Booth Tarkington

Image of Josephine

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"BOASTING'S the vulgarest thing there is," the fair young girl, Josephine, informed her three guests as they came out of the big brick Oaklin house after lunch. "Boasting's practically the same thing as bragging, and both are incredibly vulgar."

The guests, two girls and a boy, all three of their hostess's age, fourteen, were already depressed, though well fed, and they became gloomier as she used what they thought a show-off word. " 'Incredibly,' " the boy repeated. "That's about the hundredth time to-day you've said something was 'incredibly,' Josephine. You've said about a thousand things were 'vulgar,' too. Besides that, you can deny it all you want to; but you were boasting or bragging, or both or whatever you call it, just as I taxed you with."

"I did not!" young Josephine cried. "You're incredibly mistaken! There! I'll say it as frequently as I wish to and I'd like to see you endeavor to stop me because I'll throw you down and rub your face in the grass if you do, the way I did yesterday. Want me to show Ella and Sophie I can?"

In heated response he used an expression still permissible to youthful fashion that year, 1932. "Can it! Can that stuff!" Young Josephine Oaklin, slim from small feet to broad shoulders, was an athlete and as precociously active bodily as she was mentally. Jamie Elliston well knew she'd not hesitate to manhandle him. "Go on and incredibly

yourself sick," he said. "It'll sure be swell, so have yourself a time. *I'm* through objecting."

" 'Sure'! 'Swell'!" Josephine taunted him gayly. "Those two foul old words are fifty percent of your vocabulary, my dear. The other fifty consists of 'guy' and 'gal' and 'can it.' Take those away and you'd be denied all utterance."

"Oh, I would? Then listen to this: Skip it, you heel! Suit you any better?"

Sophie and Ella, each boredly skewering a patent-leather toe into the newly April-green grass, looked on coldly. "Always tangling with the boy-friend, isn't she?" Ella said. "I don't deny you gave us a nice lunch, Josephine; but who couldn't with all those servants, and if you think always picking on Jamie to prove he's yours is interesting, it simply isn't."

"I'm not hers," Jamie began. "I'm not any——"

Sophie agreed with Ella. "Yes, Josephine, you're supposed to be having a luncheon party for us; but now we've eaten it, what do we do next?"

"Well, I'll see; but there's an important event going to happen here this afternoon." Josephine made her pretty fourteen-year-old face as mysterious as she could. "Of course I don't mean anything important about you three or anything like that. The importance is going to be on the adult scale. It's essential I keep within call of the house, so we can't go anywhere else, soda-fountaining or anything. Fortunately we've got plenty of room to do whatever I decide till I get called in, since our yard happens to be the only one in town that comprises a full block."

“Oh, no! No vulgar boasting or bragging!” The Elliston boy became loudly sarcastic. “Never missed a chance yet to holler you got a yard that covers a whole block and’s got your family’s private art gallery in it besides the house and all the old bushes and trees! Listen, what’s this adult scale you claim you’re going to mix up with? Adult scale! That’s a cute one.”

Josephine moved toward him dangerously. “Asking to get your nose rubbed in the grass?”

He backed away. “You let me alone!”

Josephine leaped, caught him about his middle, threw him and did what she had threatened; but her two other guests remained apathetic. “If you think you’re giving Sophie and me a good time at your luncheon party,” Ella said, “you’re mistaken, Josephine. Can’t you two lovers do anything but fight? It’s pretty boresome for us spectators.”

Jamie Elliston, prone, cried out thickly against the word “lovers,” whereupon Miss Oaklin rubbed the grass with his face again; then let him rise. “I’ll tell you what we’ll do,” she said. “I’ll show you three some new basketball shots I’ve worked up. Come on.”

She ran ahead and they followed slowly round the wide house. Jamie, muttering morosely, used a white handkerchief upon his face and the green-stained knees of his trousers. “Doesn’t care whose clothes she destroys! Got a basket in front the side wall of their old art gallery. Wants to show us she can make more baskets than we can, just because your old Miss Murray’s School for Girls’ basketball team’s got her for its captain.”

“You’re not up to the minute, Jamie,” Ella informed him. “Nobody can deny she’s a good player and everybody thought the team’d elect her captain this year; but the girls on it all simply declined and elected Amy Keller instead.”

“Good!” Jamie cheered up a little. “So our proud and mighty old gal’s just a humble member of the team.”

