter H. Baker & Co.

1898

PS 1252
C4307

CHARACTERS.

- MADGE APTHORPE *A college girl*
- JEAN *Her confidante*
- MRS. APTHORPE *Her mother*
- GRACE APTHORPE *Her sister, aged ten*
- EDITH }
- ELINOR } *Classmates of Madge*
- CARRIE }
- MAY }
- KATE }
- AGATHA MEADE *A girl not in the secret*

Time in playing, forty minutes.

17994 COSTUMES.

White duck skirts and shirt-waists for the girls. Mrs. Apthorpe black silk, with small bonnet and lorgnette. Grace, a short dress, broad hat on the back of her head, and hair braided in two tight pig-tails.

PROPERTIES.

Two screens, a quantity of sofa-cushions, five college caps and gowns, books, tables, and chairs, a tea-kettle, a step-ladder, a picture, writing-paper, pen and ink, etc., lamp, table-covers.



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NOTE. — As first written, this play was intended for the "Emmanuel" club of Radcliffe College. The topical hits in it can be made to fit the nearest seminary or college.



AN OPEN SECRET.

ACT I.

SCENE. — *A student's room in the Radcliffe dormitory, very barely furnished. MADGE is seated at a table, R., busily writing notes, which she seals and stamps with a determined air. Enter JEAN with a cheerful expression. On perceiving MADGE'S occupation, she stops short and watches her for a moment.*

JEAN (*suggestively*). Invitations to a spread?
(MADGE *shakes her head, and continues her writing still more rapidly; JEAN reflects.*)

JEAN. Deutsche verein? Cercle Français? Science club? Class-day committee? Advertising agency for the glee club?
(MADGE *shakes her head more and more impatiently. JEAN sinks despairingly into a chair.*)

JEAN. Madge, have you lost your wits, or are you addressing circulars for a firm?

MADGE (*impatiently*). Oh, *do* keep still, Jean. You've just made me say I was decomposing, when I meant I was discomposed. Here, you're welcome to any amount of this literature.

(*She tosses a bundle of notes over to JEAN, and continues her writing.*)

JEAN (*reads*). "My dear Mr. Meade: Would you be willing to lend me a few of your rugs, and some sofa-pillows? I will take the best possible care of them, and return them by Saturday night. It would be delightful if you could get them here by Wednesday evening. Hoping that it will not be too much trouble, I remain, very sincerely yours, Madge Apthorpe." (JEAN *opens another letter and reads.*) "My dear Tom" — (*Looks surprised.*) Is it all right for me to read this, Madge?

MADGE (*looks up from her writing*). Oh, yes; keep right on. If you come to anything you ought not to see, just stop.

JEAN (*continues*): "Dear Tom: I'm going to ask rather a favor of you, but I am very much in hopes you will not think it too much. Will you please send me the furniture of your room? You don't need to send all the books; a few lexicons and some Sanscrit grammars will do nicely; but I should like your window-

couch, if you can have it removed at such short notice. Please let me know at once when you can get them here. As ever, A. M. P.S. I'd like a cap and gown, too, please."

JEAN (*aloud*). Madge, what are you trying to do? (*She starts to open another letter.*)

MADGE. You needn't bother about reading any more, my style shows a striking similarity.

JEAN. But what *do* you mean?

MADGE. Oh, yes. I forgot you didn't understand. It's just this. My family—where's the letter— (*She searches about her table, and pushes a pile of books and paper off on the floor.*) I guess I've lost it. Never mind—my family are coming to visit me. In fact, they expect to arrive on Thursday, and *this is Tuesday.*

JEAN. That's nice. But what has it to do with these men and their furniture?

MADGE (*firmly*). Had it struck you that this room resembled an anchorite's cell?

JEAN (*politely*). Why, no, dear; that is—er—it's—it's—*very* airy, and the sun shines in pleasantly, and—er—

MADGE (*dryly*). Oh, extremely. I didn't mean the natural beauties, but the furniture.

