

AUNT JANE'S NIECES

Written by

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Based on Aunt Jane's Nieces, by Edith Van Dyne
(L. Frank Baum)

INT. DE GRAF HOUSE - DAY

Sunlight streams through the kitchen windows. PROFESSOR DE GRAF thumbs through the mail. The year is 1902, America.

PROFESSOR DE GRAF
Here's a letter for you, Beth.

BETH
(reading)
Miss Elizabeth De Graf, Cloverton,
Ohio.

Fifteen year-old BETH opens the envelope and reads:

BETH (CONT'D)
My Dear Niece: It will please me to
have you spend the months of July
and August as my guest at Elmhurst.
I am in miserable health, and wish
to become better acquainted with
you before I die. A check for
necessary expenses is enclosed and
I shall expect you to arrive
promptly on the first of July...
Your Aunt, JANE MERRICK.

MRS. DE GRAF, an energetic woman with an apron around her
thick waist, purses her lips in disapproval.

PROFESSOR DE GRAF
How big's the check, Beth?

BETH
A hundred dollars.

PROFESSOR DE GRAF
Huh! Of course you won't go near
that dreadful old cat! We can use
the money to better advantage.

MRS. DE GRAF
Adolph!

PROFESSOR DE GRAF
Your sister Jane is a mean,
selfish, despicable old female.
You've said so a thousand times
yourself, Julia.

MRS. DE GRAF
My sister, Jane, is a very wealthy
woman, and she's a Merrick. How
dare you! A common De Graf!

Beth continues to calmly eat her toast.

MRS. DE GRAF (CONT'D)
Elizabeth must go to Elmhurst.

PROFESSOR DE GRAF
She shan't. No daughter of mine is going to Elmhurst to be bullied and insulted by Jane Merrick.

MRS. DE GRAF
Adolph, try to conceal the fact that you're a fool. Jane's in a desperate state of health and can't live much longer. She's decided to leave her money to Elizabeth, or she wouldn't have invited her to visit.

PROFESSOR DE GRAF
How much do you suppose Jane is worth?

MRS. DE GRAF
Half million, at the very least. Beth will be one of the wealthiest girls in the country!

PROFESSOR DE GRAF
If she gets the money, which I doubt.

MRS. DE GRAF
Why should you doubt it, after this letter?

PROFESSOR DE GRAF
You had another sister and a brother who both had children. And a brother who didn't.

MRS. DE GRAF
Yes, two other girls, I admit. But Jane's never favored them any more than she has mine. And this invitation, coming when Jane's on her death bed, is a guarantee that Beth'll get the money.

PROFESSOR DE GRAF
I hope she will.
(sigh)
We need it bad enough, I'm sure.

Beth quietly stands and gathers her school books.

PROFESSOR DE GRAF (CONT'D)

Just sign your name on the back of this, Beth, and I'll get it cashed for you.

BETH

No, Father. If I decide to go to Aunt Jane's, I must buy some clothes. If you get the money I'll never see a cent of it.

PROFESSOR DE GRAF

When will you decide?

BETH

There's no hurry. I'll take time to think it over. If I go, I must be a hypocrite, and pretend to like her, or she won't leave me her property.

MRS. DE GRAF

But think of the money!

BETH

I do think of it. I must decide if I'm willing to let my desire to have this money corrupt me.

She walks out the front door with her head high.

INT. MERRICK HOUSE - DAY

LOUISE, seventeen, is draped across a sofa with a letter in one hand, and the other hand hovering over a bowl of bonbons.

LOUISE

Who's this woman, Mamma? Jane Merrick?

MRS. MERRICK looks up from her novel. She is neatly dressed, in an unimaginative way.

MRS. MERRICK

She's your father's sister.

LOUISE

Why have I never heard of her before?

MRS. MERRICK

I assumed you knew of your Aunt Jane. You were so young when your father died it's possible I never mentioned her name.

LOUISE

Yes, I suppose.

MRS. MERRICK

They weren't on friendly terms, you know. Jane is rich, having inherited a fortune and a handsome country estate from Mr. Bradley whom she was engaged to marry, but he died on the eve of their wedding.

LOUISE

How romantic!

MRS. MERRICK

It does seem romantic, related in this way, but with the inheritance all romance disappeared from your aunt's life. She became a crabbed, disagreeable old woman.

Louise pops a bonbon in her mouth.

LOUISE

Thank Heavens Father left the life insurance.

MRS. MERRICK

Yes, we would've been beggared without it. I often wonder how we managed to live upon the interest of that money for so many years.

LOUISE

We didn't live. We existed.

(yawns)

We scrimped and pinched, and denied ourselves everything but bare necessities.

MRS. MERRICK

We're plunging now, Louise; and it may be into a bottomless pit.

LOUISE

The income of that insurance money was insignificant, but the capital's a very respectable sum. I'm just seventeen years-old, and in three years I shall be a wealthy married woman. Don't worry Mother.

MRS. MERRICK

You ought to succeed because you're quite beautiful, but if you fail, we shall be entirely ruined.

LOUISE

A strong incentive to succeed.

MRS. MERRICK

I think, Louise, you'd be wise to cultivate your rich aunt, and so have two strings to your bow.

LOUISE

You mean that I should accept her invitation to visit her?

MRS. MERRICK

Yes.

LOUISE

She's sent me a check for a hundred dollars. Isn't it funny?

Louise stands leisurely and strolls to the window, her long skirt rustling.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Tell me more of my father's family. Is this rich aunt of mine the only relative he had?

MRS. MERRICK

No, indeed. There were two other sisters and a brother. A very uninteresting lot.

LOUISE

Are there other nieces besides myself.

MRS. MERRICK

Perhaps two. Her youngest sister, Violet, married a vagabond Irishman and had a daughter about a year younger than you.

(MORE)

MRS. MERRICK (CONT'D)

And Julia married a music teacher
and they also had a daughter I
believe.

INT. PATSY'S HOUSE - DAY

Sixteen years-old and tiny, red-headed PATSY is standing on a stool brushing her father's suit.

PATSY

Now, Major, stand up straight and
behave yourself! How do you expect
me to brush your vest when you're
wriggling around in that way?

MAJOR DOYLE grins down at her mischievously. His huge white mustache twitches as he tries to restrain a smile.

MAJOR DOYLE

(strong Irish brogue)

Patsy, dear, you're so sweet this
evening, I just had to kiss the
freckles on your little nose.

PATSY

Okay, father, you're fairly decent
again, so put on your hat and we'll
go out to dinner.

INT. DANNY'S RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

They are seated at a corner table.

PATSY

Did you get paid tonight?

MAJOR DOYLE

To be sure, my Patsy.

PATSY

Then hand over the coin.

He obeys.

PATSY (CONT'D)

Remember, Major, no riotous living!
Here's an allowance. Make that go
as far as you can.

MAJOR DOYLE

Yes, Patsy.

PATSY

And now I'll order our dinner.
 (to the waiter)
 We'll share the fish and two bowls
 of soup with bread please.

The waiter turns to go.

PATSY (CONT'D)

And a bottle of claret for the
 Major.

MAJOR DOYLE

(gasps)
 Patsy!

PATSY

I'm not crazy a bit, Major. I've
 just had a raise, that's all, and
 we'll celebrate the occasion.

MAJOR DOYLE

Tell me, Patsy.

PATSY

Madam Borne said I'm a credit to
 her salon, and my wages'll be ten
 dollars a week, from now on. Ten
 dollars, Daddy!

MAJOR DOYLE

Sufferin' Moses! If this kapes on,
 we'll be millionaires, Patsy.

PATSY

We're millionaires now. We've each
 other and enough money to keep us
 from worrying.

The waiter appears with the claret and a glass for the Major.

PATSY (CONT'D)

Do you know what I've decided,
 Major, dear? You shall go visit
 your friend, the colonel. The
 vacation'll do you good, and you
 can get away all during July.

MAJOR DOYLE

Ah, Patsy, Patsy, it's an angel you
 are, and nothing less.

PATSY

Rubbish, Major. Try your claret,
and see if it's right. And eat your
fish before it gets cold.

The Major looks anxious about something.

PATSY (CONT'D)

I'll not treat you again, sir,
unless you try to look happy. Why,
you seem as glum as old Scrooge
himself!

He nervously takes a sip of the claret.

PATSY (CONT'D)

Now, then... out with it!

MAJOR DOYLE

It's a letter for you. It came
yesterday, or mayhap the day
before. I don't rightly remember.

PATSY

A letter! From whom?

MAJOR DOYLE

An ould vixen.

PATSY

And who might that be?

MAJOR DOYLE

Your mother's sister, Jane. I can
tell by the emblem on the flap of
the envelope.

PATSY

Oh, that person... Whatever induced
her to write to me?

MAJOR DOYLE

You ought to read it and find out.

Patsy's brow furrows ominously as she reads.

MAJOR DOYLE (CONT'D)

What is it, Mavoureen?

PATSY

An insult!

INT. MERRICK HOUSE - DAY

MRS. MERRICK

How did you enjoy the reception last night, Louise?

LOUISE

Well enough, but I made the discovery that my escort, Harry Wyndham, is only a poor cousin of the rich Wyndham family, and will never have a penny he doesn't earn himself.

MRS. MERRICK

I knew that. But Harry has the entree into some very exclusive social circles. I hope you treated him nicely, Louise. He can be of use to us.

LOUISE

Oh, yes, but he's a very stupid boy. By the way, Mamma, I had an adventure last evening, which I've had no time to tell you of before.

MRS. MERRICK

Yes?

LOUISE

Did you notice the girl you ordered to come from Madam Borne to style my hair for the reception?

MRS. MERRICK

I merely saw her. Was she unsatisfactory?

LOUISE

My hair never looked prettier, I'm sure. But I hardly noticed her until she dropped a letter from her clothing. It fell just beside me, and I saw that it was addressed to Miss Jane Merrick, at Elmhurst. Curious to know why a hair-dresser should be in correspondence with Aunt Jane, I managed to conceal the letter under my skirts until the girl was gone. Then I put it away until after the reception.

(MORE)

LOUISE (CONT'D)

It was sealed and stamped, all ready for the post, but I moistened the flap and easily opened it. Guess what I read?

MRS. MERRICK

I've no idea.

LOUISE

Here it is.

Louise produces a letter and carefully unfolds it.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Listen to this, if you please: 'Aunt Jane.' She doesn't even say 'dear' or 'respected,' you observe.

Louise flutters the letter.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

(reading)

Your letter to me, asking me to visit you, is an insult after your years of silence and neglect and your refusals to assist my poor mother when she was in need. Thank God we can do without your friendship and assistance now, for my father, Major Gregory Doyle, is very prosperous and earns all we need. I return your check with my compliments. If you are really ill, I am sorry for you, and would go to nurse you were you not able to hire twenty nurses, each of whom would have fully as much love and far more respect for you than I ever could. Your indignant niece, Patricia Doyle.

(looking up)

What do you think of that, Mamma?

MRS. MERRICK

How odd, Louise. This hair-dresser is your own cousin.

LOUISE

So it seems. She must be poor, or she wouldn't go out as a sort of lady's maid.

(MORE)

LOUISE (CONT'D)

I remember scolding her severely for pulling my hair, and she was as meek as a mouse, and never answered a word.

MRS. MERRICK

She has a temper though, as this letter proves.

LOUISE

I agree and it removes a rival from my path. You'll notice that Aunt Jane has sent her a check too. Here it is, folded in the letter. Probably my other cousin, the De Graf girl, is likewise invited to Elmhurst. Aunt Jane wanted us all, to see what we were like, and perhaps to choose between us.

MRS. MERRICK

Quite likely.

Mrs. Merrick, uneasily watches her daughter's face.

LOUISE

That being the case, I intend to enter the competition. With this child Patricia out of the way, it will be a simple duel with my unknown De Graf cousin for my aunt's favor, and the excitement will be agreeable even if I lose.

MRS. MERRICK

There's no danger of that. But the stakes are high, Louise. Your Aunt Jane is worth a half million dollars.

LOUISE

It shall be mine. Unless, indeed, the De Graf girl is most wonderfully clever. What's her name?

MRS. MERRICK

Elizabeth, if I remember rightly. But I'm not sure she's yet alive, my dear. I haven't heard from the De Grafs for a dozen years.

LOUISE

I shall accept my Aunt Jane's invitation, and make the acceptance as sweet as Patricia Doyle's refusal is sour. Aunt Jane'll be simply furious when she gets the little hair-dresser's note.

MRS. MERRICK

Will you send it on?

LOUISE

Why not? It's only a question of resealing the envelope and mailing it. And it'll be sure to settle Miss Doyle's chances of sharing the inheritance, for good and all.

MRS. MERRICK

And the check?

LOUISE

Oh, I shall leave the check inside the envelope. It wouldn't be at all safe to cash it, you know.