“Not so humble,” Ella said. “Practises hour after hour all alone by herself so’s to prove even if she isn’t captain she’s anyhow the best.”

They’d come round the house to an open space before a building of pale limestone, the “old art gallery.” It wasn’t old. Jamie had used the term in the instinctive manner of the young, for whom “old” naturally defines anything uninteresting, difficult or contemptible. Attached to the Tudorish brick house by a stone passageway, the skylighted gallery, a single story high and windowless on this side, made a convenient backstop. Josephine was already poised with a ball in the center of the open space and facing a “basket” set up before the wall.

“Watch this shot!” she called. “Notice the new way I use my wrist and——”

Ella interrupted her drearily. “What’s the use your having that four-thousand-dollar tennis court back yonder? There are four of us and we could all get our rubber-soles and——”

“No. The court’s covered on account of spring rains. You watch this shot; it’s different. Zing!” As adroit as she was graceful, Josephine “shot” the ball accurately. “Basket! Got a basket! Run get the ball for me, Jamie; I appoint you my retriever.” She glanced at his face, and laughed. “What’s the matter? Insulted speechless again?”

The discontented Ella made another protest. “Josephine, is it entertaining guests they just get to stand around while you shoot baskets? Hostesses are supposed to afford pleasure from the background, aren’t they?”

“Well, I’ll tell you,” Josephine said, assuming a confidential air. “I haven’t got much time to think up anything until later. You see, this important event on the adult scale I mentioned may begin to take place almost any instant and I’ve got my mother on my mind because she’s out at a big female luncheon at the Country Club. She always gets absorbed, especially if there’s contract; but I impressed and impressed it on her that she had to be on time. She ought to be here right now and I can’t get a second’s peace of mind till I see her car on our driveway.”

Jamie Elliston spoke with pain. “ ‘Impressed it’! ‘Impressed it on my mother’!”

“She does,” Sophie told him. “That’s exactly what she does. Josephine absolutely runs her mother. Everybody in town knows Mrs. Oaklin does everything Josephine tells her to.”

Josephine listened to this with a matter-of-course complacency; then “I hear a car now!” she cried, and ran back by the way she’d come. When she reached a corner of the house she stopped and looked toward a porte-cochère that sheltered a side entrance. There a taxicab had just halted; a preoccupied man carrying two thick brief-cases stepped out, rang the doorbell and disappeared within the house. The taxicab drove on till it reached a graveled space before a large brick garage at the end of the driveway. The

driver stopped his car, lighted a cigarette and waited. Josephine ran back to her guests.

“It’s commencing,” she said. “Mr. Oscar Glessit’s got here. He’s Grandfather’s lawyer; but look, I’ve got a little time left, so I can show you some more of my shots. When I haf to go in the house the rest of you can practise ’em till I come out again, so it stands to reason I’ll do all the shooting up to then. Fetch me the ball, Sophie, since the princely Mr. Elliston’s so ungracious about it.”

Sophie Tremoille went for the ball. “Oh, all right!” she said almost admiringly, as she brought it. “Always got to have your way! You think everybody else are just your mere attendants, don’t you?”

“Well——” Josephine laughed, and in this contortion her daintily shaped features were prettier than ever. “You ought to keep remembering who I am, oughtn’t you?”

“Well, honest to gosh!” This was Jamie appealing to Ella. “She means it!”

He was right. Young Josephine laughed, amused by her own egregiousness; but she did mean it.

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WITHIN the house, meanwhile, the “important event” had begun to take place, and it was even more important than she’d said. The passageway from the art gallery led by a door now closed into a large and lofty oblong room, at one end of which stood a splendid Jacobean mantelpiece of carved and blackened oak. The great fireplace, wherein small logs burned, was flanked by its proper antique adjuncts, part and parcel of the same despoiled Manor overseas: paneled high wainscotings similarly blackened by time, smoke and dark wax. Further aged panelings along the southern wall of the room separated the diamond-paned, deeply recessed windows of seventeenth-century glass that laid yellow rhomboids of sunshine on the broad-planked floor. The other sides of the room displayed books almost to the high and elaborate plaster ceiling—books on long “set-in” shelves, rows of tall thin books, rows of massive shorter books, rows of books in “special bindings,” tooled and gilded; and almost all of these books bore upon the arts of painting, sculpture, music and architecture. More books, as well as portfolios too large for the shelves, were stacked upon heavy Jacobean tables; but that there should be comfort in the room, however incongruously, the chairs and a couch against the north wall were of to-day and done in scarlet leather.

