

ADDIE: Miss Birdie, that elderberry going to give you a headache spell.

BIRDIE: (*Beginning to be drunk. Gaily*) Oh, I don't think so. I don't think it will.

ALEXANDRA: (*As HORACE puts his hand to his throat*) Do you want your medicine, Papa?

HORACE: No, no. I'm all right, darling.

BIRDIE: Mama used to give me elderberry wine when I was a little girl. For hiccougths. (*Laughs*) You know, I don't think people get hiccougths anymore. Isn't that funny? (*BIRDIE laughs. HORACE and ALEXANDRA smile*) I used to get hiccougths just when I shouldn't have.

ADDIE: (*Nods*) And nobody gets growing pains no more. That is funny. Just as if there was some style in what you get. One year an ailment's stylish and the next year it ain't.

BIRDIE: I remember. It was my first big party, at Lionnet I mean, and I was so excited, and there I was with hiccougths and Mama laughing. (*Softly. Looking at carafe*) Mama always laughed. (*Picks up carafe*) A big party, a lovely dress from Mr. Worth in Paris, France, and hiccougths. (*Pours drink*) My brother pounding me on the back and Mama with the elderberry bottle, laughing at me. Everybody was on their way to come, and I was such a ninny, hiccougthing away. (*Drinks*) You know, that was the first day I ever saw Oscar Hubbard. The Ballongs were selling their horses and he was going there to buy. He passed and lifted his hat—we could see him from the window—and my brother, to tease Mama, said maybe we should have invited the Hubbards to the party. He said Mama didn't like them because they kept a store, and he said that was old-fashioned of her. (*Her face lights up*) And then, and then, I saw Mama angry for the first time in my life. She said that wasn't the reason. She said she was old-fashioned, but not that way. She said she was old-fashioned enough not to like people who killed animals they couldn't use, and who made their money charging awful interest to ignorant niggers and cheating them on what they bought. She was very angry, Mama was. I had never seen her face like that. And then suddenly she laughed and said, "Look, I've frightened Birdie out of the hiccougths." (*Her head drops. Then softly*) And so she had. They were all gone. (*Moves to sofa, sits.*)

ADDIE: Yeah, they got mighty well-off cheating niggers. Well, there are people who eat the earth and eat all the people on it like in the Bible with the locusts. And other people who stand around and watch them eat it. (*Softly*) Sometimes I think it ain't right to stand and watch them do it.

BIRDIE: (*Thoughtfully*) Like I say, if we could only go back to Lionnet. Everybody'd be better there. They'd be good and kind. I like people to be kind. (*Pours drink*) Don't you, Horace; don't you like people to be kind?

HORACE: Yes, Birdie.

BIRDIE: (*Very drunk now*) Yes, that was the first day I ever saw Oscar. Who would have thought—You all want to know something? Well, I don't like Leo. My very own son, and I don't like him. (*Laughs, gaily*) My, I guess I even like Oscar more.

ALEXANDRA: Why did you marry Uncle Oscar?

ADDIE: That's no question for you to be asking.

HORACE: (*Sharply*) Why not? She's heard enough around here to ask anything.

BIRDIE: I don't know. I thought I liked him. He was kind to me and I thought it was because he liked me too. But that wasn't the reason—(*Wheels on ALEXANDRA*) Ask why *he* married *me*. I can tell you that: he's told it to me often enough.

ADDIE: Miss Birdie, don't—

BIRDIE: (*Speaking very rapidly*) My family was good and the cotton on Lionnet's fields was better. Ben Hubbard wanted the cotton and Oscar Hubbard married it for him. He was kind to me, then. He used to smile at me. He hasn't smiled at me since. Everybody knew that's what he married me for. (*ADDIE rises*) Everybody but me. Stupid, stupid me.

ALEXANDRA: (*To HORACE, softly*) I see. (*Hesitates*) Papa, I mean—when you feel better couldn't we go away? I mean, by ourselves. Couldn't we find a way to go?

HORACE: Yes, I know what you mean. We'll try to find a way. I promise you, darling.

ADDIE: (*Moves to BIRDIE*) Rest a bit, Miss Birdie. You get talking like this you'll get a headache and—

BIRDIE: (*Sharply*) I've never had a headache in my life. (*Begins to cry*) You know it as well as I do. (*Turns to ALEXANDRA*) I never had a headache, Zan. That's a lie they tell for me. I drink. All by myself, in my own room, by myself, I drink. Then, when

they want to hide it, they say, "Birdie's got a headache again"—

ALEXANDRA: (*Comes to her*) Aunt Birdie.

BIRDIE: Even you won't like me now. You won't like me anymore.

ALEXANDRA: I love you. I'll always love you.

BIRDIE: (*Angrily*) Well, don't. Don't love me. Because in twenty years you'll just be like me. They'll do all the same things to you. (*Begins to laugh*) You know what? In twenty-two years I haven't had a whole day of happiness. Oh, a little, like today with you all. But never a single, whole day. I say to myself, if only I had one more *whole* day, then—(*The laugh stops*) And that's the way you'll be. And you'll trail after them, just like me, hoping they won't be so mean that day or say something to make you feel so bad—only you'll be worse off because you haven't got my Mama to remember—(*Turns away, her head drops. She stands quietly, swaying a little, holding to the sofa.*)

ALEXANDRA: (*To BIRDIE*) I guess we were all trying to make a happy day. You know, we sit around and try to pretend nothing's happened. We try to pretend we are not here. We make believe we are just by ourselves, someplace else, and it doesn't seem to work. (*Kisses BIRDIE'S hand*) Come now, Aunt Birdie, I'll walk you home. You and me. (*She takes BIRDIE'S arm. They move slowly out.*)

BIRDIE: (*Softly as they exit*) You and me.