MRS. MERRICK

But if you took it out, Jane would think the girl had kept the money, after all, and would be even more against her.

LOUISE

No... I'll not do a single act of dishonesty that could be traced back to me. If I can't win honestly, mother dear, I'll quit the game, for even money can't compensate a girl for the loss of her self-respect.

Mrs. Merrick casts a cynical glance at her daughter and smiles.

INT. ELMHURST - DAY

JANE MERRICK, a frail and withered woman, is slumped in her wheelchair. Her attendant, Phibbs, is adjusting her.

AUNT JANE

Lift me up, Phibbs -- no, not that way! Do you want to break my back? There! That's better. Now the pillow at my head. What are you blinking at, you old owl?

PHIBBS, Jane's caregiver, stares at her with barely concealed dislike.

PHIBBS

Are you better this morning, Miss Jane?

AUNT JANE

No, I'm worse.

PHIBBS

You look brighter, Miss Jane.

AUNT JANE

Don't be stupid, Martha Phibbs. I know how I am, better than any doctor, and I tell you I'm on my last leg.

PHIBBS

I hope not, Miss. I'm sure you'll feel better soon. Can't I wheel you into the garden? It's a beautiful day, and quite sunny and warm already.

AUNT JANE

Be quick about it, then. And don't tire me out with your eternal doddering. When a thing has to be done, do it. That's my motto.

PHIBBS

Yes, Miss Jane.

EXT. JANE'S PRIVATE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Jane looks longingly at her garden from the porch.

AUNT JANE

I'll go down into the garden, I guess, Phibbs. This may be my last day on earth, and I'll spend an hour with my flowers before I bid them good-bye forever.

JAMES, the elderly gardener arrives. He's a skinny nervous fellow with a subtle tic at his right eye. He avoids the old woman's gaze.

AUNT JANE (CONT'D)

How are the roses coming on, James?

JAMES

Goodly, Miss.

James walks quickly away and nervously tends to the roses.

AUNT JANE

It's hard to die and leave all this, Phibbs, but it's got to be done.

PHIBBS

Not for a while yet, I hope, Miss Jane.

AUNT JANE

It won't be long, Phibbs. But I must try to live 'til my nieces come. Then I can decide which of them is most worthy to care for the old place when I'm gone.

PHIBBS

Yes, Miss.

AUNT JANE

I've heard from two of them, already. They jumped at the bait, but that's only natural. And the letters are very sensible ones, too. They both say they'll be glad to come. A very proper feeling, but I'm not deceived, Phibbs.

PHIBBS

Of course not, Miss Jane.

AUNT JANE

And somebody's got to have my money and dear Elmhurst when I'm gone. Who will it be, Phibbs?

PHIBBS

I'm sure I don't know, Miss.

AUNT JANE

Nor do I. The money's mine, and I can do what I please with it.

(MORE)

AUNT JANE (CONT'D)

I'm under no obligation to anyone.

SILAS (O.S.)

Except Kenneth.

Aunt Jane is startled at the voice of SILAS WATSON, her lawyer and friend. He's a slender balding gentleman in his late fifties.

AUNT JANE

Stuff and nonsense! I know my duties, Silas Watson.

SILAS

True, but your recent acts, I confess, puzzle me.

Silas takes a seat near Jane and leisurely crosses his legs.

SILAS (CONT'D)

Why should you choose from three inexperienced, incompetent girls a successor to Tom's fortune, when he especially requested you in his will to look after his relatives? Kenneth Forbes, his own nephew, is alone in the world now. I think Tom would've wanted you to help Kenneth now.

AUNT JANE

He placed me under no obligations to leave the boy any money. You know that well enough, for you drew up the will.

SILAS

Yes, I drew up the will, and I remember he gave to you, his betrothed, all that he possessed... gave it gladly and lovingly, and without reserve. But perhaps his conscience pricked him a bit, after all, for he added the words: 'I shall expect you to look after the welfare of my only relative, my sister, Katherine Bradley or any of her heirs.' It appears to me, Miss Jane, that's a distinct obligation. The boy is now sixteen and is a fine fellow.

AUNT JANE

Bah! An imbecile. An awkward, ill-mannered brat who's only fit for a stable-boy! I know him, Silas, and he'll never amount to a hill of beans. Leave him my money? Not if I hadn't a relative on earth!

SILAS

You misjudge him, Jane. Kenneth is all right if you'll treat him decently. But he won't stand your abuse and I don't think the less of him for it.

Silas pulls a pipe out of his coat pocket.

AUNT JANE

What abuse? Haven't I given him a home and an education? And he's been rebellious and pig-headed and sullen in return for my kindness, so naturally there's little love lost between us.

SILAS

You resented your one obligation, Jane; and although you fulfilled it to the letter, you didn't in the spirit of Tom Bradley's request. I don't blame the boy for not liking you.

AUNT JANE

Sir!

She weakly pounds the armrest of her wheelchair as she galres at him.

SILAS

All right, Jane; fly at me if you will, but I intend to tell you frankly what I think of your actions as long as we remain friends.

Silas packs the pipe bowl as he eyes her.

AUNT JANE

That's why we are friends, Silas; and it's useless to quarrel with me now that I'm on my death bed.

(MORE)

AUNT JANE (CONT'D)

A few days more will end me, I'm positive; so bear with me a little longer, my friend.

SILAS

You're not so very bad, Jane, and I'm almost sure you'll be with us for a long time to come. But I fear this invasion of your nieces won't be good for you. Are they really coming?

AUNT JANE

Two of them are, I'm sure, for they've accepted my invitation.

SILAS

Oh, yes, here's a letter just arrived. Perhaps it contains news from the third niece.

He hands it to her and lights his pipe.

AUNT JANE

My glasses, Phibbs!

SILAS

What do you know about these girls?

AUNT JANE

Nothing whatever. I scarcely knew of their existence until you hunted them out for me and found they were alive. But I'm going to know them, and study them, and the one who's most capable and deserving shall have my property.

SILAS

(sighs)
And Kenneth?

AUNT JANE

I'll provide an annuity for the brat, although it's more than he deserves.

SILAS

I see. But if none of the three girls are worthy?

AUNT JANE

Then I'll leave every cent to
charity... except Kenneth's
annuity.

Phibbs arrives with the glasses, and Jane reads the letter.

AUNT JANE (CONT'D)

A refusal... A refusal from the
Irishman's daughter, Patricia
Doyle. Here.

She hands the letter to Silas. He shakes his head as he reads
it with something between a smile and a frown.

AUNT JANE (CONT'D)

The girl is right. It's the sort of
letter I'd have written. I'll write
again, Silas, and humble myself,
and try to get her to come.

SILAS

You surprise me!

AUNT JANE

I surprise myself, but I mean to
know more of this Patricia Doyle.
Perhaps I've found a gold mine,
Silas Watson!

EXT. ELMHURST GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Silas walks through garden toward the stables. He climbs the
exterior stairs to KENNETH BRADLEY'S room. Ken is sitting on
the windowsill and doesn't acknowledge the lawyer's approach.

INT. KENNETH'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Silas picks up an open book next to Ken. The page is covered
with various drawings of cats, people, flowers, etc.

SILAS

Morning Ken.

Ken grabs the book and throws it out window.

SILAS (CONT'D)

I didn't know you have a talent for
drawing.

The teen grunts rudely.

SILAS (CONT'D)
 Your Aunt is failing fast.
 (waits)
 I don't think she'll live much longer.

Ken doesn't look at Silas.

SILAS (CONT'D)
 When she dies, there'll be a new mistress at Elmhurst and you'll have to move out.
 (pause)
 You're sixteen, and you're not ready for college. You'd be of no use in the commercial world. You don't even have the capacity to become a clerk. What'll you do, Kenneth? Where will you go?

Kenneth stalks around the room with clenched fists.

KENNETH
 When will Aunt Jane die?

SILAS
 I hope she will live many days yet, but she may die tomorrow.

KENNETH
 When she dies, I'll answer your question. I'll do something... I don't know what, and I won't bother about it till the time comes.

SILAS
 Could you earn a living?

KENNETH
 Perhaps not... but I'll get along. Will I be a beggar?

SILAS
 I don't know. It depends on how much Aunt Jane leaves you in her will.

KENNETH
 I hope she won't leave me a cent! I hate her, and I'll be glad when she's dead and out of my way!

Silas shakes his head sadly.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

I hate her! She's insulted me, scorned me, humiliated me every moment since I've been here. I'll be glad to have her die, and I don't want a cent of her miserable money.

SILAS

Money is necessary to one who's unable to earn his living. And the money she leaves you -- if she does leave you any -- won't be hers, remember, but your Uncle Tom's.

KENNETH

Uncle Tom was good to my mother.

SILAS

Well, Uncle Tom gave his money to Aunt Jane, whom he'd expected to marry. The place will go to someone else, which means you must move on.

KENNETH

Who will have Elmhurst?

SILAS

One of your aunt's nieces, probably. She has three, it seems, all of them young girls, and she's invited them to come here to visit her.

KENNETH

(hands on top of his head)
Girls! Girls at Elmhurst?

SILAS

To be sure. One of the nieces, it seems, refuses to come, but there'll be two of them to scramble for your aunt's affection.

KENNETH

She has none.

SILAS

Or her money, which is the same thing. The one she likes the best will get the estate.

KENNETH

Three girls fighting one against the other for Elmhurst and fawning before a cruel and malicious old woman who could never love anyone but herself.

SILAS

And her flowers.

KENNETH

Oh, yes, and her flowers.

SILAS

The girls needn't worry you, Kenneth. It'll be easy for you to keep out of their way.

KENNETH

When will they come?

SILAS

Next week, I believe.

KENNETH

Perhaps they won't know I'm here.

SILAS

Perhaps not. I'll tell Misery to bring all your meals to this room, and no one ever comes to this end of the garden. But if they find you, Kenneth, and scare you out of your den, run over to me, and I'll keep you safe until the girls are gone.

KENNETH

Thank you, Mr. Watson, it isn't that I'm afraid of girls in general, you know, but they may be as cruel as their aunt.

SILAS

I know nothing about them, so I can't vouch in any way for Aunt Jane's nieces. But they're young, and it's probable they'll be as shy and uncomfortable here at Elmhurst as you are. And after all, Kenneth, the most important thing just now is your own future. What in the world is to become of you?

Silas stops at the door before leaving and looks at Kenneth.

KENNETH

I'll not bother my head about it
until the time comes.

INT ELMHURST DRAWING ROOM - DAY

Beth enters the drawing room on a sunny morning.

AUNT JANE

So, this is Elizabeth, is it? You
may kiss me, child.

Beth approaches her withered cheek with a pinched look on her
face. She gives Jane a quick peck and backs up.

AUNT JANE (CONT'D)

Well, what do you think of me?

BETH

Surely, it's too early to ask me
that. I'm going to try to like you,
and my first sight of my new aunt
leads me to hope I shall succeed.

AUNT JANE

Why shouldn't you like me? Why must
you try to like your mother's
sister?

BETH

There are reasons why your name's
seldom mentioned in my father's
family. Until your letter came I
scarcely knew I possessed an aunt.
I hope we shall become friends,
Aunt Jane, but until then, it's
better we shouldn't discuss the
past.

The old woman stares hard at the girl for a moment.

AUNT JANE

Your journey has tired you. I'll
have Misery show you to your room.

BETH

I'm not tired, but I'll go to my
room, if you'd like. When may I see
you again?

AUNT JANE

When I send for you.

(beat)

I suppose you know I'm a paralytic,
and liable to die at any time?

BETH

I'm very sorry. You don't seem very
ill.

AUNT JANE

I'm on my last leg. I may not live
an hour. But that's not your
problem, I suppose. By the way, I
expect your cousin on the afternoon
train.

BETH

My cousin?

AUNT JANE

Yes, Louise Merrick.

BETH

Oh!

AUNT JANE

What do you mean by that?

BETH

I didn't know I had a cousin...
That is, I didn't know whether
Louise Merrick was alive or not.
Mother's mentioned her name once or
twice in my presence; but not
lately.

AUNT JANE

Well, she's alive. Very much alive,
I believe. And she's coming to
visit me... while you are here. I
expect you to be friends.

BETH

To be sure.

AUNT JANE

We dine at seven. I always lunch in
my own room, and you may do the
same.

INT. BETH'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The housekeeper, MISERY, escorts Beth into her room. She's a short, stout woman with a kind face. Beth glances about the elegant room.

BETH (V.O.)
 (inner monologue)
 Here's an opportunity to win a fortune and a home beautiful enough for a princess. If I fail to get it I shall deserve to live in poverty forever afterward.

Beth notices Misery watching her.

BETH
 (to Misery)
 Thank you for being so kind. I've never been away from home before, and you must be a mother to me while I'm at Elmhurst.