This was Mr. Thomas Oaklin’s library. Manorial himself, black-coated and wing-collared, with a beautiful Cashmere

shawl over his knees, he sat in an easy-chair near the fireplace—a white-haired, finely withered old man palely handsome and still commanding. As he talked to his lawyer, Oscar Glessit, he sometimes made a gesture with a long, bony and old-veined white hand; but the movement was always so consciously suave that it took care not to disturb the inch-and-a-half ash of the cigar held between the first and second fingers. The picture he presented to the eye conveyed flawlessly the tradition in which he loved to live—connoisseur patron of art, grand seigneur—easily possible to an eighth-generation American, fastidious and scholarly third-generation mid-western millionaire. So neatly, in his rich surrounding, he made this portrait of himself that his knowing he made it is little to be doubted.

“You have it all in order now, Glessit,” he said graciously. “I’ve no further criticism.”

“Yes, it’ll do at last, Mr. Oaklin.” The lawyer sat at one of the Jacobean tables, and upon it his open brief-cases revealed a dismal quantity of legal papers. “Broadly, it all sounds simple enough, sir; but in detail it’s a rather staggeringly elaborate affair. The amount of securities involved and not leaving them to the natural heirs——”

“Just a moment.” Mr. Oaklin slightly lifted his long-ashed cigar as a middle-aged tall colored man entered the room. “What is it, Harvey?”

“Mr. Horne on the telephone, sir. Ask me find out how soon you expectin’ him, sir. Say he ready come now if you want him.”

“I do. Tell him so, Harvey.”

The colored man departed soft-footedly, and Mr. Oaklin's grey eyes denoted pleasure. "We've got a surprise for John Constable Horne, I think, Glessit, what?"

"No question, sir. I hope Mr. Horne'll have the patience to go through these papers as he ought to, considering what you plan for him; but, knowing him, I doubt it. By the way, until I drew them up for you I never knew his middle name was Constable. Is that a family name?"

"No, Glessit. His parents—rather 'arty' people in their day—naïvely named him for the greatest British landscapist, perhaps the greatest of all landscapists; but from boyhood John Horne's admired that painter so much he's always thought it would be pretentious to use the name. Probably he thinks it's more American, too, to call himself John C. Horne; he's notional. He's a dozen years younger than I—at my age I find that my friends are all my juniors, otherwise they wouldn't be alive—but John Horne's life, like my own, has been a continuous devotion to the Fine Arts. He's spent almost as much time as I have, myself, in my gallery of paintings and sculptures, and he's a genuine authority upon Oriental art, in particular upon the Northern Wei stone sculptures. I fear this doesn't much interest you, Glessit." Mr. Oaklin smiled faintly and with his left hand rang a small steel bell beside him upon a squat old black table.

The colored man, Harvey, reappeared in the doorway. "Yes, sir?"

"Harvey, has my daughter-in-law come home?"

"Yes, sir. Few minutes ago. Upstairs changin' her dress again."

“And Miss Josephine’s where you can find her when I wish her to come in?”

“Yes, sir. Basketballin’ right outside.”

Harvey waited a moment; then, seeing that his employer had fallen into a meditation, departed. The lawyer, rearranging though not rustling certain of his papers, glanced up from time to time during the next fifteen minutes, but refrained from speaking. Mr. Oaklin not infrequently went into these silences—contemplations concerned with the past or with art, or with God knows what, Oscar Glessit thought; men as old as Thomas Oaklin seemed to live mainly in their own old dead worlds. The old dead world at present engaging Mr. Oaklin was shattered by the noisy voice of his friend, John Constable Horne, who walked into the library already talking. He was followed by Harvey, bringing upon a tray a decanter of sherry, thin wine glasses and a porcelain basket of small cakes.

“What, what? What’s all this?” Mr. Horne asked brusquely. Somewhere in his sixties, he was a thick, short, baldish, bustling man, pudgy in feature but with noticeably sparkling small blue eyes. “Oscar Glessit and a barrel of his horrible documents? Scene from one of those extinct genteel melodramas: the Duke changes his will.”

Mr. Oaklin smiled at him. “Sit down—I’m never comfortable till I can get you to sit down, John—and don’t go leaping up every moment or so while I’m explaining what you’re here for. Let the sherry alone; I’ll offer it later. That’s all, Harvey. I ask you to sit down and listen, John.”

