

KATHRYN. You shoulda seen it, Grace! The church was filled with flowers. Lilies and carnations and orchids. You know how Amelia loved orchids.

IRENE. They weren't orchids.

KATHRYN. They were orchids, Irene.

IRENE. Flags.

KATHRYN. Orchids. I know an orchid when I see one. Purple orchids. Oh, and that smell. Grace—that smell. What was that smell, it was like, like—

GRACE. Flowers?

KATHRYN. No. It was like—heaven. I was gonna say, it was like heaven.

IRENE. Like heaven? Kathryn: It was just a funeral. Ya make it out like it was some Valentino picture.

KATHRYN. It wasn't just a funeral. It was Amelia's. And it was beautiful. Ya shoulda seen it. The church was like...the botanical gardens...and the company sent a big spray of flowers, too. Carnations.

IRENE. Mums.

KATHRYN. Yellow carnations.

IRENE. Those were mums.

GRACE. Well it sounds like a nice service anyhow.

*(Enter MACNEIL.)*

MACNEIL. Girls, girls! The whistle's already gone. Now, then. I've received new instructions this day. We're going back to the old way of pointin' the brushes. We was losin' too much paint in the cloth. *(She collects the cloth. As she does the GIRLS point the brush on their lips. GRACE hesitates.)*

GRACE. But—

MACNEIL. Yes, Grace? Something ya wish to say?

GRACE. Dr. Von Sochocky told me not to do that. He said it's—unsanitary.

MACNEIL. Unsanitary? Well, I can't hardly believe he'd say such a thing. We've done this as long as I've been here. Ya must've misunderstood him.

GRACE. Yes ma'am. *(GRACE surrenders the cloth and tips the brush on her lips.)*

MACNEIL. And you're not to get new brushes until you've done with the old. And they got to be so bad they can't get a point no more.

KATHRYN *(to IRENE)*. Ya can't make quota like that!

MACNEIL. Well, you'll do your best, then. Since I have my instructions.

IRENE. I need a new brush. *(MRS. MACNEIL looks at the brush, then gives IRENE another.)*

MACNEIL. It's not for us to be askin' questions, is it? It's for us to do the work. *(MACNEIL moves away, and the GIRLS set to painting, pointing the brushes on their lips as they proceed.)*

KATHRYN. I have my instructions, girls, I have my instructions.

IRENE. Here's an instruction for you, MacNeil: Let some of the starch outta yer corset. *(KATHRYN laughs.)*

GRACE. Was she at the service?

IRENE. MacNeil? Are you kidding? Y'think she'd cross the street for her own mother?

KATHRYN. Most everybody else was, though. You was about the only girl from the floor who wasn't there.

GRACE. I wanted to come. But Ma was workin' and I had to watch the little'uns.

KATHRYN. Ya coulda brought 'em.

GRACE. All seven?

KATHRYN. Well if it was me, I'da tried to get there.

IRENE. Just lay off. Grace feels bad as it is.

GRACE. Were many of the fellas there?

KATHRYN. Oh yeah—lots of fellas from downstairs. Mr. Roth from the front office. Dr. Von Sochocky was there. And Mr. Roeder.

IRENE. And he left early.

KATHRYN. So? He was there all the same. Oh! And, Grace—you know that fella from crystalizing, what's his name, the one with the red hair? He was there. Y'know who I mean?

GRACE. Oh! The tall fella with the freckles?

KATHRYN. That's the one—who snaps his fingers all the time.

GRACE. George!

IRENE. Jerry.

KATHRYN. I think it is George.

IRENE. It's Jerry. Jerry Mallon. He's the one who was always talkin' to Amelia in the day room.

KATHRYN. That's right! Ooh, Grace! When the mass was over, he goes over to the coffin— And he goes like this, like this he goes— *(She puts her hand to her lips and slowly blows a kiss to an imaginary coffin.)*

GRACE. No!

KATHRYN. Yes!

GRACE. Really?

KATHRYN. Really! *(They both squeal excitedly.)*

IRENE. Oh for pity's sakes.

KATHRYN. Well, he did. Nobody could believe it.

IRENE. So what if he did?

KATHRYN. So what? He was in love with her, that's so what. Don't you think so, Grace?

GRACE. Well I guess he had to be. If he did that.

KATHRYN. And can you imagine? Can you imagine? If he loved her and he never told her, never could bring himself to say! Because...because she was *so* beautiful...and...and he was *so* shy. And now it's too late. It's too late, their love is forever thwarted. He didn't tell her, and he'll never get a chance ever again. *(They reflect on this realization somberly.)*

GRACE. Poor Amelia.

KATHRYN. Poor Amelia!

IRENE. Poor kid.

KATHRYN. Her family took it awful bad, Grace. Albina, Quinta, everybody. Everyone of 'em cryin'. Even her father, cryin' so bad. I never saw a man cry before and not like that—just bawlin' like a baby.

IRENE. And y'know why, too.

GRACE. 'Cause their daughter had died.

IRENE. What she died *from*.

KATHRYN. Irene. Don't go spreadin' stories.

IRENE. It's not a story. Albina told us. No reason Grace shouldn't know.

GRACE. Know what? Know what? *(KATHRYN whispers something awful.)* Amelia?

KATHRYN. Ain't it awful? Albina said her father's fit to be tied, too—six girls at home and ain't none of 'em ever goin' to a dance again.

IRENE. All because Amelia upped and died from *sypthilis!*

GRACE. Sh!

IRENE. I can't help it if that's what she died from!

GRACE. You don't know that for sure.