JEAN (*doubtfully*). Yes, the furniture.

MADGE. Or, to be more accurate, the lack of furniture, may strike my mother as peculiar, when she gave me two hundred dollars last fall for the express purpose of fitting up my rooms.

JEAN. Was *that* the money—?

MADGE. Hush, my dear! To be brief, I found other uses for it, which I have not thought best to communicate to my family. Clearly, at this time, an explanation would be awkward. I saw but three ways out of the difficulty. First, to produce the money, which was impossible; second, to borrow the money, which was impracticable; and third, to borrow everything else, which is exactly what I'm proceeding to do.

JEAN. But why on earth didn't you explain something of this to these men? They'll take you for a raving lunatic.

MADGE. Oh, no, they won't, my dear, being more or less accustomed to my little ways. Besides, it's one of my cardinal mottoes, "Never explain anything to a man." It takes trouble, and then, when you get through, they *always* knew all about it a lot better than you did; and so you don't get thanked.

JEAN. But you might have asked the girls for things.

MADGE. Ye-es, I suppose I might; but, Jean, what's the use of having men if you don't make them useful? Besides, they appreciate you so much more if you're a lot of trouble. There! (*Sealing the last note.*) One, two, three, four, five, six, seven—where are those other two?—nine. I think I've asked every man I know for everything he possesses. Now I'll post 'em, and see what the results will be. (*Exit MADGE.*)

JEAN. Results! I should think so! If I let her collect furniture from all over Harvard Yard, she'll get into an awful mess. She's always getting into messes, and this will be the worst one yet. I'll tell the girls about it, and we'll see what they can do for her.

(Exit JEAN.)

(Re-enter MADGE, yawning.)

MADGE. Oh, dear! I feel as if I needed some relaxation after this severe mental strain. I think I'll go down to the reading-room and peruse the "Review of Reviews" and the "Ladies' Home Journal." (Looks at her watch.) Horrors! Twenty-two minutes before twelve, and my English thème is due at noon. (Rushes to the table and takes up her pen.) Now, let's see. Scenery descriptions are the easiest things to do in a rush, for you can stop anywhere and it seems appropriate—in fact, rather a welcome relief. (Writes.) "'Tis moonlight. In the sky the bright stars glisten." That doesn't sound particularly original, but I guess it will do. (Writes.) "On the bank the pale moon shone." (Repeats with an air of deep satisfaction.) "Pale moon—on the bank the pale moon shone." What bank? Indefinite. I'll have to scratch that out. (Erases.) Oh, dear, what happened next? I can't send in any more "two-line impressions," for that unfeeling instructor has got tired of writing "concise," and now he labels them "feeble." (Reads it over to herself, and shakes her head.) Seems to me it's time something occurred. Oh, yes! My own impressions. (Writes.) "An icy tremor seizes me"—which it truthfully does, for it's nearly quarter to twelve. (Writes.) "Fear grasps me in its vicious vice—opalescent transcendance etherealizes." There! I don't know what that means, so it certainly must be good. (Writes.) "Soft, dewy, and resplendant, the sun rises over the house-tops." I wonder if it's time for the sun to rise yet? The moon is only four commas and a semicolon back—oh! I forgot the punctuation. (Inserts it with a flourish.) There! I do like the effect of four question marks and an exclamation point in a row. It gives such an air of style to the page. Now, let's see. (Writes.) "A lethargy is over me"—which means I don't want to get up. That's too plain—it has no relieving shadows. (Scratches out.) "The magnitude of forces is parallel." I wonder how you spell parallel—make them all the same size, I guess. (Writes.) "Let me try to properly express my feelings—properly let me try to express my feelings—let me properly try to express my—properly let me try to express"—Oh, dear! I thought the English language was simple until I studied Hill's Rhetoric. (Writes.) "I am alone. Around me all is still." (A crash outside.) Gracious Peter! what is that noise?