“I’ll sit,” Mr. Horne responded, and did so. “It’s against my nature but I’m doing it. What for? My soul, but you and

Oscar Glessit look ponderous! If you're not changing your will——"

"No, I've just been making one, the first and last."

"I see," Horne said. "You want me for a witness, which shows you're not leaving me anything, thank God!"

"I am, though." His old friend regarded him gravely. "I'm leaving you a responsibility; I'm putting it upon you."

"I decline. Whatever it is, Lord help me, I refuse!"

"You can't." Mr. Oaklin's thin but mellow voice was slightly tremulous for the moment. "It's what I'd have asked my son to do for me if he'd lived until now. It's a great thing; but since Tom's death there's no one except you I'd trust with it. My daughter-in-law wouldn't do at all. I make no complaint of her; I merely say she won't do. My granddaughter is remarkable, highly gifted and precociously advanced in mind and character; but obviously she's still too young. So I turn to you."

"Why to me?" Mr. Horne looked seriously disturbed. "Don't like responsibilities. What about your niece, Mary Fount? She's your own brother's daughter. She's still alive, isn't she? You know where she's living, don't you? Certainly used to take a great interest in her and——"

"I did, and I suppose of course she's still alive or I'd have been notified. Mary Oaklin had a genuine feeling for the arts and I'd taken great pains to cultivate it in her—until she threw it all away to marry that migratory fellow, Fount." Mr. Oaklin, though remaining scrupulously formal, looked cross. "Why bring it up, may I ask?"

"Oh, just a passing thought," Mr. Horne explained. "A bit surprised by your saying you had no family except your

granddaughter.”

“For this purpose I have not.” Irritation lingered in Mr. Oaklin’s voice. “I don’t say but that if my niece still lived here—and were not Mrs. Fount—I mightn’t have somewhat associated her with you and my granddaughter in this project; but I know almost nothing of her nowadays. She’s not available, John; she’s out.”

“Out of what?” Horne said testily. “Let’s get to it. What do you want done?”

“I think you already have an idea. The surprise for you is that it’s you who’ll have to do it. First I want you to understand why I want it done. I’m afraid the root reason is that in my old age I’ve discovered how abominably selfish a life I’ve led.”

Oscar Glessit displayed a protesting hand above his open brief-cases. “Oh, no, you can’t say that, Mr. Oaklin! A man who’s already made such a magnificent gift to his city as the Thomas Oaklin Symphony Hall—yes indeed, and provided for the orchestra’s annual deficit as you have and ——”

“No.” Mr. Oaklin smiled ruefully. “I’ve done all that for my own personal pleasure. During most of my life, in order to hear a symphony orchestra I had to travel to larger cities. I’ll go abroad on a boat any day; but in my old age I hate trains and I hate automobiles. I backed a symphony orchestra here simply to avoid going away and for my own convenience. It’s been expensive, yes; but not compared to what I have in mind now.”

“To it, man!” the lively Horne suggested. “To it!”

Thomas Oaklin was not so to be hurried. “No, I’ll have my say my own way, no matter how it bores you and poor Glessit.” He disregarded another protest from the lawyer. “How many centuries and how many men tried to find the Philosophers’ Stone?”

“Asking me?” Horne said. “I think the search for it began before the Middle Ages; but I’d have to look it up, and as for how many alchemists spent their lives——”

“Never mind,” the old man interrupted. “We know it was supposed to change base metals into gold. In other words, it was to turn hard dull life into happiness. Well, I found the Philosophers’ Stone when I was young; but I never handed it about, just kept it to myself. It’s a real thing, Glessit, though I don’t expect you to believe it. What’s more, I shouldn’t say I found it, because it was presented to me by my father. My grandfather had given it to him.”

Oscar Glessit looked indulgent. “I understand, Mr. Oaklin. Everybody knows how largely and wisely you’ve increased what you inherited from your father and grandfather.”

“I’m afraid you’re speaking of money, Glessit.” Mr. Oaklin was amused. “However, most people would. They don’t know they may all possess the Philosophers’ Stone if they will.”

“Prosier and prosier in his old age,” the lawyer thought. “Always got to talk as if he’d written it first!” The spoken words were, of course, “Very interesting, Mr. Oaklin.”