MISERY
 Bless you child! Of course I'll be a mother to you. You'll need a bit of comforting now and then, my dear, if you're going to live with Jane Merrick.

BETH
 Is she terribly cross?

MISERY
 At times she's a fiend, but don't you mind her tantrums, or lay 'em to heart, and you'll get 'long with her all right.

BETH
 Thank you... I'll try to not let it bother me.

MISERY
 Do you need anything else, deary?

BETH
 Nothing at all, thank you.

BETH (V.O.)
 That was one brilliant move, at any rate. I've made a friend at Elmhurst who'll be of use to me.
 (MORE)

BETH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Come as soon as you like, Cousin Louise! You'll have to be more clever than I am, if you hope to win Elmhurst.

EXT. AUNT JANE'S PRIVATE GARDEN - DAY

Aunt Jane is in her garden, amidst her flowers, surrounded by a high box-hedge. It's distinct from the vast expanse of shrubbery and flower-beds which make up the grounds at Elmhurst.

OSCAR, the butler and chauffeur, comes through an opening in the hedge and touches his hat.

AUNT JANE

Has my niece arrived?

OSCAR

She's on the way, mum. She stopped outside the grounds to pick wild flowers, an' said I was to tell you she'd walk the rest o' the way.

AUNT JANE

Oscar, has this girl been questioning you?

OSCAR

She asked a few questions, mum.

AUNT JANE

About me?

OSCAR

Some of 'em, if I remember right, mum, was about you.

AUNT JANE

And you told her I was fond of flowers?

OSCAR

I may have just mentioned that you liked 'em, mum.

Jane gives a scornful snort.

AUNT JANE

You may go, Oscar. Have the girl's luggage placed in her room.

OSCAR

Yes, mum.

Soon the graceful form of Louise appears through the same hedge opening.

LOUISE

Oh, my dear, dear aunt! How glad I am to see you at last, and how good of you to let me come here!

AUNT JANE

This is Louise, I suppose. You are welcome to Elmhurst.

Louise drops to her knees and takes up her aunt's hands.

LOUISE

Tell me how you are? Do you suffer any? And are you getting better, dear aunt, in this beautiful garden with the birds and the sunshine?

AUNT JANE

Get up... You're spoiling your gown.

LOUISE

Never mind the gown. Tell me about yourself. I've been so anxious since your last letter.

Aunt Jane's face relaxes a bit as she talks about her health.

AUNT JANE

I'm dying, as you can plainly see. My days are numbered, Louise. If you stay long enough you can gather scrawny wild flowers for my coffin.

LOUISE

Don't laugh at these poor things! I'm so fond of flowers, and we find none growing wild in New York, you know.

AUNT JANE

How old are you, Louise.

LOUISE

Just seventeen, Aunt.

AUNT JANE

I'd forgotten you are so old as that. Let me see; Elizabeth cannot be more than fifteen.

LOUISE

Elizabeth?

AUNT JANE

Elizabeth De Graf, your cousin. She arrived at Elmhurst this morning and will be your companion while you're here.

LOUISE

That's nice.

AUNT JANE

I hope you'll be friends.

LOUISE

Why not, Aunt? I haven't known much of my relations in the past, you know, so it pleases me to find an aunt and a cousin at the same time. I'm sure I shall love you both.

Louise flits about admiring the flowers, and circles back to Jane.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Let me fix your pillow -- you don't seem comfortable. There! Isn't that better?

(lowers her voice)

I'm afraid you've needed more loving care than a paid attendant can give you, but for a time, at least, I mean to be your nurse, and look after your wants. You should've sent for me before, Aunt Jane.

Jane rolls her eyes at this little speech.

AUNT JANE

Don't trouble yourself; Phibbs knows my ways, and does all that's required. Run away, now, Louise. The housekeeper'll show you to your room. It's opposite Elizabeth's, and you'll do well to make her acquaintance at once.

(MORE)

AUNT JANE (CONT'D)

I shall expect you both to dine
with me at seven.

LOUISE

Can't I stay here a little longer.
We haven't spoken two words
together, and I'm not a bit tired.
What a superb rose this is! Is it
one of your favorites, Aunt Jane?

AUNT JANE

Run off. I want to be alone.

Louise sighs and strokes the gray hair lightly.

LOUISE

Very well; I'll go, but I don't
intend to be treated as a stranger,
dear Aunt. You are my father's
eldest sister, and I mean to make
you love me, if you'll give me the
least chance to do so.

AUNT JANE

Misery will show you your room.
Remember, I dine promptly at seven.

LOUISE

I shall count the minutes.

AUNT JANE

(mutters)

Were she in the least sincere,
Louise might prove a very pleasant
companion. But she's not sincere;
she's coddling me to win my money,
and if I don't watch out she'll
succeed.

(stares off in space)

Yet I might do worse than to leave
Elmhurst to a clever woman.

INT. BETH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Beth is gazing moodily out her window when a knock is heard.

BETH

Come in.

With a little cry, Louise runs forward and catches Beth in
her arms and kisses her cheek.

LOUISE

You must be my Cousin Elizabeth,
and I'm awfully glad to see you at
last!

Beth doesn't respond to her cousin's enthusiasm. They stand
at arms length assessing each other.

LOUISE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

She's pretty enough, but has no
style whatsoever. She wears her new
gown in a frumpy manner and one can
read her face easily. There's
little danger in this quarter, I'm
sure, so I may as well be friends
with the poor child.

BETH

Won't you sit down?

BETH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

This is not going to be an easy
opponent with her fancy ways.

LOUISE

Of course; we must get acquainted.
I didn't know you were here, until
an hour ago, but as soon as Aunt
Jane told me I ran to my room,
unpacked, and here I am -- prepared
for a good long chat and to love
you just as dearly as you'll let
me.

BETH

I knew you were coming, but not
until this morning. Perhaps had I
known, I wouldn't have come.

LOUISE

Oh! Why not?

BETH

Have you known Aunt Jane before
today?

LOUISE

No.

BETH

Nor I. The letter asking me to
visit her was the first I've ever
received from her.

(MORE)

BETH (CONT'D)

Even my mother, her own sister, doesn't correspond with her. I was brought up to hate her very name as a selfish old woman. But, since she asked me to visit her, we judged she'd softened and might wish to become friendly, so I accepted the invitation. I'd no idea you were also invited.

Louise strolls around the room trailing her fingers over Beth's belongings.

LOUISE

(smiling)

But why should you resent my being here? Surely, two girls will have a better time in this lonely old place than one could've alone. For my part, I'm happy to find you at Elmhurst.

BETH

Thank you. That's a nice thing to say, but I doubt it's true. Don't let's beat around the bush. I hate hypocrisy, and if we're going to be friends let's be honest with one another from the start.

LOUISE

Well?

BETH

It's plain to me that Aunt Jane has invited us here to choose which one of us shall inherit her money and Elmhurst. She's old and feeble, and she hasn't any other relations.

LOUISE

Oh, yes, she has.

BETH

You mean Patricia Doyle?

LOUISE

Yes.

BETH

What do you know of her?

LOUISE
Nothing at all.

BETH
Has Aunt Jane mentioned her?

LOUISE
Not in my presence.

BETH
Then we may conclude she's been left out of the arrangement. And, as I said, Aunt Jane's likely to choose one of us to inherit her wealth. I'd hoped to have it all to myself, but I was mistaken. You'll fight for your chance and fight mighty hard!

LOUISE
How funny!
(laughs)
Why, we could split it fifty-fifty!
But, my dear cousin, I don't want Aunt Jane's money.

BETH
You don't?

LOUISE
Not a penny of it, nor Elmhurst, nor anything you can possibly lay claim to, my dear. My mother and I are amply provided for, and I'm only here to have a break from my social duties and to get acquainted with my aunt. That's all.

BETH
Oh!

LOUISE
So it was really a splendid idea of yours to be honest with me at our first meeting, for it led to your learning the truth. Now tell me something about yourself and your people. Are you poor?

BETH

Poor as poverty. My father teaches music, and mother scolds him continually for not being able to earn enough money to keep out of debt.

LOUISE

Hasn't Aunt Jane helped you?

BETH

We've never seen a cent of her money, although father has tried at times to borrow enough to help him out of his difficulties.

LOUISE

That's strange. She seems like such a dear kindly old lady.

BETH

I think she's horrid, but I mustn't let her know it. I even kissed her, when she asked me to, and it sent a shiver all down my back.

LOUISE

For my part, I'm fond of everyone, and it delights me to fuss around invalids. I ought to have been a trained nurse, you know; but of course there's no necessity of my earning a living.

BETH

What's to prevent Aunt Jane leaving you her property, even if you are rich, and don't need it? You like to care for invalids, and I don't. Suppose Aunt Jane prefers you to me, and wills you all her money?

LOUISE

Well, that would be beyond my power to prevent. Maybe she'll give it to us both.

BETH

You're deceiving me. You're trying to make me think you don't want Elmhurst, when you're as anxious to get it as I am.

LOUISE

My dear Elizabeth -- by the way,
that's an awfully long name; what
do they call you, Lizzie, or
Bessie, or--

BETH

They call me Beth.

LOUISE

Then, my dear Beth, let me beg you
not to borrow trouble. I couldn't
live in this out-of-the-way corner
of the world, you know.

BETH

But suppose she leaves it to you?
You wouldn't refuse it, I imagine.

LOUISE

I can't refuse to love and pet Aunt
Jane just because she has money and
my sweet cousin Beth is anxious to
inherit it. But if she selects me
as her heir, I will agree to
transfer half the estate to you --
the half that consists of Elmhurst.

BETH

Is there much more?

LOUISE

I haven't a list of Aunt Jane's
possessions, so I don't know. But
you shall have Elmhurst.

BETH

It's a magnificent mansion.

LOUISE

It shall be yours, dear, whatever
Aunt Jane decides. See, this is a
compact, and I'll seal it with a
kiss.

Louise springs up and drops to her cousin's side and kisses
her hand.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Now shall we be friends?

BETH

Were I in your place, I would never promise to give up a penny of the inheritance. If I win it, I shall keep it all.

LOUISE

To be sure. I should want you to, my dear.

BETH

Then, since we've no cause to argue, we may as well become friends.

INT. AUNT JANE'S DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

AUNT JANE

Which of my nieces do you prefer?

SILAS

I cannot say on so short an acquaintance. Which do you prefer?

AUNT JANE

I can't imagine Elmhurst belonging to either girl, Silas. You must go to New York at once. I must see the other niece... the one who defies me and refuses to answer my second letter.

SILAS

Patricia Doyle?

AUNT JANE

Yes. I shall not die happy unless she comes to Elmhurst. Bribe her, threaten her. Kidnap her if necessary, Silas, but bring her here as quickly as possible.

SILAS

I'll do my best, Jane. But why are you so anxious?

AUNT JANE

My time's drawing near, old friend, and this matter of my will lies heavily on my conscience. What if I should die tonight?

Silas sits quietly watching her.

SILAS

She may prove even more
undesirable.

AUNT JANE

In that case, I'll pack her back
again and choose between these two.
But you must fetch her, Silas, and
you must fetch her at once!

SILAS

I'll do the best I can, Jane.

EXT. STABLES - DAY

It's early the next morning. DUNCAN, bald-headed but with
white and bushy side-whiskers, is engaged in the business of
oiling and polishing a harness.

DUNCAN

What do ye think o' 'em, Kenneth
lad?

Kenneth looks up from the pine box lid he's drawing on.

KENNETH

Think o' whom, Don?

DUNCAN

The young leddies.

KENNETH

What young ladies?

DUNCAN

Miss Jane's nieces, the ones Oscar
brought from the station yesterday.

KENNETH

I was away with my gun all
yesterday and heard nothing of it.

DUNCAN

Why, it seems Miss Jane's invited
'em to make her a visit.

KENNETH

But not yet, Duncan! Not so soon.

DUNCAN

Na'theless, they're here.

KENNETH

How many?

DUNCAN

Two, lad. A bonny young thing came on the morning train, an' a nice, wide-awake one by the two o'clock.

KENNETH

Will they be running about the place, then?

DUNCAN

Most likely, 'Twould be a shame to shut them up with the missus. But why not? They'll be company for ye, Kenneth lad.

KENNETH

How long will they stay?

DUNCAN

Maybe for a yer'. Oscar foresees one or the ither o' 'em will own the place when Miss Jane gi'es up the ghost.

Ken stands up and throws the lid down and dashes out of the tack room. Duncan picks it up and looks at the sketch of himself. He carries it over to a shelf and hides it.

Ken, in a fury throws the halter over the mare's neck and jumps on without the saddle.

INT. HALLWAY TO BETH'S BEDROOM - DAY

That same morning, Beth leaves her room with a school book.

PHIBBS

Good morning, miss.

BETH

Oh, good morning Phibbs.

Beth looks thoughtfully at the elderly servant.

BETH (CONT'D)

Do your feet hurt you?