(Another crash outside R. MADGE rises hastily from her chair, and exit, L. Enter hurriedly from R., in procession, CARRIE with piano-lamp, EDITH with rug and some books, MAY with table,

ELINOR *with small armchair*, KATE *with another chair and a small rug*. They set everything down in the centre of the stage, with the rug underneath, in a mess, and then draw a long breath of relief.)

CARRIE. Now, the first thing to do is to get something on the floor.

(CARRIE, EDITH, and MAY begin moving everything off the rug, and piling it at the back of the stage. KATE and ELINOR go out, and come back with a couple of screens, which they lean against the wall at the back.)

EDITH. Now, I know just exactly how I want this rug fixed.

CHORUS. Yes; so do I.

(Each girl takes hold of one corner of the rug, and lifts it off the floor.)

EDITH (*giving it a pull*). Now, it wants to go just this way.

ELINOR (*pulling it*). No; it wants to go over this way.

EDITH. No; it wants to look artistic. It ought to come over this way, and lie at an angle.

KATE (*pulling it in still another direction*). No, it doesn't either — want to be artistic. We don't want the room to look as if we'd just fixed it up for Madge's mother.

MAY. Well, it looks very untidy that way, anyhow.

CARRIE. Well, if it looked tidy, it wouldn't look like Madge's room, that's sure.

ELINOR. Let's put it down this way.

CHORUS. No, *this* way.

(Each girl pulls the rug in a different direction, and tries to walk off with it. The rug comes up off the floor, and is carried around the front of the stage in a circle.)

ELINOR. Don't let's play ring-around-rosy with it any longer.

CHORUS. Let's put it down just here.

(Each girl puts down her corner, and stands on it. Then they scrape out the wrinkles with their feet.)

EDITH. That's just where I wanted it in the first place.

(KATE and CARRIE go out, and come back with two big armfuls of sofa-pillows. MAY is fixing books on a table, R., and EDITH tries to pull the rug without noticing her. MAY loses her balance, and tumbles over.)

MAY (*indignantly*). What did you do that for?

EDITH. Oh, I beg your pardon. I was fixing the rug.

MAY. Well, that wasn't a rug, that was me. Don't you know me from a rug. I won't do another thing.

(CARRIE comes in with small table, which she sets against the wall, L., and goes off. MAY and KATE retire to the back of the stage. EDITH comes along, seizes CARRIE'S table, sets it out at an angle from the wall. CARRIE enters with a lamp. Sees EDITH, puts the lamp down on the floor, hurries over, and puts the table back again.)

EDITH. O Carrie, don't put it that way. Don't you see it doesn't look artistic?

CARRIE. I don't care about your old artistic. I'm going to have it my way.

(EDITH tries to pull it out. CARRIE pushes it back and sits down on it.)

KATE. Now I'll show you what'll be the handsomest thing in the room.

(She takes one of the screens, brings it down to the front of the stage, opens it, and sets it just in front of the foot-lights. Then she puts up the other just beside it. Just then ELINOR looks up from the sofa-pillows she is arranging.)

ELINOR (laughs). I feel as if I were in the gymnasium.

EDITH. Looks as if we were trying to hide a folding bed. That won't do.

(ELINOR and EDITH step inside the screens, fold them up, and walk off inside them to the back of the room. MAY and KATE sit down on chairs, R., and confide in each other. EDITH sets every piece of furniture at a different angle, and CARRIE follows her, setting them straight again. In the midst of it wanders ELINOR, humming "Sweet Marie" to herself, and piling a heap of sofa-pillows on every chair and table.)

KATE (struck with an idea). Don't you think we'd get along better if we had er — less — somehow?

IDIGNANT CHORUS. { Why, no, of course not.
We're getting along beautifully, etc.
It's just what we need.

EDITH (with an air of explaining things). And then, if we had less, we wouldn't have so much — don't you see?

MAY. But did you ever see such looking walls — they're so bare. Come on, Kate, and I'll get my "Angelus."