“No, it isn’t. Not to you, Glessit, because you don’t believe me; you think I’m just mooning—and yet what I say is literally true. Any human being can find the Philosophers’ Stone for himself and by means of it transform his life. Even

if it’s the dullest and most sordid, he can bring a golden happiness into it and keep that happiness as long as he lives. The Philosophers’ Stone isn’t what this nasty new slang calls ‘escape’; it’s a magic ready to anybody’s hand; yet it’s a secret from most of the millions of people on this earth. Strange, isn’t it, that such a secret should be as plain as day to anybody who chooses to open his eyes? The Philosophers’ Stone, Glessit, isn’t philosophy, isn’t science, isn’t even religion—it’s what we call art.”

“I see, Mr. Oaklin. Yes, of course, we all know that an appreciation of art is——”

“No, you don’t all know.” The old man became more emphatic. “Only a few people in this city of ours know what art could be to them, even though it can intimately be almost everything to almost everybody. Myself, I have known from my boyhood because right at home in the old house down on Madison Street there were my grandfather’s and my father’s collections surrounding me. They were of an earlier, sometimes naïve taste but had noble items among them, and thank heaven they got to me when I was young! Well, until now I’ve been a pig about them and all the splendid things I’ve added to them. I’ve kept to myself the pleasure they could put into other lives. Yet I love my city as well as any Florentine of the Renaissance loved his. Of course you see what I’m up to, John Horne.”

“I suppose so. Going to open your gallery to the public and——”

“No, that’s not a tenth of it.” Thomas Oaklin leaned forward and a pinkness appeared upon the old grey-white of his cheeks and temples. “I’ve been asking myself what it

was the Florentines did to make their city a shrine of art for the whole world. What would a devoted Florentine have done with resources like mine? He'd have built something beautiful. I've said to myself, 'Here's my own town, a city of close upon a hundred and eighty thousand people now. I've given them an orchestra for their ears, yes; but what about an art that their eyes can see?' John Horne, I want to build a great place. Call me romantic, call me sentimental; all right, but I want to build a Temple of Art. It will be the people's and in it they'll find the Philosophers' Stone I've kept so long to myself. I want it to be for all the people of my city."

"Bigger than I thought," Horne said. "You're having your will drawn to provide for a real museum, are you?"

"That guess goes only half-way, John. I'm leaving the funds to carry on the life of a museum amply; but I intend to see the building itself with my own eyes. The small gallery I built a few years ago is so crowded it hurts me to go in there —great paintings almost frame to frame, Whistler and Manet and Sargent in the next alcove to Rubens and Dobson and Van Dyck; Mino da Fiesole and Amadeo sculptures within ten feet of a Chinese room; Île de France Gothic ivories and Renaissance bronzes on shelves of the same cabinet, and some of my father's darlingest Seventeenth Century Dutch pictures with no place to live but the cellar. Worthy canvases even pack the attic of this house. I intend to last until I've seen my masterpieces with the right space about them, John Horne; I mean to see them myself in the setting they deserve!"

"Easy come, easy go," Horne said; but his laugh was a little excited. "Going it, aren't you, rather?"

“I am indeed.” Mr. Oaklin still leaned forward, and the thin flush deepened upon his cheeks and brow. “That jumbled gallery of mine is to be only the lower story of one wing of the palace of art I’m going to build, and I’ll show you the blueprints next month when my New York architects bring them out here to be passed upon. You’ll have to look over those blueprints with me, and pretty critically, because you’re going to be President of my hand-picked Museum Association and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Thomas Oaklin Museum of Art—and for life, Jonathan, my Jo-John.”

“I am not!”

“You are.” The old man sank back in his chair, relaxed and smiling. “The will provides for the carrying-on of the museum after I’m gone, staff salaries, maintenance and all that, with also a fairly considerable fund, upwards of two hundred thousand dollars a year, for the continuing purchase of works of art—an item you’ll not be able to resist, not if I know you, and I think I do.”

“I’m afraid you do,” Horne said, almost in a whisper. “I’m afraid you do.”

“What a man!” Mr. Oaklin spared another glance to his lawyer. “Glessit, notice this fellow. When I spoke of bringing happiness and beauty into the lives of our fellow-townsmen he had no enthusiasm; but now when he understands it’s a chance for him to spend the rest of his days haggling with art dealers and winking at auctioneers, why, he’s all on fire!”

“At least starting to scorch and smoke,” Horne admitted. He jumped up and began to walk about the room.