PHIBBS

Yes, miss; in the mornin' they's awful bad.

(MORE)

PHIBBS (CONT'D)

It's being on 'em all the day,
'tendin' to Miss Jane, you know.
But after a time I gets more used
to the pain, and don't feel it. The
mornin's always the worst.

BETH

Come into my room.

Phibbs reluctantly follows Beth who goes to a box and pulls out a jar of lotion.

BETH (CONT'D)

Mother has the same trouble you
complain of, and here's a remedy
that always gives her relief. I
brought it with me in case I should
take long walks and get sore feet.

She gently pushes Phibbs into the chair, and to Phibbs amazement, removes her shoes and socks and rubs in the lotion.

BETH (CONT'D)

There. Now they're sure to feel
better, and you must take this jar
to your room, and use it every
night and morning.

PHIBBS

Bless your dear heart! I'm sure I
feel twenty years younger a'ready.
But you shouldn't 'a' done it,
miss, indeed you shouldn't.

BETH

I'm glad to help you. It would be
cruel to let you suffer when I can
ease your pain.

PHIBBS

But what'll Miss Jane say?

BETH

It's our secret, and I'm sure if I
ever need a friend you'll be there
for me.

PHIBBS

I'll do anything for you, Miss
Elizabeth.

EXT. ELMHURST GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Beth walks down a garden path and sits in a rose arbor with a bench. She opens her textbook and begins to study.

The sound of snipping shears draws closer. James appears around the corner, intent upon his job.

BETH
Good morning.

James stares, says nothing, but nods his head slightly.

BETH (CONT'D)
Am I in your way?

He turns his back on her and resumes clipping.

Beth rises and places a hand on his arm, preparing to speak. James throws his hands up, dropping the shears, and runs away.

Beth stares. Misery laughs as she comes up behind Beth.

MISERY
It's just his way, Miss; don't you be scared by anything that James does. Why, at times he won't even speak to Miss Jane.

BETH
He isn't mute, is he?

MISERY
Lor', no! But he's so odd an' contrary he won't talk to a soul. Not since the day Master Tom were killed. James was travellin' with Master Tom, you know, and there was an accident, an' the train run off'n the track an' tipped over. James weren't hurt a'tall, but he dragged Master Tom outta the wreck and sat by him 'til he died. Then James brought Master Tom's body back home again; but his mind seemed to have got a shock, and he never was the same afterwards.

BETH
Poor man! But how'd I frighten him?

MISERY

You tried to make him talk, and you're a stranger. Strangers always affect James 'at way. But breakfast be ready, Miss.

INT. BETH'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

LOUISE

Good morning, I'm here to keep my cousin company.

Louise enters carrying her breakfast tray.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

I would've slept an hour longer, but old Misery, who seems rightly named, insisted on waking me, just that I might eat. Isn't this a funny establishment?

BETH

It's different from everything I'm used to, but it seems very pleasant here, and everyone's very kind and attentive.

LOUISE

I'll dress when we finish, and we'll take a long walk together, and see the place.

EXT. ELMHURST GARDEN - DAY

The two girls explore the garden and find Ken's stairs. They sit on the bottom step and chat. Phibbs arrives.

PHIBBS

Louise, Miss Jane would like to see you.

INT. AUNT JANE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Aunt Jane is in her wheelchair as usual.

AUNT JANE

Sit down.

Louise kisses her cheek and fluffs her pillows first.

AUNT JANE (CONT'D)

Tell me something of the city and your social life. I've been so long dead to the world that I've lost track of people and things.

LOUISE

Let me dress your hair at the same time. It looks frowsy, and I can talk while I work.

AUNT JANE

(rude embarrassment)
I can't lift my head.

LOUISE

Never mind, I can make it look beautiful in half a jiffy. It pleases me to fuss over someone.

AUNT JANE

Do you go to parties or the theater?

LOUISE

Oh my, yes, it seems we're always at some event or another. Just the other day whilst at the Grey's Ball I saw none other than the Earl of Shelby. He's newly married, you know, and his young wife is quite charming... and rich. That's the reason for the marriage of course.

Aunt Jane sits spellbound as Louise gossips.

AUNT JANE

However did your mother manage to gain an entree into society?

LOUISE

Father left us a very respectable life insurance. He died twelve years ago, you know. She decided it was time I made my debut. For the last season we have been rather social, I admit.

AUNT JANE

Are you rich, then?

LOUISE

Mercy no! But we have enough for our requirements.

(MORE)

LOUISE (CONT'D)

By the way, Auntie, I want to return that check you sent me. It was awfully good and generous of you, but I don't need it, you know.

Hands Jane the check, which she takes with a tremulous hand.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

It's quite enough for you to give me this nice treat in the country. You look tired, and I mustn't fatigue you.

Louise gives her a kiss on the cheek and crosses the room.

LOUISE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(internal dialogue)

That was one hundred dollars well spent.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - CONTINUOUS

Kenneth slows his horse as he approaches a short stout man walking down the lane with a small red bundle in hand.

UNCLE JOHN MERRICK raises a hand to ask a question.

UNCLE JOHN

Sorry to trouble you, lad, but I ain't just certain about my way.

KENNETH

Where do you want to go?

UNCLE JOHN

To Jane Merrick's place. They call it Elmhurst, I guess.

KENNETH

It's straight ahead.

UNCLE JOHN

Far from here?

KENNETH

A mile perhaps.

UNCLE JOHN

They said it was three from the village, but I feel I've come a dozen a'ready... Know Jane Merrick?

Ken nods.

UNCLE JOHN (CONT'D)

Like her?

KENNETH

I hate her.

Uncle John laughs uneasily.

UNCLE JOHN

Then it's the same Jane as ever. I sort o' hoped she'd reformed, and I'd be glad to see her again. They tell me she's got money.

KENNETH

She owns Elmhurst, and has mortgages on a dozen farms around here, and property in New York, and thousands of dollars in the bank. Aunt Jane's rich all right.

UNCLE JOHN

Aunt Jane? What's your name, lad?

KENNETH

Kenneth Forbes.

UNCLE JOHN

Don't recollect any Forbes' in the family.

KENNETH

She isn't really my aunt, and she doesn't treat me as an aunt would either; but she's my guardian, and I've always called her Aunt.

UNCLE JOHN

She's never married, eh?

KENNETH

No. She was engaged to my Uncle Tom, but he was killed in a railway accident and left her all he had.

Uncle John looks up curiously at he teen.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

When my parents died, Aunt Jane took me for Uncle Tom's sake, and keeps me out of charity.

Ken slides off the horse and walks alongside John.

UNCLE JOHN

Are Jane's sisters living? Julia
and Violet?

KENNETH

I don't know. But there're two of
her nieces at Elmhurst.

UNCLE JOHN

Ha! Who are they?

KENNETH

(bitterly)

Girls... I haven't seen them.

UNCLE JOHN

Don't like girls, I take it?

KENNETH

Never met one worth liking.

Uncle John nods solemnly while hiding a smile.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

You know Aunt -- Miss Merrick, sir?

UNCLE JOHN

Just her brother, John, that's all.

KENNETH

I didn't know she had a brother,
sir-that is, living.

UNCLE JOHN

She had two; but Will's dead, years
ago, I'm told. I'm the other.

KENNETH

Where've you been all this time?

UNCLE JOHN

I went west a long time ago; before
you were born, I guess.

KENNETH

You lived in California?

UNCLE JOHN

No, Oregon. I was a tinsmith. I've
come back to look up the family and
find how many are left. Curious
sort of a task, isn't it?

KENNETH

I don't know. Perhaps it's natural, but I'm sorry you came to Aunt Jane first.

UNCLE JOHN

Why?

KENNETH

She's in bad health -- on her deathbed, you know -- and her temper's dreadful.

UNCLE JOHN

She's always been dreadful, but she's my sister. I heard she'd suddenly become rich, and a great lady, and that was a surprising thing to happen to a Merrick. We've always been a poor lot, you know.

Kenneth looks pityingly at John's little bundle and nods politely.

KENNETH

I'm sure she'll ask you to stay, sir. And if she doesn't, you come out to the stable and let me know, and I'll drive you to town again.

UNCLE JOHN

Thank you, lad.

KENNETH

We're here at last.
(points to the front door)
Seeing that you're her brother, sir, I advise you to go to the front door and ring the bell.

UNCLE JOHN

I will.

KENNETH

Another thing...

Uncle John pauses and looks at Kenneth.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

You'd better not say you met me. It wouldn't be a good introduction. She hates me as much as I hate her.

UNCLE JOHN
Very good, my lad. I'll keep mum.

John shakes his head sadly as he watches the boy walk away.

UNCLE JOHN (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Poor boy!

INT. JANE'S ROOM - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Beth arrives as Louise leaves. She awkwardly approaches her aunt and stands before her in her serious way.

AUNT JANE
I want to be amused. Can you read aloud?

BETH
Not very well, I'm afraid. But I'll be glad to try. What do you like?

AUNT JANE
Select your own book.

Beth looks through the books and chooses one and begins;

BETH
The American Revolutionary War was fought from 1775 to 1783...

Jane immediately feigns sleep. But Beth is uncertain if Jane is asleep or not, so she keeps reading the monotonous book.

INT. ENTRY HALL - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Oscar lets Uncle John in the front door.

OSCAR
Can I help you, sir?

UNCLE JOHN
Could you tell Miss Jane Merrick that her brother John is here?

OSCAR
Certainly.

Oscar takes John's red bundle, and sets it on the hall chair. Then he leads John to the drawing room.

INT. JANE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Misery arrives and Beth stops reading.

MISERY

Miss.

Jane jolts awake.

AUNT JANE

What's the matter?

MISERY

There's a man to see you, Miss.

AUNT JANE

Send him about his business!

MISERY

But--

AUNT JANE

I won't see him, I tell you!

MISERY

But he says he's your brother,
Miss.

EXT. STABLES - CONTINUOUS

Louise is standing near the stables watching Kenneth brush a horse when Beth walks up.

BETH

Something has happened.

Louise turns with raised brows.

BETH (CONT'D)

A man's arrived who says he's Aunt
Jane's brother.

LOUISE

Impossible! Have you seen him?

BETH

No, but he says he's John Merrick.

LOUISE

Oh, I know... the peddler, or
tinker, or something or other, who
disappeared years ago. But it
doesn't matter.

BETH

It may matter a great deal. Aunt Jane may leave him her money.

LOUISE

He's the eldest of the family. Aunt Jane won't leave her money to an old man.

Kenneth is finished grooming. Oscar tips his hat respectfully and leads the mare away. Ken leaves without seeing the girls.

BETH

I wonder who that is?

LOUISE

We'll find out. I took him for a stable boy, at first. But Oscar seems to treat him as a superior.

Louise, with Beth trailing behind her, approaches Oscar.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Who was the young man?

OSCAR

Which young man, miss?

LOUISE

The one who just walked away.

Louise asks with one hand on her hip.

OSCAR

Oh, that's Master Kenneth, miss.

LOUISE

Where did he come from?

OSCAR

Master Kenneth? Why he lives here. He's Master Tom's nephew.

LOUISE

Mr. Thomas Bradley?

OSCAR

The same, Miss.

LOUISE

Ah. How long has Master Kenneth lived here?

OSCAR

A good many years. I can't just remember how long.

LOUISE

Thank you, Oscar.

They walk away.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Here's a more surprising discovery than Uncle John, Beth. The boy has a better right than any of us to inherit Elmhurst.

BETH

Then why did Aunt Jane send for us?

LOUISE

It's a mystery, dear, which we shall solve.

BETH

Come, we'll ask the housekeeper. I'm sure old Misery'll tell us all we want to know.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MISERY

Master Kenneth? Why, he's just Master Tom's nephew, that's all.

Misery sets the polishing rag in her little wood box.

BETH

Is this his home?

MISERY

All the home he's got, my dear. His father and mother are both dead, and Miss Jane took 'em in, just 'cause she thought Master Tom would 'a' liked it.

LOUISE

Is she fond of him?

MISERY

Fond of the boy? Why, Miss Jane just hates him, for a fact.

(MORE)

MISERY (CONT'D)

She won't even see him, or have him near her. He keeps to his little room in the left wing, he does.

BETH

That's strange, isn't he a nice boy?

MISERY

We're all very fond of Master Kenneth, but I'll admit he's a strange lad, and has a bad temper. It may be due to his lack of bringin' up, for he just runs wild. I don't know what will become of 'em when Miss Jane dies.

As they exit, Louise says quietly;

LOUISE

There's no danger in that quarter, after all. The boy is a mere hanger-on. You see, Aunt Jane's old sweetheart, Thomas Bradley, left everything to her when he died, and she can do as she likes with it.

EXT. ELMHURST GARDEN - DAY

The cousins are slowly strolling along the many garden paths that afternoon. As they round a corner they see a short robust old man seated on a bench puffing on a pipe.