(Exit MAY and KATE.)

EDITH. There, now they're gone, we'll get something done.

(They set a table in the middle of the room, and arrange four or five chairs and two more tables in a semicircle around it. ELINOR places two of her sofa-cushions on each chair.)

ELINOR. You don't think there are too many lamps, do you?

CARRIE (*firmly*). Certainly not. Six is *none* too many for a student's room. But I think we could get along with a few less sofa-pillows, Elinor, my dear.

ELINOR (*indignantly*). Certainly not. You can't possibly have too many. They give an air of tone to the room. I read it in the "Ladies' Home Journal."

EDITH. There, I think the room is getting to look really home-like — and artistic.

(*Re-enter MAY and KATE, with step-ladder and picture. They push aside the other girls' arrangement of furniture, and set up the ladder in the middle of the room. The other girls rush to pick up the things with cries of dismay.*)

KATE (*cordially*). Now, May, I'll hold it while you climb up.

MAY (*enthusiastically*). Oh, no, dear; let me hold it for you. I'd just as lief.

KATE. No, really, I shouldn't want to trouble you.

MAY. But you can climb so much better than I.

KATE. Oh, no, I can't. You're so much lighter on your feet, you know. Besides, I'm stronger to hold it up if it should tip, you know. (*She tries to help MAY up the first step.*)

MAY. Oh! (*Screams and starts back.*)

KATE. If I should tip, and you should be underneath it, it would come right down on top of you. I'd *much* better hold it.

(*MAY gingerly gets up one step. The ladder begins to shake suspiciously. She grasps KATE by the neck or hair, as convenient.*)

MAY (*tenderly*). O Kate, dear, I can't bear to have you underneath me so. I — I might come right down on top of you. (*Persuasively.*) Don't you want to climb up, Edith?

EDITH (*quickly*). Oh, no, thank you, dear. I — I'm *so* busy. Besides, you know so much more about picture-hanging than I do. I'll help Kate hold it.

(*MAY begins to climb up. She steps on her dress, and she has to hold that up. KATE takes hold of one of her hands, and tries to help her up.*)

MAY (*screaming as the ladder shakes*). O Kate, dear, I'm *so* afraid I'll fall. I'd crush you if I did. (*She tries to come down, but KATE and EDITH resolutely assist her up. When she reaches the top she sits down with an air of relief, and finds the ladder in the middle of the room; indignantly.*) Well, what on earth am I to hang things on, I should like to know, now you've got me all the way up here? (*Every one begins to laugh.*)

EDITH. Well, it's your own fault. I should think any one would know better than to put the ladder in the middle of a room.

MAY (*rapidly coming down; indignantly*). Well, who put the ladder in the middle of the room? Did I put the ladder in the middle of the room?

CARRIE (*sitting on table, L.; jeeringly*). Who wouldn't know better than to put the ladder in the middle of the room?

MAY. All right; hang it up yourself then.

CARRIE. You sit on this table so Edith can't move it, and I will.

(*They move the step-ladder to the back of the room. CARRIE takes the picture, and climbs up.*)

CARRIE. Now you stand off there, and tell me when it's right.

EDITH. Yes, we will. To begin with, that's too low. (CARRIE *moves it.*)

CHORUS. That's too high. (CARRIE *moves it.*)

CHORUS. That's too far to the right. (CARRIE *moves it.*)

EDITH. { Move it up a little.

MAY. { Set it down more. } (*Together.*)

ELINOR. { Too far over at one side. } (CARRIE *moves it.*)

KATE. That's too high.

MAY. } (*Together.*) That's too low. (CARRIE *moves it.*)

EDITH. } That's too far to the left.

CHORUS. } That's too far to the right.

(CARRIE *lets go the picture.*)

CARRIE. Well, you girls can come up and hang it yourself. I won't bother with it any more.

KATE. Why, it's upside down!

CHORUS. I *knew* something was the matter with it.