“President? Chairman of the Board of Trustees? Ex-officio on all committees, what? Dealers bringing Franz Halses, Bellinis, Sung porcelains, Gothic chasubles to make my mouth water—me that’s never had but one chipped Shansi head and one Pontormo drawing and one Winslow Homer watercolor to my name! I feel myself on the way to accept. Damn my old soul, I *know* I’m going to accept! Time for the sherry, ain’t it?”

“No, it isn’t. Sit down.”

Mr. Horne didn’t sit; he came and stood before Oaklin’s chair, serious. “See here, though! This is a fairly colossal cobweb you’re spinning, ain’t it? It’s a prospect removing a good big hunk of your assets out of the reach of your family, ain’t it?”

“Yes, more than nine-tenths.”

“Well, see here, then.” Horne’s seriousness increased. “What are Mrs. Thomas Oaklin, Junior, and her young daughter going to say to it? The time may come when they ——”

“No. I was just getting to that—if I could induce you to sit down again.”

“I’m down,” Horne said, and was.

Mr. Oaklin leaned forward once more. “I’ll show you presently; but first I want to ask you to begin to interest yourself rather earnestly in my granddaughter.”

“But I——” Horne looked polite as if with certain inner reservations. “Oh, I do, I do! A very, very pretty child, Josephine. Precociously advanced, too, as you say. A nice confidence in herself; willing to be talkative with older

people and on almost any subject under the sun. Only the last time I was here she told me all about El Greco."

Mr. Oaklin laughed fondly. "Yes, she's a bit that way and I'm glad she is; youth ought to be sure of itself. I want you to learn to understand her better, though, John. I'm not just a doting grandparent when I say she has a feeling for art and a comprehension of it far, far beyond her years."

"Oh, no doubt, no doubt! I'm sure——"

"She's sound, John. Volatile, yes; but sound underneath. That lovely child's companionship in my tastes—why, even two years ago, when she was only twelve and she and I had a month together with the Prado, her love of the great masters there was as deep as mine and her knowledge of them almost as thorough. Last year it was the same in the Louvre and the Uffizi. It's her human quality I want you to know better, though."

"Oh, yes, certainly! I'm sure I——"

"I want you to know her generous heart, John. Isn't it rather remarkable that she's enthusiastic over my plan for a museum? She's for it heart and soul, in spite of the plain fact that it'll keep her from being what people call a great heiress. Isn't it a pretty rare thing, John Horne, that she'd actually rather see the museum built than have the money, herself?"

"She would? You're sure she understands what she loses?"

"Perfectly. I've been all over it with her and she wants it my way; but for what she gives up I intend that she'll have the compensation of identifying her life with that of the museum. I've been over it with Glessit and it's provided that

when she comes of age she'll be a member of the Board of Trustees, herself, and I know you'll regard my wish that along with you she'll always have a decisive voice in the museum's control. I've promised her that and I know I can trust you to see the promise kept."

"Yes—certainly, certainly." Shadow again lay faintly upon Mr. Horne's brow. "But young people—and their mothers—do change their minds sometimes about inheritances that go to great public benefits. You're sure you're not afraid that some day——"

"I said I'd show you." Mr. Oaklin once more rang his bell and spoke to the prompt servitor. "Harvey, ask Miss Josephine and her mother to join us now. Then go into the gallery and tell Mrs. Hevlin and her sister-in-law I'd like them to come in."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Oaklin turned a smiling face upon his old friend. "Now, John Horne, you're going to see how a child in years can have the mind and heart of a woman whose love of art—yes, and of art for all our people—is greater than her love for self."

III

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JOSEPHINE came into the room quickly, and, against the background of dark paneling and the tiers of books, her fair head was a charming shape of light. Her face wore an expression entirely different from that she'd shown to her young friends outdoors; a fully grown-up dignity, not unlike a schoolteacher's, was displayed and yet she hurried gracefully to sit upon the arm of her grandfather's chair somewhat as if she'd been a favored page.

"How do you do, Mr. Horne," she said in a sweetly hushed voice. "How do you do, Mr. Glessit. Grandfather dear, I'm quite ready to perform my part in this affair. Ceremony perhaps we should all more appropriately call it? Yes, ceremony, I think."

Her grandfather beamed upon her, took her hand; John Constable Horne looked appealingly at Oscar Glessit as if to ask, "Don't you want to help me kill her?" but the lawyer kept his eyes to the contents of his brief-cases.

"Ceremony if you prefer, certainly, dear," Mr. Oaklin said. "Is your mother going to keep us waiting?"