LOUISE

Are you Uncle John?

UNCLE JOHN

If you're my nieces, then I'm Uncle John. Sit down, my dears, and let's get acquainted.

LOUISE

You've just arrived, we hear.

UNCLE JOHN

Yes. Walked up from the station this morning. Come to see Jane, you know, but didn't know I'd find two nieces. Hadn't any idea I possessed two nieces, to be honest about it.

LOUISE

I believe you have three.

UNCLE JOHN
Three? Who's the other?

LOUISE
Why, Patricia Doyle.

UNCLE JOHN
Doyle? Doyle? Don't remember that name.

BETH
I believe your sister Violet married a man named Doyle.

UNCLE JOHN
So she did. Captain Doyle-or Major Doyle-or some such fellow. But what're your names?

LOUISE
I'm Louise Merrick, your brother Will's daughter.

UNCLE JOHN
Oh... And you?

BETH
My mother was Julia Merrick. She married Professor De Graf. I am Elizabeth De Graf.

UNCLE JOHN
Yes, yes, I remember Julia very well, as a girl. She used to put on a lot of airs, and hassle father because he wouldn't have the old buggy painted every spring.

Uncomfortable silence.

LOUISE
What brought you back here after all of these years?

UNCLE JOHN
Family affection, I guess. Wanted to find out what family I had left.

BETH
Now that you're here, what're you going to do?

UNCLE JOHN
Nothing my dear.

LOUISE

Have you any money?

UNCLE JOHN

Might have expected that question, my dear, but it's rather hard to answer. If I say no, you'll be afraid I'll want to borrow a little spendin' money, now an' then; and if I say yes, you'll take me fer a Rockyfeller.

Louise looks at his stained black neck tie and smiles.

LOUISE

Not exactly.

UNCLE JOHN

Well now, here's Jane, my sister, just rolling in wealth she don't know what to do with. And she's invited me to stay a while. So let's call the money question settled, my dears.

Beth looks bored and Louise looks satisfied with her interrogation. They start to move away when John speaks again.

UNCLE JOHN (CONT'D)

Jane won't last long.

LOUISE

You think not?

UNCLE JOHN

She says she's half dead a'ready, and I believe it. Pretty soon she'll blow out, like a candle. All that worries her is to keep alive until she can decide who to leave her money to. That's why you're here, I s'pose, my dears. How do you like being on exhibition, an' goin' through your paces, like a bunch o' trotting hosses, to see which is worth the most?

BETH

Uncle John, I'd hoped I'd like you. But if you're going to be so very vulgar, I'll have nothing more to do with you!

Both girls turn their noses up and strut away. Uncle John laughs silently.

BETH (CONT'D)

He's a strange old man and a fool.

LOUISE

Don't judge hastily, Beth. I can't make up my mind, just yet, whether Uncle John is a fool or not.

BETH

Anyhow, he's laughing at us.

LOUISE

And that's the strongest evidence of his sanity. Beth, my dear, Aunt Jane has placed us in a most ridiculous position.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Aunt Jane's in her black silk dress she wears for dining. Uncle John's seated opposite her at the great table with his same rumpled clothes but has a soiled white neck tie on. The girls are dressed in their best and seated opposite each other. The meal is finished.

Jane signals Phibbs that she is ready to go to the library.

INT. LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

They all follow Phibbs pushing Jane's chair to the library.

AUNT JANE

Do you play bridge?

BETH

Yes, aunt.

LOUISE

Not very well, I'm afraid.

They all sit at the game table.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Later, Jane and John are sitting in front of the fire alone.

AUNT JANE

Well, what do you think of the girls?

UNCLE JOHN

During my lifetime, I've noticed that girls're just girls and nothing more. Jane, your sex is a puzzle that ain't worth the trouble solving. You're all alike, and what little I've seen of my nieces convinces me they're regulation females... no better nor worse than their kind.

AUNT JANE

Louise seems a capable girl. I didn't care much for her at first, but she improves on acquaintance. She's been well trained by her mother, and is very ladylike.

UNCLE JOHN

She's smarter than the other one but not so honest.

AUNT JANE

Beth has no tact at all and is very serious, but then, she's younger than Louise.

UNCLE JOHN

Where's the other niece? Aren't there three of 'em?

AUNT JANE

Yes. The other's coming. Silas Watson, my lawyer, has just telegraphed from New York that he's bringing Patricia back with him.

UNCLE JOHN

Had to send for her, eh?

AUNT JANE

Yes. She's Irish, and if I remember rightly her father is a disgraceful old reprobate, who caused poor Violet no end of worry. The girl may be like him, for she wrote me a dreadful letter, scolding me because I hadn't kept her parents supplied with money, and refusing to be my guest.

UNCLE JOHN
But she's changed her mind?

AUNT JANE
Apparently.

Uncle John leans back in his chair with his hands behind his head.

UNCLE JOHN
My advice is to let 'em draw cards for Elmhurst. If you want to leave your money to the best o' the lot, you're as sure of striking it right that way as any other.

AUNT JANE
Nonsense! I don't want to leave my money to the best of the lot.

UNCLE JOHN
No?

AUNT JANE
By no means. I want to leave it to the one I prefer -- whether she's the best or not.

UNCLE JOHN
I see. Jane, I'll repeat my former observation. Your sex is a puzzle that ain't worth solving.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - DAY

Patsy sits down in front of her aunt still wearing her hat and her grey wrap.

PATSY
Well, here I am, but whether I ought to be here or not, I have my doubts.

AUNT JANE
You're an odd little thing. I wonder why I took so much trouble to get you.

PATSY
So do I. You'll probably be sorry for it.

SILAS

I explained to Miss Doyle that you were ill, and wanted to see her. And she kindly consented to come to Elmhurst for a few days.

PATSY

You see, I'd just got Daddy away on his vacation, so I was quite by myself when Mr. Watson came to me and wouldn't take no for an answer.

AUNT JANE

Why did you object to coming here?

PATSY

Well, I didn't know you, and I didn't especially want to know you. You've been little of a friend to my folks these past years. You're rich and selfish while we're poor and proud. We like to live our lives in our own way.

AUNT JANE

Are you a working girl?

PATSY

Surely, and drawing a big lump of salary every Saturday night. I'm a hair-dresser, you know, and by the way, your hair looks nice.

AUNT JANE

Louise dressed my hair this way.

PATSY

Your maid?

AUNT JANE

My niece, Louise Merrick.

PATSY

A cousin? Is she here?

AUNT JANE

Yes, and your other cousin, Elizabeth De Graf, is here also.

PATSY

That's just the trouble. That's why I didn't want to come, you know.

AUNT JANE

I don't understand you, Patricia.

PATSY

Why, it's as plain as the nose on your face. You want us girls here just to compare us with each other, and pick out the one you like best.

AUNT JANE

Well?

PATSY

The others you'll throw over, and the favorite will get your money.

AUNT JANE

Haven't I the right to do that?

PATSY

Perhaps you have. But we may as well understand each other right now, Aunt Jane. I won't touch a penny of your money, under any circumstances.

AUNT JANE

I think I agree, Patricia.

PATSY

Stick to that, Aunt, and there's no reason we shouldn't be friends. I don't mind having come to see you, for it'll give me a bit of a rest and the country is beautiful just now. Though you seem harsh and disagreeable, I believe I shall like you.

Patsy and Jane eye each other.

PATSY (CONT'D)

If you'd like me to stay a few days, I'll take off my things and make myself at home. But I'm out of the race for your money, and I'll pay my way from now on just as I've always done.

AUNT JANE

Misery, show my niece, Miss Patricia, to the Rose Chamber. And see that she is made comfortable.

PATSY

Thank you.

AUNT JANE

Make yourself perfectly free of the place, and have as good a time as you can. Stay as long as you please, but while you're here, if you ever feel like chatting with a harsh and disagreeable old woman, come to me at any time and you'll be welcome.

Patsy stands to leave, but turns back at Jane's words.

PATSY

Ah! I've been cruel, Aunt Jane. You must forgive me. It's just my blunt Irish way, you see; but if I hadn't been drawn to you from the first I wouldn't have said a word -- good or bad!

AUNT JANE

Go now, but come to me again whenever you like.

Patsy follows Misery out of the room. Silas sits opposite his old friend for some moments in thoughtful silence.

SILAS

The child is impossible.

AUNT JANE

You think so?

SILAS

Absolutely. Either of the others would make a better Lady of Elmhurst. Yet I like the little thing, I confess. She quite won my old heart after I had known her for five minutes. But Jane, you're making a grave mistake in all this. Why don't you do the right thing and leave Elmhurst to Kenneth?

AUNT JANE

You bore me, Silas.

SILAS

What's this I hear about John Merrick having returned from the West?

AUNT JANE

He came yesterday. It was a great surprise to me.

SILAS

I never knew of this brother, I believe.

AUNT JANE

No, he'd gone away before I became acquainted with either you or Tom.

SILAS

What sort of man is he?

AUNT JANE

Honest and simple, hard-headed and experienced.

SILAS

Is he independent?

AUNT JANE

I believe so. He didn't have much of an education, but he seems to be a good man, for all that. I'm glad he appeared at Elmhurst just at this time.

SILAS

You had believed him dead?

AUNT JANE

Yes. He had passed out of my life completely, and I never knew what became of him.

INT. KENNETH'S ROOM - DAY

Silas enters Ken's room silently. Uncle John and Ken are playing chess.

UNCLE JOHN

You're bound to lose the pawn, whichever way you play.

Ken gives an angry cry and thrusts the table away and the chess pieces clatter to the floor. Uncle John grabs him and throws him over his lap and spansks him. When he's done, Ken mutters in anger but keeps a respectful eye on John.

UNCLE JOHN (CONT'D)

(calmly)

You broke the bargain, and I kept my word. The compact was if you raised a rough-house, like you did yesterday, and got unruly, that I'd give you a good spanking. Now, wasn't it?

KENNETH

Yes.

UNCLE JOHN

Well, that blamed temper o' your'n got away with you again, and you're well spanked for not heading it off. Pick up the board, Ken, my lad, and let's try it again.

Ken starts to comply, but sees the lawyer. He flings himself against his chest and cries dramatically.

UNCLE JOHN (CONT'D)

A bargain's a bargain.

KENNETH

(sobs)

He whipped me! He whipped me like a child.

UNCLE JOHN

Your own fault. You wanted me to play a game with you, and I agreed, providin' you behaved yourself. And you didn't. Stop blubberin', and introduce me to your friend. Name's Watson, ain't it.

SILAS

Silas Watson, sir, at your service, and you must be John Merrick, who I understand has arrived during my absence.

UNCLE JOHN

Exactly.

SILAS

Glad to welcome you to Elmhurst, sir. I was good friends with Thomas Bradley.

UNCLE JOHN

Bradley must have been a fool to give this place to Jane.

SILAS

He was in love, sir.

(to Ken)

How are things going? Have the girls bothered you much, as yet?

KENNETH

No, I keep out of their way.

SILAS

That's a good idea.

(to John)

Bye the bye, sir, I've just brought you a new niece.

UNCLE JOHN

Patricia?

SILAS

She prefers to be called Patsy. A queer little thing; half Irish, you know.

UNCLE JOHN

And half Merrick. That's an odd combination, but the Irish may be able to stand it. These nieces are more than I bargained for. I came to see one relative, and find three more, and all women!

SILAS

I think you'll like Patsy, anyhow. And so will you, Kenneth.

KENNETH

I hate all girls!

SILAS

You won't hate this one. She's as wild and impulsive as you are, but better natured. She'll make a good comrade, although she may box your ears once in a while.

Ken turns away and begins picking up the chess pieces as the men go down the steps.

EXT. ELMHURST GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

They stroll through the garden.

UNCLE JOHN

A strange boy.

SILAS

I'm glad to see you've made friends with him. Until now he's had no one to befriend him but me, and at times he's so unmanageable it worries me dreadfully.

UNCLE JOHN

There's considerable character about the lad, but he's been spoiled and allowed to grow up wild, like a weed.

SILAS

He ought to go to a proper school, but I can't induce Jane to spend the money on him.

UNCLE JOHN

Jane's odd. In fact, Mr. Watson, it's a odd world, and the longer I live in it the stranger I find it.

Just then they encounter poor James who scurries away.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

LOUISE

It's a pleasure to meet you, Cousin Patricia.

PATSY

Thank you.
(turns to Beth)
And you must be Elizabeth?

BETH

(coldly)
I am. It's good to meet you.

PATSY

You can call me Patsy, and there's no use our trying to be chums just because we're cousins.

(MORE)

PATSY (CONT'D)

One of you will get her money, for I've told her I wouldn't touch a penny of it, and she has told me I wouldn't get the chance. So one of you will be a great lady. I'll not stay long, anyhow, so just forget I'm here. I'll amuse myself and try not to bother you.