MAY. How do *you* like picture-hanging, Carrie?

CARRIE. Well, I managed to hang it up on something, and that was more than you did, anyway.

(*Enter MADGE.*)

CHORUS (*confused*). O Madge, we heard about your mother coming, and so we thought we'd surprise you. Jean told us you didn't know what to do, and so we got all our things together — and May got the step-ladder in the middle of the room — and Carrie hung it up on — Edith doesn't want to — May do anything, and we —

(MADGE *puts both hands over her ears, and rushes to the front of the stage. CARRIE'S voice rises above the din.*)

CARRIE. And so we brought up all our things to make the room look nice.

MAY. There's lots more coming.

(*Bumping on the stairs outside.*)

ELINOR. That's Tasco falling up-stairs with them now.

MADGE. But, girls —

EDITH. Now, my dear, you just sit still, and make yourself comfortable.

MAY. We'll have the room in order in no time.

(*A tremendous knocking at the door. Very deep voice roars, "Package for Miss Apthorpe from Mr. Meade." A large bundle appears at the door. CARRIE picks it up and brings it to MADGE, who sits down on the floor and looks at it, shaking her head. The girls gather around her.*)

EDITH. Open it, quick!

CARRIE. What is it, candy?

ELINOR (*hopefully*). Flowers?

MADGE (*laconically*). More.

MAY. More what? Where from?

MADGE. *Men!*

(*Girls look at each other, surprised, and murmur "men!"*)

MADGE. I'd forgotten all about it. What shall we do? There isn't room enough to walk now.

ELINOR. Oh, we'll see about it. Never mind.

(*Girls open parcel, and scatter the rugs, etc., about.*)

EDITH (*consolingly*). We'll just put them up on top somewhere.

(*Loud knocking. Voice announces, very loudly, "Package for Miss Apthorpe." Edge of a large piece of furniture is pushed in.*)

CARRIE. What on earth is that?

MADGE. It's the window-seat I asked for. I forgot I hadn't any window to put it in.

EDITH. Well, let it stay out in the hall then.

ELINOR. There's no room for it in here.

CHORUS. Push it out! Push it out!

(*The girls all take hold of the edge, and begin to push. As fast as they get it nearly out of the door, it is pushed way in again.*)

MADGE (*desperately*). Some one go and make that man take the thing away. I can't stand any more of it.

MAY. Kate, you go out and settle with Tasco. I haven't the courage.

(*Exit KATE. The girls form a line before the door and listen. Sounds of dispute in the hall. Gruff voice rises and sinks, then KATE'S voice; then voice gruffer than before, a clatter, and the sound of departing feet. Re-enter KATE.*)

MAY. How did you get rid of him?

KATE. Oh, I suggested that the fire in the library was smoking, and I'd seen his wife looking for him to fix it. He had to go down to Cambridgeport on an errand right away. (*Girls all laugh.*) Doesn't the room look great?

EDITH. If there were only room enough to move, I think it might.

(The girls try to sit down. They find the chairs covered with sofa-cushions. Each girl in succession picks up the cushions from her chair, and lays them on the table in the centre.)

MADGE. It's perfectly great, girls, and I'm ever so much obliged. *(She removes a lamp, a tablecloth, and a pile of books from a chair, and sits down.)* Now, if I can only remember that May's pen isn't to be written with under any circumstances, and that none of the lamps have any oil in them, and that Kate's chair isn't to be sat in, because the legs are rickety, I think I'll get on nicely. I'm ever so much obliged.

(Knocking at the door opposite. Bell rings.)

MAY *(jumps up)*. Oh, there's luncheon! Good-by!

MADGE. Good-by. Thank you ever so much.

CHORUS. Good-by! Good-by!

MADGE. I'm ever so much obliged.

ELINOR. Oh, we haven't done very much.

MADGE. Oh, you've done a great deal, thank you.

(Exeunt girls.)