"No." The young girl laughed. "No, just stopped for a last touch before our Cinquecento silver mirror on the stairway landing. I gave her a yell, so she's practically here."

Mrs. Thomas Oaklin, Junior, came in slowly, a prettyish blonde woman too-plumply forty-five, not over-dressed or over-hairdressed but almost so, and self-pamperedly though

languidly all in the top of the latest moment's fashion. She didn't speak to anybody; she nodded discontentedly at the room in general, sat down and looked toward the windows.

"That's right, Mother," Josephine said. "Just rest and listen, please. I think we can all begin now. What papers do I sign, Grandfather?"

He patted her hand. "Your signature's mostly garniture, I'm afraid; you're still legally a minor, dear. Your mother's is more important." He spoke to his daughter-in-law. "Folia, you understand that of course I don't need your consent or Josephine's to the building of a museum or anything else I choose to do during my lifetime; but Mr. Glessit thinks it might be useful, in view of any future contingencies, if you and she sign a statement. It's to the effect that you fully understand the museum project and approve of it, and also that you're both aware of the provisions in my will for the future maintenance of the museum and of the symphony orchestra, too. You agree that you and your daughter are provided for by separate deeds and bequests; that you fully consent to all provisions in the will, have no wish to alter any of them, and will never attempt to do so. You realize, don't you, that the will would stand anyhow and this is only an extra precaution of Mr. Glessit's?"

Mrs. Oaklin didn't answer, nor did she move; she continued to stare toward the sunlit windows across the room. Josephine, still upon the arm of her grandfather's chair, spoke warningly.

"Mother!"

Mrs. Oaklin's expression altered slightly, trending more toward the sulky, and Josephine spoke again.

“Mother!”

Mrs. Oaklin gave her a resentful glance but consented to speak. “To me it all seems rather peculiar. I don’t ask anything for myself, I never have; but when I’m expected to sign away much the greater part of my only daughter’s prospects in life——”

“*Mother!*” Josephine jumped from the arm of the chair, stood ominously stiff, facing the rebellious lady. “Didn’t I tell you you’re not signing away anything, because it’s going to be done anyhow willy-nilly whatever you say and you’ll only make an exhibition of yourself? Didn’t you give me your consent, only last night when we had that argument, you’d accede to my absolute wishes in this matter, and Grandfather’s? How many times have I got to tell you this museum is the object of my life and I’ll carry it out to the last iota? Have I got to tell you again that——”

“No.” Mrs. Oaklin suddenly looked whipped. “Don’t tell me again. I’ve been very nervous ever since I lost your father, and I can’t possibly go through any more of these scenes with you.”

“Then step straight around that table and sign where Mr. Glessit shows you!”

Mrs. Oaklin, with an emotional heave, got herself up from her chair, went round the table and stood sacrificially beside the lawyer. At the same time the door opposite the fireplace was opened and a stout, horn-spectacled elderly woman, amiably expectant, stepped into the library from the passageway that led to Mr. Oaklin’s art gallery. She was followed hesitantly by an older woman plainly in a state of awe.

“Mr. Glessit, this is my curator, Mrs. Hevlin,” Oaklin said. “She’s kindly brought her sister-in-law and they know the purpose of the statement they’re to witness. So of course do my granddaughter and her mother; but I think you’d best read it aloud and let all four of them examine it for themselves before they affix their signatures.” He was silent, looking tenderly and admiringly at Josephine as this process was followed.

She took full charge when the time came for Mrs. Oaklin to sign. “Sit right down here, Mother,” Josephine said. “Write your name in full where I put my finger. You’re supposed to sign even before I do, myself.” Mrs. Oaklin, still reluctant, stood motionless. Josephine gave her a pat on the shoulder that was more a push than a caress. “Mother! I’m the person most concerned, not you, am I not, if I voluntarily and of my own act gladly make this sacrifice for the sake of art and Grandfather? You’re only his daughter-in-law, not a blood-relation at all; so what are you hanging back for?”

Mrs. Oaklin sat and wrote. “Very well,” she said badgeredly. “I only hope a day won’t come when you’ll bitterly reproach me for what you’re making me do.”

“Never!” The enthusiastic child’s uplifted face was radiant. “Never! This is for the ideal that Grandfather and I both live for. It’s for art. I’ll never regret what I’m doing to-day if I live a thousand years!”