As Patsy turns away, they exchange a skeptical look.

EXT. AUNT JANE'S PRIVATE GARDEN - DAY

Beth arrives and stands stiffly before her aunt.

BETH

Hello Aunt Jane, would you like me to read to you today?

Jane indicates a garden chair.

AUNT JANE

No, why don't we just sit and visit. Tell me about your life? You're going to school?

BETH

Yes, to become a school teacher. My father is a music teacher.

AUNT JANE

He can't make much money doing that. Does my sister work?

BETH

She sews and irons for income.

Beth flushes in embarrassment.

Louise arrives with a bustle of energy.

LOUISE

Hello, what a glorious day.

Louise arranges Aunt Jane's pillows.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Your garden smells delicious. What is the name of this rose?

AUNT JANE

That's one of my favorite roses. It is the Archduke Charles.

Louise smells it.

Beth rolls her eyes.

Patsy enters the garden from a side path.

PATSY

A garden party. How wonderful.

She kisses her aunt's cheek.

AUNT JANE

It's not a party. We are just visiting and admiring the roses.

PATSY

They must've been wonderful companions in this lonely place.

AUNT JANE

Lonely? Elmhurst? You are impertinent.

PATSY

Yes, I am. When's the last time you had a party here.

AUNT JANE

This is not a party house.

PATSY

That's because you've never invited anyone over for a party.

AUNT JANE

I invited you, and I think I may've been mistaken.

Patsy laughs and continues along a path leaving the three ladies staring after her.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

SILAS

So what do you think of your nieces?

AUNT JANE

I haven't decided. Beth pointed out several areas of household expenses I've neglected because I'm dying. I've asked her to look over the weekly accounts.

SILAS

And?

AUNT JANE

And she has, and she was correct, but she's so serious. Whereas that Louise is such a pleasant young lady.

SILAS

Is that a bad thing, to be serious? I would think that an admirable trait. The servants adore her.

AUNT JANE

And Patsy...
(smiles)
Patsy's impossible.

SILAS

Patsy's not serious, that's for certain.

AUNT JANE

That's not true... She's very serious about not wanting my money.

EXT. GAZEBO - DAY

Louise corners Ken in the garden gazebo.

LOUISE

Ah, you're Kenneth Forbes, I suppose. I'm very glad to make your acquaintance. I'm Louise Merrick, Miss Merrick's niece.

Ken shrinks back in fear.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

You needn't be afraid of me. You must be nearly my own age?

Still no reply.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

I suppose you don't know much of girls and are rather shy, but I want to be friends and I hope you'll let me.

Raises his hands as though to ward her off.

KENNETH

Go away!

LOUISE

Why?

Ken suddenly leaps past her and runs away.

Louise steps into the garden and looks after him, bewildered.

Beth walks up to her.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Kenneth is a regular little savage.

BETH

Never mind him. He's only a boy,
and doesn't amount to anything,
anyway. After Aunt Jane dies he
will probably go somewhere else to
live.

EXT. KENNETH'S BOTTOM STEP - DAY

Louise and Beth are sitting on the bottom step leading up to Ken's room.

Ken is glaring down at them from inside his room.

When they notice him, they giggle and start up the steps causing him to panic and flee through the inside hallway.

EXT. KEN'S ROOM - DAY

The next day, Beth and Louise are sitting on the bottom step again blocking Ken's exit.

Near his door on the porch, there is a small ladder leading to the second story roof. Ken looks back and forth between the ladder and an oak a dozen feet from the edge of the roof.

The girls walk away.

Kenneth carries a plank to the roof, where, after several attempts, he succeeds in dropping one end into a crotch of the oak, thus connecting the edge of the roof with the tree by means of the narrow plank.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

The next day, at first sight of the girls in his end of the garden, he flees to the roof, runs across the improvised bridge, shimmies down the tree and, hidden by the hedge, makes good his escape.

But Louise and Beth discover this escape plan and come giggling up his steps several times to watch him flee across the plank.

EXT. STABLE - DAY

Patsy's in the stables brushing down Nora, the mare.

PATSY
Oscar, does Ken like to ride?

OSCAR
Oh, yes, miss.

Patsy looks thoughtfully between the big-boned old work horse and the sorrel mare she is brushing.

PATSY
Is Nora the horse he usually rides?

OSCAR
Yes, miss.

PATSY
I'd better take Sam this morning.

OSCAR
You won't like Sam, miss, and he gets ugly at times and acts bad. Master Kenneth won't use Nora today, I'm sure.

PATSY
I think I'll ask him.

EXT. KEN'S STAIRS TO ROOF ESCAPE - CONTINUOUS

Patsy arrives at the bottom of Kens stairs.

KENNETH
(from window)
Get out of here!

PATSY

I won't! I've come to speak to you about the mare, and you'll just treat me decently, or I'll know the reason why!

Patsy starts up the stairs.

Kenneth flees to the ladder and up to the roof.

Patsy steps back down to the garden and looks up to see Ken running across his plank. He slips off and grabs wildly at the plank. He can't get a grip and grabs a hook instead.

He's dangling thirty feet up from the ground with one hand.

PATSY (CONT'D)

Hold on! I'm coming!

She runs up the steps, through his room, up the ladder and to the roof.

PATSY (CONT'D)

Hang on!

Patsy lays flat on her belly on the plank with an arm on each side of the plank. She grabs each wrist in a firm grip.

PATSY (CONT'D)

Now, then, let go of the hook.

KENNETH

No, I might drag you down with me.

PATSY

No you won't. I'm very strong and I'm sure I can save you. Let go!

KENNETH

I'm not afraid to die.

(bitterly)

Take away your hands, and I'll drop.

PATSY

Don't be a fool! There's no danger if you do just what I tell you.

They stare into each other's eyes. Ken gives a slight nod and lets go of the hook.

PATSY (CONT'D)

Now, then, when I lift you up, grab the edges of the plank.

She lifts him by his wrists enough for him to grasp the plank, then she creeps back.

PATSY (CONT'D)
Now swing your legs up and you're safe.

Ken tries, but can only touch the plank with his toes.

PATSY (CONT'D)
Once more!

This time she grabs his feet and hooks his legs around the plank.

PATSY (CONT'D)
Can you climb up now?

KENNETH
(panting)
I'll try.

EXT. AUNT JANE'S GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Aunt Jane, Uncle John and Silas are visiting in the garden. Jane glances up and sees Patsy and Kenneth on the plank. She cries out in alarm.

Both men follow her gaze and jump to their feet. They watch in fear as Patsy is kneeling on the plank with Ken hanging by his hands and legs.

SILAS
She must be trying to save him!

UNCLE JOHN
Ken must've fallen.

Both men run at full speed out of her garden.

Aunt Jane sits still and watches with a hand to her throat as Ken struggles to get on top of the plank. He tries several times.

Finally Patsy crawls back out onto the plank and grabs his collar when he tries and drags him to safety. She stands up and backs away.

AUNT JANE
Bravely done.

Suddenly Patsy's arms flail as she loses her balance. She tips sideways and disappears from sight.

Aunt Jane lets out an agonized scream, bringing Phibbs running to her side. Aunt Jane is in a dead faint.

Phibbs looks up and sees Ken crawling across the plank to the oak tree.

PHIBBS

Drat that boy! He'll be the death
of Miss Jane, yet.

EXT. GENERAL GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Uncle John and Silas are tangled on the ground with Patsy on top of them.

They scramble to their feet, but Patsy lays still.

Ken runs to her side, and pulling a bandana out of his pocket he tries to stop the bleeding from her forehead.

KENNETH

Do something! For God's sake try to
do something! Can't you see she's
killed herself to save me?

Uncle John kneels down and lifts the small girl in his arms.

UNCLE JOHN

Quiet, my lad, she ain't dead. Get
Nora, and fetch the doctor.

Ken races away.

INT. PATSY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Uncle John carries Patsy into her room while Misery quickly pulls back the covers on the bed. He lays her on the bed.

EXT. AUNT JANE'S GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Aunt Jane regains consciousness and grabs Phibb's wrist.

AUNT JANE

Is she dead?

PHIBBS

(looks around)
Who, Miss Jane?

AUNT JANE

Patricia.

PHIBBS

I don't know, Miss Jane. Why should she be dead?

AUNT JANE

Run, you idiot! Run at once and find out. Ask my brother -- ask anyone -- if Patricia's dead!

INT. PATSY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Phibbs stands just inside Patsy's door, awestruck.

UNCLE JOHN

No, she's not dead, but I can't tell how badly she is hurt. One of her legs is broken, I know, for I felt it as I carried her.

Phibbs runs out of the room.

Misery shoos the men out of the room as Beth and Louise arrive. Beth tucks the blanket gently around her cousin and brushes a wayward red lock off Patsy's pale face.

The doctor arrives.

INT. AUNT JANE'S DRAWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

DR. ELLEL

Her leg is fractured, and she's badly bruised. But I don't think she's suffered any internal injuries. The wound on her forehead is a mere nothing. So, with good care, I expect the young lady to get along nicely.

AUNT JANE

Do everything you can for her. You will be well paid Dr. Ellel.

DR. ELLEL

Yes, ma'am. I'll reset the leg.

INT. PATSY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

DR. ELLEL

Young ladies, will you please wait outside.

DR. ELLEL (CONT'D)
 Misery, lend me a hand here. I want
 to set her limb and stitch up her
 forehead before she regains
 consciousness.

INT. PATSY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Misery lets the girls in, and the doctor leaves.

Beth and Louise hover over her. Patsy has a bandage on her forehead. Her splinted leg shows under the bedspread.

Patsy wakes, but is too weak to talk. She looks upon her cousins with grateful love.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE PATSY'S DOOR - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS

--Kenneth begs for updates from everyone who comes in and out of the room. He paces up and down the hall.

--Louise, seeing his distress quietly talks to him.

--Beth comes out and almost runs into him. She smiles and pats his arm and rushes away on her errand.

INT. PATSY'S ROOM - NIGHT

LOUISE
 Patsy, dear, would you be willing
 to see Kenneth. He's been so
 desperate to see that you're well
 with his own eyes.

PATSY
 Yes, of course. Beth, help me sit
 upright.

Kenneth enters and advances awkwardly, looking fearfully at her bandaged white face.

PATSY (CONT'D)
 (gently)
 Hello Kenneth.

Patsy holds out a hand to him. He grasps her hand in both of his hands. He stares down at her with wide eyes. His bottom lip slightly quivers.

Louise gently sends him away when Patsy begins to look embarrassed by his frightened attention.

INT. HALLWAY IN FRONT OF PATSY'S ROOM - DAY

UNCLE JOHN

Come away and play a game of chess.

Uncle John loops Ken's arm and drags him away.

INT. KEN'S ROOM TO STEPS - CONTINUOUS

They play a game of chess and Uncle John wins easily to the distracted boy.

He goes out onto the step and lights his pipe. Ken follows with a piece of paper and a pencil and sketches Patsy.

Uncle John gets up after awhile and looks over Ken's shoulder. He lets out a low whistle. Ken doesn't notice.

EXT. STABLES - CONTINUOUS

John strolls into the stables.

DUNCAN

How's Miss Patsy this morning?

UNCLE JOHN

She's doing fine.

DUNCAN

A brave girl, sir!

UNCLE JOHN

Indeed.

DUNCAN

And the boy?

UNCLE JOHN

Why, he seems changed, in some way, Duncan. Not so nervous and wild as usual, you know. I've just left him drawing a picture... A good picture, too.

DUNCAN

Ah, he can do that, sir, as well as a real artist.

UNCLE JOHN

So you've known him to draw before this?

DUNCAN

Why, he's always at it, sir, in his quieter moods.

INT. KEN'S ROOM -- DAY

Several days later, Oscar carries a large package into Ken's room.

Ken stares at it for awhile and then carefully unwraps it to reveal a portable easel, canvas and drawing-paper, paints and oils, pencils, brushes and water colors.

INT. PATSY'S ROOM - DAY

Louise and Beth sit with Patsy, Beth reading and Louise needle-working.

PATSY

Tomorrow is day number ten and I will be permitted to get up out of this horrid bed.

Louise and Beth smile at her impatience.

Ken knocks and enters with his easel and art supplies.

PATSY (CONT'D)

Good golly! Where did you get the fancy art supplies?

KENNETH

I don't know. It was delivered to my room. At first, I thought it was from Mr. Watson, but he says he knows nothing about it. Then I thought it might be Uncle John; but Uncle John is too poor to afford such an expensive present.

LOUISE

I don't believe he has a penny in the world.

BETH

All he owns is an extra necktie, slightly damaged.

PATSY

But he's a dear old man, and I'm sure he would have given all those things to Kenneth had he been able.

KENNETH

Then who was it?

PATSY

Why, Aunt Jane, to be sure.

KENNETH

She wouldn't do anything to please me, even to save her life. She hates me, I know that well enough.