(Voice announces, "Parcel for Miss Aphthorpe." A big newspaper parcel is pushed into the room, bursting open as it comes.)

MADGE. What's this? There isn't room enough for another thing. Oh, dear, the cap and gown! *(She gets down on the floor, and begins to rummage in a mass of black things.)* One, two, three, four, five, six. I wonder how many Tom thinks there are of me? *(Reads from tags.)* "27 Holworthy, 76 Matthews, 32 Grays, stolen from 14 Ware." I wonder whether he meant me to wear them all at once, or in single file? I suppose I might as well try them on. *(Puts on one which trails behind on the ground for a foot. The cap comes down over her ears. She takes it off, and tries on another, which comes just below her knees. She perches the cap on one side of her head, and looks at herself in the glass.)* I wonder if mamma would think that looked academic. *(Takes it off and kneels down near the footlights, begins to rummage among the gowns again. Then she stops and laughs.)* Here's the gown of the great big father bear, and here's the gown of the little baby bear. Now, if I could only find the gown of the medium-sized mother bear, I think I'd get along nicely.

CURTAIN.

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ACT II.

SCENE. — *Same as Act I.* MRS. APTHORPE and GRACE discovered alone in MADGE'S room. GRACE wanders about the room with her hands in her jacket pockets, casually but cheerfully investigating everything. MRS. APTHORPE examines things with a less approving air.

MRS. APTHORPE. I might have known that Madge wouldn't spend that money to advantage. Look at this dark red carpet and pale green table-cover.

(*Enter ELINOR, bursting in with a tea-kettle in one hand, not seeing MRS. APTHORPE.*)

ELINOR. O Madge, I thought you ought to have a tea-kettle, and I knew Mr. Meade wouldn't get his here on time, and — (*Suddenly catches sight of MRS. APTHORPE, and tries to conceal the tea-kettle behind her.*) I beg your pardon, Mrs. Apthorpe. (*Very effusively.*) How do you do? I am so glad to see you. (*MRS. APTHORPE tries to shake hands; ELINOR has to shift the tea-kettle into the other hand behind her back.*)

MRS. A. This is — ?

ELINOR. Elinor Spencer.

MRS. A. So glad to meet you, Miss Spencer. I've so often heard Madge speak of you. Won't you sit down?

ELINOR. No, thank you; I'm in a great hurry. (*Aside.*) I wonder how I am going to get out of the room without turning my back.

(*GRACE edges suspiciously around at one side, trying to find out what ELINOR is holding; a loud noise of thumping is heard in the hall.*)

ELINOR. There! that's my lecture. I must go. You see that's — that's the new way of calling us to lectures. (*A knocking at the door.*) The professor goes out and thumps, and — and — (*she gets somewhat incoherent*) — once for English, twice for Latin, three times for Greek — and so on. I think this must be for Sanscrit —

MRS. A. Dear me, how interesting —

VOICE (*rather indistinctly*). Package for Miss Apthorpe —

MRS. A. What was that?

ELINOR. I think the instructor is getting impatient. I really must go. (*She bows herself out without turning her back.*)

MRS. A. What singular manners these Radcliffe girls have. But I don't wonder, if the professors have such peculiar ways and such voices. I should think the noise in the halls would disturb the classes.

GRACE (*with an air of conviction*). It was a tea-kettle, mamma.

MRS. A. (*absently*). What was a tea-kettle, my dear? Now I should think it would be much better for the girls to know what time the lectures were going to be and to go to them, instead of being collected like laundry bundles; but I suppose I don't understand social life at Radcliffe.

(GRACE *sits on the table and swings her feet meditatively.*)

GRACE. Yayah! That was a tea-kettle, and there was a package in the hall. Why did that girl go out backward, mamma?

MRS. A. I'm sure I don't know, my dear. Perhaps it was gymnastic exercise. I wonder where Madge is —

GRACE. I should think if they always did gymnastic exercises that way, they would bump into each other. Why don't they, mamma?

