

THEODORA. (*Entering the room. She too is dressed in night-gown and robe.*) I was doing my nails, silly. Did you think the goblins got me? (*She crosses to c. of the area, holding up her hands, with fingers spread.*) See—red. I love decorating myself. Someday I'll paint myself all over.

ELEANOR. (*Laughing.*) With gold paint, no doubt.

THEODORA. (*Loftily.*) Nail polish and perfume. And maybe mascara. Don't laugh. You should think more about such things yourself.

ELEANOR. No time.

THEODORA. (*Shaking her head.*) Poor Nell. I shall take you in hand and make a different person out of you. I don't like being with women of no color. (*Menacingly.*) Maybe I'll put red polish on your toes—right now.

ELEANOR. (*Backing away with a laugh.*) Oh no you won't! (*She sits on the bed.*)

THEODORA. (*Crossing towards her.*) Surely a famous courtesan like yourself is accustomed to the ministrations of hand-maidens. (*She holds her hand out expectantly. Eleanor curls her feet under her.*)

ELEANOR. I can't . . . I hate having things done to me.

THEODORA. (*Dropping her hand.*) Well, you're about as crazy as anyone I ever saw.

ELEANOR. (*Looking away.*) I don't like to feel helpless. My mother . . .

THEODORA. (*Breaking in.*) Your mother would have been delighted to see you with red toenails.

ELEANOR. (*Looking at Theodora.*) It's wicked. I mean on my feet. It would make me feel like a fool.

THEODORA. (*Sitting beside her.*) You've got foolishness and wickedness mixed up. (*Teasing.*) Just think how pleasantly surprised Dr. Montague and Luke would be.

ELEANOR. (*Pettishly.*) No matter what I say, you make it seem foolish.

THEODORA. (*Looking at Eleanor.*) Or wicked. (*Seriously.*) You know what I think, Nell? I think that you ought to go home. (*She gets up.*)

ELEANOR. (*Upset.*) I don't want to go. Why should I?

THEODORA. (*Turning to her. Quietly.*) Because you're still afraid. And you have been ever since we've been here.

ELEANOR. (*A note of desperation in her voice.*) No. I was an idiot this afternoon, about the rabbit. It was a surprise, that's all. It's only that I'm tired. I'm not used to driving as far as I did today. (*She looks anxiously at Theodora.*)

THEODORA. (*After a moment, with understanding.*) You do look pale. You should be in bed. I'll go to my room. (*She turns.*)

ELEANOR. (*Suddenly.*) Don't go, not yet. Couldn't we talk awhile? I think I'm too restless to sleep right away.

THEODORA. (*Smiling.*) Of course. (*She crosses back to the foot of the bed and sits.*) Matter of fact I think we'll all have lots of chance for rest while we're here. Just between us, I think it's going to be pretty dull.

ELEANOR. (*Pulling her knees under her chin.*) We'll find plenty to do in the morning.

THEODORA. At home there would be people around, and lots of talk and laughter. Lights and excitement—that's for me.

ELEANOR. (*Seriously.*) I suppose I don't need such things. There never was much excitement while I was taking care of Mother. When she was asleep I'd play solitaire or listen to the radio. I couldn't read in the evenings, not after reading aloud to her every afternoon. Her illness went on for so many years.

THEODORA. (*Sympathetically.*) You make me feel foolish now. Shallow and selfish.

ELEANOR. Why should you?

THEODORA. Because I worry about there being nothing to amuse me. Tell me how horrible I am.

ELEANOR. (*Obediently.*) You're horrible.

THEODORA. But you are sweet and pleasant, and everyone likes you very much. Luke has fallen in love with you—and I'm jealous.

ELEANOR. (*Amused.*) What nonsense.

THEODORA. Not at all. Now I want to know more about you. Did you really have to take care of your mother for a long time?

ELEANOR. Eleven years, until she died three months ago.

THEODORA. Were you sorry when she died? Should I say how sorry I am?

ELEANOR. (*Quietly.*) No. She wasn't very happy.

THEODORA. And neither were you.

ELEANOR. (*Nodding.*) And neither was I.

THEODORA. What about now? What did you do when she died?



ELEANOR. Sold the house, and everything else that my sister didn't want.

THEODORA. Everything?

ELEANOR. Just as soon as I could.