PATSY

Oh, no; I'm sure she doesn't. Aunt Jane has a heap of good in her; but you've got to dig for it, like you do for gold.

KENNETH

If she really did it, it was to please either Uncle John or Mr. Watson. I've lived here for years, and she's never done me a kind act. It isn't likely she'd begin now.

Ken sets up his project, makes a sketch and tries to fill it with watercolors. It turns out horrible. In a fit of anger he shreds it.

PATSY

But I must have my picture, anyhow. Make it in ink or pencil, Ken, and I'm sure it will be beautiful.

LOUISE

You need instruction, to do water color properly.

KENNETH

Then I can never do it!

In spite of this he begins a new drawing.

INT. JANE'S PRIVATE GARDEN - DAY

Patsy arrives in Aunt Jane's garden for her first visit in a wheelchair pushed by Beth and Louise.

Aunt Jane is in a surly mood.

AUNT JANE

Well, girl, how do you like being a fool?

PATSY

(grins)

It feels so natural that I don't mind it.

AUNT JANE

You might've killed yourself and all for nothing!

PATSY

Are you feeling better?

AUNT JANE

I shall never be better. The end is not far off now.

PATSY

Oh, I'm sorry to hear you say that! Why, here we are, four newly found relations all beginning to get acquainted, and we can't have our little party broken up, Auntie dear.

UNCLE JOHN (O.C.)

Five of us ---five relations.

Uncle John comes around the hedge.

UNCLE JOHN (CONT'D)

Don't I count, Patsy, you rogue? Why you're looking as bright and as bonny as can be. I wouldn't be surprised if you could toddle.

PATSY

Not yet, but I'm doing finely, Uncle John, and it won't be long before I can get about as well as ever.

AUNT JANE

And to think, all this trouble was caused by that miserable boy! If I knew where to send him he'd not stay at Elmhurst a day longer.

PATSY

Why, he's my best friend, Aunt. I don't think I could be happy at Elmhurst without Kenneth.

LOUISE

He's quite reformed, and seems like a very nice boy.

BETH

He's a little odd, at times, but not a bit rude, as he used to be.

Aunt Jane stares in amazement.

UNCLE JOHN

The fact is, Jane, you've never given the boy a chance. On the contrary, you nearly ruined him by making a hermit of him and giving him no schooling to speak of and no society except servants. He was as wild as a hawk when I first came, but these girls are just the sort of companions he needs, to soften him and make him a man. I've no doubt he'll come out all right, in the end.

AUNT JANE

Perhaps you'd like to adopt him yourself, John?

UNCLE JOHN

I ain't in the adopting business, Jane, and if I was, I'd adopt these nieces o' mine, instead of Tom Bradley's nephew. If Tom hadn't seen you, Jane, and loved your pretty face when you were young, Kenneth Forbes would now be the owner of Elmhurst. Did you ever think of that?

Aunt Jane's face contorts with rage.

AUNT JANE

John Merrick, leave my presence!

He slowly lights his pipe and walks away through the hedge.

INT. BETH'S ROOM - DAY

Louise is standing at the window in her room.

LOUISE

I'm getting rather worried over Aunt Jane's evident weakness for our cousin. The Irish girl may get the money yet.

BETH

Nonsense. Patsy said she wouldn't accept a penny of it, and I'm positive she'll keep her word. Besides, you don't want it, remember?

INT. AUNT JANE'S DRAWING ROOM - DAY

AUNT JANE

Silas, I'm ready to have you draw up my will.

Brief stunned silence. Then he pulls out a pen and notebook.

SILAS

Very well, Jane.

AUNT JANE

There is no use disguising the fact, Silas, that I grow weaker every day, and the numbness is creeping nearer to my heart. I have fully made up my mind as to the disposition of my property.

SILAS

Yes?

AUNT JANE

I shall leave to my niece Louise five thousand dollars.

SILAS

Yes, Jane.

AUNT JANE

And to Elizabeth a like sum.

The lawyer looks up with a disappointed look.

AUNT JANE (CONT'D)

Also to my brother, John Merrick.
The sum of five thousand dollars.

SILAS

To your brother?

AUNT JANE

Yes. That should be enough to take care of him for as long as he lives. He seems quite simple in his tastes, and he's an old man.

Silas writes it down.

AUNT JANE (CONT'D)

All my other remaining property, both real and personal, I shall leave to my niece, Patricia Doyle.

SILAS

Patricia!

AUNT JANE

Do as I bid, Silas Watson.

He leans back in his chair and looks thoughtfully at her.

SILAS

I'm not only your lawyer, Jane, I am also your friend and counselor. Do you realize what this bequest means?

AUNT JANE

It means that Patricia will inherit Elmhurst—and a fortune besides. Why not, Silas? I liked the child from the first. She's frank and open and brave, and will do credit to me.

SILAS

She is very young and unsophisticated, and of all your nieces she will least appreciate your generosity.

AUNT JANE

You're to be my executor, and will manage the estate until the girl comes of age. You'll see that she is properly educated and fitted for her station in life.

SILAS

But the boy, Jane? You seem to have forgotten Ken.

AUNT JANE

Drat the boy! I've done enough for him already.

SILAS

Wouldn't Tom like you to provide for Kenneth in some way, however humbly?

AUNT JANE

How do you know what Tom would like, after all these years? And how should I know, either? The money is mine, and the brat is nothing to me. Let him shift for himself.

SILAS

There's a great deal of money, Jane. To spare fifty thousand dollars to Kenneth, who is Tom's sole remaining relative, would be no hardship to Patricia. Indeed, she'd scarcely miss it.

AUNT JANE

You remind me of something, Silas. Add twenty thousand to Silas Watson. You've been very faithful to my interests and have helped to increase my fortune.

SILAS

Thank you Jane. And the boy?

Jane sighs wearily.

AUNT JANE

Give the boy two thousand.

SILAS

Make it ten, Jane.

AUNT JANE

I'll make it five and not a penny more. Now leave me, and prepare the will at once. I want to sign it today, if possible.

Silas bows gravely and leaves the room.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

The lawyer, Dr. Ellel, and a notary, are standing around the desk. Aunt Jane is seated in her wheelchair holding the document. She signs it and the others sign it also.

EXT. JANE'S PRIVATE GARDEN - DAY

Patsy is wheeled by Beth into Aunt Jane's private garden for a visit.

PATSY

My goodness! What a lovely,
sunshiny garden this afternoon. And
you look especially well, Aunt.

Phibbs leaves them to chat indistinctly for a bit, then;

AUNT JANE

How unfortunate the Major couldn't
properly educate you.

PATSY

How dare you! The Major did a
wonderful job raising me after my
mother died because you refused to
spare a penny to help her! My
father's a good man!

The shouting draws Phibbs hurriedly into the garden. She stops with her hand to her chest and looks from one to the other.

AUNT JANE

Now Patricia, I didn't mean to
raise your Irish temper.

PATSY

You don't get to speak about my
parents... you've not earned that
right!

Silas walks in at that moment to hear Patsy's tirade. He looks questioningly at Jane.

AUNT JANE

Patricia is quite right, Silas, and
I deserve all she's said. If the
girl were fond enough of me to
defend me as she does her father, I
would be very proud, indeed.

Patricia cools down at once and smiles brightly at her aunt.

PATSY

Forgive me! I know you didn't mean it, and I was wrong to talk to you in such a way.

INT. BETH'S ROOM -NIGHT

Beth is seated at her writing table with stationery in front of her. She taps her pen in the inkstand. With furrowed brow she begins to write with her bottom lip between her teeth:

BETH (V.O.)

Dearest Mother, I've done the best I could, but I'm not as clever as Louise nor as amusing as Patsy, so Aunt Jane pays little attention to me. She's a dreadful old woman, and I can't bring myself to appear to like her. That probably accounts for my failure; but I may as well stay on here until something happens.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

The cousins walk closely together laughing and talking. Patsy swings along on her crutches.

As they approach Ken's stairs, he steps out at the sound of their voices. Trotting lightly down the steps, he joins them on their stroll.

Uncle John smiles at them as they approach his reading nook in the garden.

UNCLE JOHN

You children seem cheerful this morning.

LOUISE

Patsy is happy to finally be out of the wheelchair.

Patsy stops and swings her broken leg back and forth with youthful energy.

PATSY

That's the truth. Soon, I'll be able to sneak away on Ken's mare.

KENNETH

I'll saddle up old Sam and go with you.

He blushes when they all turn to look at him.

BETH

That's kind of you Kenneth.

UNCLE JOHN

How is your art coming along?
Anything new?

PATSY

Oh, indeed! He's finished several drawings--

LOUISE

And has even learned a bit about watercolor--

BETH

You should see the one of the stable cats.

They talk over each other while Ken looks down and makes a design in the dirt with the point of his shoe.

KENNETH

It's nothing.

UNCLE JOHN

Have you figured out who gave you the supplies, Ken?

He shakes his head no.

INT. JANE'S GARDEN - DAY

Patsy and Aunt Jane are sitting quietly in the garden.

PATSY

I've invited Kenneth to dinner this evening.

AUNT JANE

(angry)
Who gave you such authority?

PATSY

No one, I just took it.

AUNT JANE

He shall not come. I'll have no interference from you, Miss, with my household arrangements. Phibbs!

Louise arrives with Phibbs and takes a seat.

AUNT JANE (CONT'D)

Instruct the servants to forbid Kenneth from entering my dining room this evening.

PATSY

Also, Phibbs, tell them not to lay a plate for me, and ask Oscar to be ready with the buggy at five o'clock. I'm going home.

Louise looks at Patsy and Aunt Jane glaring at each other like prize fighters. She bursts into laughter.

Patsy joins her, and finally Aunt Jane allows a smile to cross her stiff lips.

AUNT JANE

Never mind, Phibbs, we'll compromise matters.

PATSY

How?

AUNT JANE

By setting a plate for Kenneth. I imagine I can stand his society for one evening.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Kenneth enters the dining room timidly. He is the model of proper behavior.

Aunt Jane relents and speaks to him.

AUNT JANE

I understand from my brother John that you're an artist.

KENNETH

Yes, ma'am.

AUNT JANE

What do you like to do? Draw? Paint?

KENNETH

I've always liked to draw, but lately I've been learning to paint. I enjoy drawing people, but the flowers and Elmhurst are good too.

She keeps glancing at him with surprise throughout the meal.

EXT. PRIVATE GARDEN - DAY

PATSY

What a lovely dinner party last night, don't you think?

AUNT JANE

I know you are trying to wheedle me, but I don't object to the boy attending dinners with us.

Patsy beams in delight.

PATSY

I got a letter from the Major this morning. He's going to extend his vacation with his friend, the colonel. That'll work splendidly for me if you don't mind having me. It'll give my leg time to heal.

AUNT JANE

Of course, you must stay here 'til you are well.

PATSY

Thank you, Aunt Jane. I can't work yet at Madam Borne's, so I may as well stay here and enjoy myself.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - DAY

SILAS

I just think it's unfair after all this time to let Louise and Beth hope they might inherit Elmhurst.

AUNT JANE

Yes, but I hate the idea of disrupting the peace I've had.

SILAS

Jane, it's not fair.

AUNT JANE

(sighs)

Okay, okay, I will tell them
tomorrow morning.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - DAY

They come filing in the next morning. Patsy sits at the back
and props her crutches against the wall.

AUNT JANE

I believe, young ladies, that you
have understood from the first my
reason for inviting you to visit
Elmhurst this summer. I am old, and
must soon pass away, and instead of
leaving you and your parents to
squabble over my property when I'm
gone, I decided to make a will
giving my estate to someone of my
choice. I had no personal
acquaintance with any of you, but
judged that one out of the three
might serve my purpose, and
therefore invited you all here.

Louise is fluttering with excitement, Beth is chewing her
bottom lip, and Patsy leans forward with interest.

Uncle John sits a little to the back, near Patsy and Kenneth.
He watches with an amused smile upon his face.

The lawyer sits silent with his eyes fixed upon a pattern in
the rug.

AUNT JANE (CONT'D)

In arriving at a decision, I do not
claim to have acted with either
good judgment or intelligence. I've
simply followed my own whim, as
I've the right to do, and selected
the niece I prefer to become my
heiress. You cannot accuse me of
injustice, because none of you had
a right to expect anything of me;
but I'll say this, I'm pleased with
all three of you, and wish I'd
taken pains to form your
acquaintance earlier in life. You
might've cheered my old age and
rendered it less lonely and dull.

UNCLE JOHN

Well said, Jane.

AUNT JANE

Some days ago I asked my lawyer, Mr. Watson, to draw up my will. It was at once prepared and signed, and now stands as my last will and testament. I've given to you, Louise, the sum of five thousand dollars.

Louise laughs nervously, and throws out a hand with an indifferent gesture.