MRS. A. Grace, get off that table at once; I'm ashamed of you.

(*Enter MADGE, unperceived at the back.*)

MADGE. Now for it. I hope I look innocent and happy. I don't feel it. (*Coming forward.*) Why, mother, where did you come from. I didn't expect you so early. (*Aside.*) That isn't a lie, at any rate.

(*MADGE and her mother embrace. Then MADGE and GRACE.*)

MADGE (*throwing books on the table*). I've just come from a — a — Latin recitation. So sorry I wasn't here to meet you —

(*GRACE wanders over and begins to examine the books which MADGE has just put down.*)

GRACE. Why, mamma, here are the Dolly Dialogues.

MADGE (*turning toward her*). Why, Grace dear, how you've grown. (*Gently removes the books from GRACE'S hands.*) Don't you think she has, mother?

MRS. A. (*surprised*). Why, no, not particularly, in three months. (*Aside.*) I hate to hurt her feelings, but I really must speak about the arrangement of this room. It's atrocious. What could she have been thinking of to get such things.

(*As MADGE turns away from GRACE, her gown, which is much too large, and not fitted at all behind, sags and flops as she walks, and catches her mother's eye.*)

MRS. A. My dear Madge, where did you get that gown?

MADGE (*absently*). I think it's the one from 26 Matthews — that is — it's — it's —

MRS. A. Did you have it made to order at the best place, as I told you to?

MADGE. Yes — er — that is it *came* by special order. (*Aside.*) There's some truth in that in any case.

MRS. A. I don't think it could have been a good dressmaker.

MADGE (*with absorbed interest*). Grace, dear, come tell me how you are getting on with your piano-lessons.

MRS. A. Why, my dear, Grace has not had a piano-lesson for three years.

MADGE. Oh — er — yes — I meant the — er — the violin, or (*desperately*) the cornet, I believe.

MRS. A. (*aside*). I am sure that Madge is injuring herself by over study. She's not at all herself.

(GRACE wanders about, opening books, pulling at drawers, and looking in corners. She finds one or two notes from men which she reads in an undertone. MADGE watches her uneasily, while she tries to talk with her mother; knock; enter cheerfully AGATHA MEADE, a girl not in the secret.)

AGATHA. O Madge, I came to ask about the plans for — but you are busy, I see. (*Stopping short.*) Isn't that Edith's dreadful lampshade that her aunt sent her at Christmas?

MADGE (*trying to stand between her and other things*). Yes; she wanted to try it with a pale green table-cover.

AGATHA. Nothing could make it look well. But (*looking past MADGE*) how did you come by a sofa-pillow just like my brother's?

MADGE. Could you come at six to talk over things? Good-by — good-by — good-by!

AGATHA (*astonished*). Yes. (*Exit.*)

MRS. A. There seems a lack of cordiality in your manner, Madge, which I don't like; but, let me see — we were talking about your gown, were we not? Now, suppose I go to the dressmaker with you; I am sure there must be some mistake.

(*Tries to fix it; MADGE twitches uneasily, still watching GRACE.*)

MADGE. Oh, no, mother dear; I — I wouldn't bother you for the world. Besides, it's all right. They all do that way. (*Aside.*) That is, all that Tom sent me did. (*Aloud.*) What a pretty dress you have on, Grace. Come here and let me see it.

(GRACE reluctantly saunters over to MADGE, who puts her arm round her; GRACE objects.)

MRS. A. (*aside; gazing about the room*). To think that a daughter of mine should put a bright pink lampshade and a dark yellow one on a pale green table-cover. (*Aloud.*) Madge, my dear, where did you get that table-cover?

MADGE (*confused; lets go of GRACE*). I guess that's Kate's. That is — er — Kate chose it, you know.

MRS. A. Well, Kate has very bad taste.

GRACE. Madge, what are all these different names in the books — Ralph Meade, Robert Morse, Tom —

MADGE. Grace, will you please let my books alone. I'm — I'm afraid your hands aren't clean.