THEODORA. (*Gaily.*) And then you started the mad, gay fling that brought you inevitably to Hill House?

ELEANOR. (*Dryly.*) Not exactly.

THEODORA. (*Surprised.*) But after all those wasted years. Didn't you go on a cruise, or look for exciting young men, or buy new clothes,—something?

ELEANOR. Unfortunately there wasn't much money. I did buy some new clothes. To come to Hill House.

THEODORA. What about when you go back? Do you have a job?

ELEANOR. No, no job right now. I don't know quite what I'll do.

THEODORA. I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to turn on every light in the apartment and just bask. (*She gets up.*)

ELEANOR. What is your apartment like?

THEODORA. (*Sbrugging.*) Nice. It's an old place, but we fixed it up ourselves, my roommate and I. We painted it red and white and made over a lot of old furniture we dug up in junk shops. We both love doing over old things. (*Pause.*) Tell me where you live.

ELEANOR. (*Slowly, with uncertainty.*) I have a little place of my own. Like yours, only I live alone. I'm still furnishing it, buying things one at a time so they'll be just right. Everything has to be exactly the way I want it, because there's only me to use it. Right now I'm looking for a blue cup with stars painted on the inside. I had one when I was a little girl. When you looked into it, after the milk was all gone, it seemed full of stars. I want a cup like that again.

THEODORA. ~~Maybe I'll find one for you. Then I can send it to you. Someday you'll get a little package saying "To Eleanor, with love from her friend Theodora," and it will be a blue cup full of stars. (*Pause.*) But right now Theodora is sleepy. What do you say to bed time?~~

ELEANOR. I wonder if the others are in bed?

THEODORA. Most likely. The Doctor's probably reading a horror story—for relaxation.

ELEANOR. I'll bet their doors are locked. Mine is.

THEODORA. (*Crossing towards the D. R. door.*) Mine, too. But

~~I'll leave this one ajar. If you feel the least bit nervous call out, promise?~~

~~ELEANOR. I will. And Theo? Thank you for talking. It won't really be dull here. Not if we have each other to talk to.~~

~~THEODORA. (*Smiling.*) Good night.~~

~~ELEANOR. Good night. Sleep tight. (*Theodora exits D. R., leaving the door ajar behind her. Eleanor takes off her robe and drapes it over the end of the bed, crosses to the bureau as if to put out the light, then hesitates and decides to leave it on. She gets into bed and pulls up the covers. After she has composed herself for sleep the light on the bureau dims slowly to denote the passage of time. Then Eleanor begins to toss about, murmuring to herself, as though having a nightmare. Her words become louder and more distinct. As she calls out in her sleep the bureau light gradually comes up again.*) Coming, Mother, coming. (*Louder.*) It's all right, I'm coming. (*Frantically.*) Just a minute—I'm coming! (*She tosses about feverishly.*)~~

~~THEODORA. (*Off R.*) Eleanor?~~

~~ELEANOR. (*Sitting up suddenly, her eyes open wide in terror.*) Coming, Mother—I'm coming!~~

~~THEODORA. (*At the door, D. R.*) Eleanor—did you hear it?~~

~~ELEANOR. (*Coming into focus.*) What? What? Theodora?~~

~~THEODORA. (*Crossing to the bed.*) Was it just my imagination? Didn't you hear it?~~

~~ELEANOR. (*Confused.*) Hear what? What's wrong?~~

~~THEODORA. (*Calmly.*) Something is knocking on the doors. (*Eleanor reacts in fright.*) Down at the other end of the hall. (*She senses Eleanor's fear.*) I didn't mean to upset you—probably the Doctor and Luke are there already to see what's going on. It just . . . surprised me, that's all. I was fast asleep.~~

~~ELEANOR. (*Holding up her hand for silence, she listens attentively. Then in a small voice.*) Theodora, it's getting closer.~~

~~THEODORA. (*Moving closer to Eleanor.*) Only a noise, that's all it can be. (*Puzzled.*) Listen, it has an echo. (*They both listen closely. From off U. R. comes a distant, hollow, thumping sound, as though the doors were being hit with an iron kettle, or iron bar. There is a pattern of regular thumping for a minute, then a soft tapping, and finally a quick flurry of energetic, impatient pounding. The cycle is repeated on each door—coming gradually nearer.*)~~