“Nobly spoken!” Her grandfather’s aged face was almost as inspiredly brightened as was her youthful one. “Isn’t that nobly spoken, John Horne?”

“Very, very,” Mr. Horne replied, trying not to imply that he was aware of any grandfatherly infatuation. “I suppose

the signatures of the witnesses complete this—this safeguard?”

Josephine smiled at him. “Aren’t you forgetting something rather important, Mr. Horne? The witnesses are only supposed to guarantee my and my mother’s signatures, aren’t they? So naturally both of ours would come first, wouldn’t they? I haven’t affixed mine. Such matters ought to follow in their proper order, oughtn’t they, Mr. Horne?”

“Certainly,” he said, and for a moment seemed to look into the long future wherein he was to be associated with Josephine in the management of the Thomas Oaklin Museum of the Fine Arts. “Certainly you sign before they do, my—my child.”

Josephine took the pen from Oscar Glessit. “I do this, glorying in it!” she announced, sat, wrote her name; then sprang up, ran to her grandfather and threw her arms about him. “There! Are you happy? I am! Are you going to put it in the newspapers, Grandfather?”

“I suppose so—some sort of formal announcement within the next day or two.”

“So it won’t hurt if I mention it to people?”

“No, not at all, dear.”

“Then——” She looked thoughtful. “I’ve got a few luncheon guests, you know, and as they’re still probably around somewhere perhaps I better go back and try to keep them amused—unless there are some more documents I ought to sign? Of course if there are any other documents that ought to have my signature——”

“No, no; that’s all,” the old man said. “Run along, but come back to me here in the library later, after your young friends have gone.”

“I will.” She reached the door at a hop-skip-and-jump; then checked herself, turned and spoke, not only to her grandfather but to her mother, Mr. John Constable Horne, Mr. Oscar Glessit, Mrs. Hevlin and Mrs. Hevlin’s sister-in-law. “This is a day long to be remembered by each and every one of us,” she said; and went forth, walking solemnly.

Outdoors, near her practise “basket,” she found two of her guests in a state of complaint while the other enjoyed himself. “He’s just as big a pig as you are, yourself, Josephine!” Ella cried. “He hasn’t given Sophie or me one single chance at the ball ever since you went in the house.”

“Why should I?” the Elliston boy inquired. “You’re neither of you any good. Look, Josephine, here’s that shot you were braggin’ about, how you used your wrist and everything. It’s nothing. Watch me. Yippee!”

He threw; but Josephine didn’t watch him. “To me,” she said, “compared to the ceremony I’ve just performed my part in, shooting baskets is rather less than infantine. I’ve just been through a pretty emotional ceremony, so I feel pretty emotionally exhausted. I might tell you about it some time; but not now.” She placed the tips of the fingers of her right hand against her forehead and tried to look wan. “No, not now, not now.”

“Why not?” Sophie asked.

“Well—it seems almost years ago since I went in the house.” Josephine let her forehead alone and became

brisker. “It’s been pretty exhausting but if I decide to tell you I give you my permission to let your fathers and mothers know about it and everybody you like, because now it’s an open secret and’s going to be in the newspapers practically right away. It changes my whole life, so——”

Sophie Tremoille interrupted. “You’re going away to boarding school?”

“No!” Josephine was annoyed. “Boarding school! Diable! Quelle bêtise! Jamie Elliston, put down that ball!” She ran at him, knocked the ball from his hands. “Listen, can’t you?”

“To what? To you tryin’ to squeak first-year French?”

Josephine pointed to the stone steps leading up to a side entrance in the wall of the art gallery. “Sit down there, all three of you.” Then, when they’d gloomily obeyed her, she stood before them, clasped her hands upon her breast and looked at the sky. Jamie didn’t care for the pose.

“Whatch doin’?” he asked. “Tryin’ to look like Joan of Arc at the Battle of Bunker Hill?”

“Be quiet,” she said dreamily. “I’ve given my life to a cause. That’s what the ceremony was. Sophie, you and Ella can have love in your lives and bright homes and children and firesides. I used to think those things might be for me, too; but not any more.”

The effect failed upon Ella. “No love? You mean you’re giving Jamie the brush-off; he isn’t to be the boy-friend any more?”

“I didn’t say that exactly,” Josephine admitted. “I don’t mean I couldn’t like any boy I want to or’d haf to stop Jamie from preferring me; but I’ve undertaken a terrific responsibility. Grandfather’s going to build a tremendous