GRACE. Oh, yes they are; I washed them yesterday. I've got my gloves on too. (*Continues.*)

(*Knock; enter KATE hastily.*)

KATE. Well, Madge, is it over? (*Seeing family.*) Ah — oh — no, I mean — excuse me — (*Hastens out.*)

MRS. A. Another queer but apparently worthy girl. She seemed anxious about you, Madge —

MADGE. Yes; she probably wanted to ask about my hour examination. I've been having one, you know, and for some reason she thought I might not get through.

MRS. A. These are really very handsome rugs. Now what is he make?

(*Stoops to pick up a corner of the rug.*)

MADGE (*aside*). And Tom's name is on the under side just at that corner. (*Laying her hand on the rug; aloud.*) I — I wouldn't, other. You — you might raise a dust. It — it's some time since was swept — *PLÉ*

MRS. A. But, my dear Madge, don't you know that is very healthy —

GRACE (*picking up the corner*). Oh, no, it isn't dusty; and here's the name of the maker right here — "Tom Hereford, 26 Matthews."

MADGE (*aside*). It's all over now, so here goes. (*Aloud.*) Oh, I remember now, that was where it came from. You see, mother, I —

MRS. A. Why, my dear, did you get it second-hand?

MADGE. Why — er — that is, yes, mother — at least, no. (*Aside; mopping her brow.*) I never realized before that the hardest part of crime is getting out of it. I've got to stick it out.

H (*Aloud.*) O mother, don't you want to read my daily themes? Here's a pile of them in the rough draft. (*Sweeps a pile of manuscripts into her mother's lap, and starts after GRACE.*)

MRS. A. (*putting up the lorgnette; reads*). "My dear Mr. Madge, would you lend me a few of your rugs and some sofa-pillows?" Here's something scratched out. (*Reads slowly.*) "I want them Thursday" — a blot — "return them Saturday." What a very peculiar daily theme.

(*Knock.*)

VOICE. Package for Miss Apthorpe.

(MADGE hurries to the door. Her mother turns from reading the "daily.")

MRS. A. Madge, my dear.

MADGE (*hastily stuffing the package behind the sofa*). Yes, mother.

(GRACE dives behind the sofa after the bundle.)

MRS. A. Is this the usual style of daily ?

(GRACE *emerges, dragging the bundle after her.*)

MADGE. Why, yes; I think so. (*Seizing the letter from her mother's hand with sudden horror.*) Oh, yes — that is — er — special exercises in composition. It's in Barrett Wendell, you know.

GRACE (*aside, tugging at the string*). I wish I had a pair of scissors.

MRS. A. Is it, truly? Now I should have thought anybody could write a letter like that. Is all Ballet Windall like this, my dear?

GRACE (*in triumph*). There! I bit it open.

(MRS. APTHORPE and MADGE *turn to face a mass of rugs, picture and teapots over which GRACE is rummaging.*)

MRS. A. Madge!

MADGE (*sinking into a chair and casting her cap on the floor*). My doom is sealed!

GRACE (*picking up the cap*). And here's the same name in cap that there was on the rug —

MADGE (*aside*). If I don't get even with you.

MRS. A. Will you explain what is the meaning of this, and why you find it necessary to borrow furniture from strange young men when I gave you money for your furnishing last fall?

MADGE. Mother, I spent it — otherwise.

MRS. A. (*stiffly*). For what?

MADGE. In the lunch-room for buns.

(MRS. APTHORPE *shakes her head, and looks at MADGE solemnly through her longrette.*)

MADGE. I took the junior class to the Castle Square. (MRS. APTHORPE *still shakes her head.*) I bought Victor Hugo in nine seven volumes for French.

MRS. A. There are but fifty-three volumes, my dear.

MADGE. Mother, I *cannot* tell a lie; I gave it to the scholarship fund.

(MRS. APTHORPE *shakes her head and is about to speak* w

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