LOUISE

Many thanks, Aunt.

AUNT JANE

To you, Beth, I have given the same sum.

Tears appear in Beth's eyes, but she says nothing.

AUNT JANE (CONT'D)

I've also provided for you, John, in the sum of five thousand dollars.

UNCLE JOHN

Me! Why, suguration, Jane, I don't--

AUNT JANE

Hush! I expect neither thanks nor protests. If you take care of the money, John, it will last you as long as you live.

Uncle John starts with a snicker, which turns into great guffaws of laughter.

Patsy leans toward Uncle John and theatrically says;

PATSY

I hope, dear Uncle, that when poor Aunt Jane is gone you'll be able to buy a new necktie.

They both giggle while the others stare in astonishment. John wipes his damp cheeks with a hanky.

UNCLE JOHN

Thank you, Jane. It's a lot of money, and I'll be proud to own it.

AUNT JANE
Why did you laugh?

UNCLE JOHN
Our old Dad once said I'd never be worth a dollar in all my life. What would he say now, Jane, if he knew I stand to have five thousand -- if I can manage to outlive you?

She turns away in scorn.

AUNT JANE
In addition to these bequests, I've left five thousand and an annuity to Kenneth and twenty thousand to Mr. Watson. The remainder of the property will go to Patricia.

Silence. Ken is stunned.

PATSY
You may as well make another will, Aunt. I'll not touch a penny of your money.

AUNT JANE
(fiercely)
Why not?

PATSY
You have been kind to me, and you mean well. I'd rather not tell you my reasons.

AUNT JANE
I demand to know them!

PATSY
Ah, Aunt, can't you understand, without my speaking?

AUNT JANE
No.

A flush crosses Jane's cheeks.

Patsy rises and swings to a position directly in front of Jane Merrick, where she rests on her crutches. Patsy's eyes are bright and full of indignation, and her plain little face is so white that every freckle shows distinctly.

PATSY

There was a time, years ago, when you were very rich and your sister Violet, my mother, was very poor. Her health was bad, and she had me to care for, while my father was ill with a fever. She asked you to loan her a little money to tide her over her period of want.

(louder)

What did you do, Jane Merrick? You who live in a beautiful mansion, and have more money than you could use? You told her she belonged to a family of beggars, and none of them could wheedle your money away from you!

AUNT JANE

It was true, they were after me like a pack of wolves -- every Merrick of them. They would've ruined me if I'd let them.

John clears his throat meaningfully.

AUNT JANE (CONT'D)

Except you John.

PATSY

So far as my mother is concerned, that's a lie. She never appealed to you but that once. The result was she died, and I was left to the care of strangers until my father was well enough to support me.

AUNT JANE

I'm sorry, girl.

(lips trembling)

I was wrong. I see it now, and I am sorry I refused Violet.

PATSY

Then I forgive you! I forgive you, Aunt Jane, for through your own selfishness you cut yourself off from all your family. From all who might have loved you, and you've lived all these years a solitary and loveless life. There'll be no grudge of mine to follow you to the grave, Aunt Jane.

Patsy taps a finger on Aunt Jane's desktop.

PATSY (CONT'D)

But, I'll never touch a penny of the money that was denied my poor dead mother. Thank God the old Dad and I are independent, and can earn our own living.

Uncle John goes to where Patsy is standing and hugs her, crutches and all. Then he releases her, and without a word stalks from the room.

AUNT JANE

Leave me now. I want time to think.

Patricia goes around to her aunt and gently lays a hand on her grey head and kisses her withered cheek.

PATSY

That's right,
(she whispers)
Think it over, Aunt. It's all past and done now, and I'm sorry I had to hurt you. But not a penny. Remember, not a penny will I take!

INT. LOUISE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Louise is seated at her desk writing.

LOUISE (V.O.)

After all, it isn't so bad as it might be, Mother, dear. I'll get five thousand, at the very worst, and that will help us on our way considerably. But I'm quite sure that Patsy means just what she says, and that she will yet induce Aunt Jane to alter her will. In that case I believe the estate will either be divided between Beth and me, or I will get it all. I shall stay here and play my best cards until the game is finished.

Louise signs her name with a flourish and folds the note.

INT. AUNT JANE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Patsy arrives next day to find her aunt looking sad.

AUNT JANE

I want you to reconsider your decision of yesterday, Patricia.

PATSY

Don't ask me to do that, Aunt, my mind is fully made up.

AUNT JANE

I've made mistakes, I know, but I want to do the right thing, at last.

PATSY

Then I'll show you how. You mustn't think me impertinent, Aunt, for I don't mean to be so at all. But tell me; why did you wish to leave me your money?

AUNT JANE

Because your nature is quite like my own, child, and I admire your independence and spirit.

PATSY

But my cousins are much more deserving. Louise is very sweet and loves you more than I do, while Beth is the most sensible and practical girl I've ever known.

AUNT JANE

That may be so, but I've left each a legacy, Patricia, and you alone are my choice for the mistress of Elmhurst. I told you yesterday, I'm not trying to be just. I plan to leave my property according to my personal desire, and no one shall stop me.

PATSY

But that is quite wrong, Aunt, and if you want me to inherit your wealth you will be disappointed. A moment ago you said you wished to do the right thing, at last. Don't you know what that is?

Jane looks at the ceiling.

AUNT JANE

Perhaps you will tell me.

PATSY

With pleasure. Mr. Bradley left you this property because he loved you, and love blinded him to all sense of justice. He should have considered his own flesh and blood.

AUNT JANE

There was no one but his sister, who at that time was not married.

PATSY

But the property ought to be Ken's. It would please me beyond belief to have you make your will in his favor.

AUNT JANE

I won't.

PATSY

It would also be considerate and just to the memory of Mr. Bradley. What's going to become of Kenneth?

AUNT JANE

I left him five thousand.

PATSY

Not enough to educate him properly. Why, the boy might become a famous artist, if he had good masters.

AUNT JANE

The boy is nothing to me.

PATSY

But he ought to have Elmhurst, at least. Won't you leave it to him, Aunt Jane?

AUNT JANE

No.

PATSY

Then do as you please. As a matter of justice, the place should never have been yours, and I won't accept a dollar of the money if I starve to death!

AUNT JANE

(pleadingly)
Think of your father.

PATSY

Ah, I've done that, and I know how many comforts I could buy for the dear Major. Also I'd like to go to a girl's college and get a proper education. But not with your money, Aunt Jane. It would burn my fingers. Don't you dare to will your selfish hoard to me!

AUNT JANE

Let us change the subject, Patricia.

PATSY

Will you change your will?

AUNT JANE

No.

PATSY

Then I won't talk to you. I'm angry and hurt, and if I stay here I'll say things I shall be sorry for.

With these words, Patsy marches out of the room with flaming cheeks.

Aunt Jane watches with admiring eyes.

AUNT JANE

(whispers)

It's just as I'd do under the same circumstances.

INT. BETH'S ROOM - DAY

Louise is draped over a sofa, Beth is sitting primly at her writing desk and Patsy is pacing and flinging her arms about.

PATSY

Every day she calls me to visit, and every day I tell her I'll not accept her money. She's the most stubborn person I've ever met!

Louise and Beth exchange a knowing smile.

PATSY (CONT'D)

At least Elmhurst should go to Kenneth. It's not right that he should be thrown out on his ear.

BETH
Would it be so terrible to be rich?

LOUISE
I think it would lovely.

PATSY
So do I, but not her contaminated
money!

BETH
Well, I think you are exhausting
her. She seems much more frail
lately.

EXT. PRIVATE GARDEN - DAY

The next morning Patsy arrives for her visit.

PATSY
Good morning, Aunt.

AUNT JANE
Are we going to fight again today?

PATSY
Not if you agree to change the
will.

AUNT JANE
Very well, Patricia; you shall have
your way. My only desire, child, is
to please you, and if you long to
see Kenneth the owner of Elmhurst
I'll have a new will drawn in his
favor.

PATSY
Do you really mean it, aunt?

AUNT JANE
I mean exactly what I say, and now
let us cease all bickerings, my
dear, and my few remaining days
will be peaceful and happy.

PATSY
I could almost love you for this
final act of justice!

Silas enters.

PATSY (CONT'D)
Tell him, aunt! Let him get the
paper ready right away.

AUNT JANE
(avoiding his eyes)
There is no reason for haste.

Patsy spins around and stares at her with narrowed eyes.

AUNT JANE (CONT'D)
Oh, Very well... I have promised
Patricia that you shall draw a new
will, leaving all my estate to
Kenneth Forbes, except for the
bequests that are mentioned in the
present paper.

Silas looks amazed and suspicious.

PATSY
Tell him to draw up the paper
today, aunt!

AUNT JANE
As soon as you can, Silas.

PATSY
And, aunt, can't you spare a little
more to Louise and Beth? It would
make them so happy.

AUNT JANE
Double the amount I had allowed to
each of them.

SILAS
Are you serious?

AUNT JANE
Yes, I am tired of opposing this
child's wishes. What do I care what
becomes of my money when I'm gone?
All I desire is to have my
remaining days peaceful.

Patsy wraps her arms around the invalid and hugs and kisses
her. Aunt Jane is flustered by the attention.

PATSY
They shall be, Aunt!

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Silas and Patsy talk quietly as they walk together slowly through the gardens.

SILAS

Have you read it, then?

PATSY

Yes, but, Mr. Watson, she still hasn't signed it. I'm trying not to be suspicious, but I'm afraid she is purposefully not signing the new will. Every day she has some new reason for not signing it...

(mimicking Jane)

'I'm too tired. I don't have enough witnesses'... it's always some such excuse.

SILAS

Hmmm.

PATSY

I suspect she is hoping she'll die before the new will is legal. I'm so very disappointed in her, sir.

SILAS

I will speak to her, Miss Patsy.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - DAY

Patsy enters the room as Silas and Jane are in deep conversation.

PATSY

Am I interrupting? Shall I come back?

AUNT JANE

No, dear, Silas was just telling me that I've been unfair to you. I will sign the will today.

Patsy claps her hands impulsively.

PATSY

Right now?

AUNT JANE

No dear. This afternoon.

Patsy looks anxiously between the two.

AUNT JANE (CONT'D)
I will call you to witness it.

INT. PATSY'S BEDROOM - DAY

PHIBBS
Miss Patsy, Miss Jane would like to see you in her drawing room now.

Patsy tosses her book down.

PATSY
Oh, yes! Right away, Phibbs.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

PATSY
Hello Aunt, and hello Oscar.

Oscar tips forward in a small bow.

AUNT JANE
Good, you are here. I have Oscar and Phibbs as my witnesses.

Patsy leans over the desk to watch in excitement.

The two witnesses sign it and Aunt Jane slides it into a large yellow envelope.

Patsy flits around and hugs each one of them, before racing out of the room.

EXT. ELMHURST GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Patsy bursts upon Louise and Beth who are reading in their favorite nook. Uncle John looks up from the newspaper.

PATSY
I have the most fabulous news! Aunt Jane has finally signed the will. It's done, I'm not to inherit anything!

LOUISE
You are a mystery.

BETH
She's daft.

UNCLE JOHN
She's genuine.

Patsy twirls, making her skirt flare.

BETH
Be careful, you just came off your
crutches last week.

PATSY
Yes, dear thoughtful Beth.

John hops up and offers his arm. They dance a country jig.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

As Patsy enters, Aunt Jane is handing the large envelope to
Silas.

PATSY
(whispers to Silas)
It's properly signed.

SILAS
And sealed.

He tips the envelope for her to see the seal.

INT. BETH'S ROOM - NIGHT

BETH
She said we'll both profit
nicely... what does that mean?

LOUISE
It must mean we'll split Aunt
Jane's wealth. What else could it
mean?

BETH
I don't know.

LOUISE
Goodness, you're such a worrier!
Even if we get nothing, we had a
grand time together, didn't we?

Beth steps to Louise's side and takes her hand.

BETH
Of course, cousin. That's a gift
that will last a lifetime.

EXT. JANE'S PRIVATE GARDEN - DAY

Jane is fussing over her flowers.

AUNT JANE

James has been neglecting his work,
lately.

PHIBBS

He's very strange, ma'am. Even more
so since the young ladies an'
Master John came to Elmhurst.
Strangers he never could abide, as
you know, and he runs and hides
himself as soon as he sees any of
'em about.

AUNT JANE

Poor James! But he mustn't neglect
my flowers, or they'll be ruined.
Go and find him, and ask him to
come here, and then guard the
opening in the hedge. See that none
of my nieces come to bother him.

PHIBBS

Yes, miss.

EXT. JANE'S PRIVATE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

James enters by himself to see Aunt Jane sitting in her
wheelchair with her back to him. She appears to be looking up
at the trees.

JAMES

(hat in hand)
I've come, miss.

Getting no answer he circles around and sees her eyes staring
blankly with a shaft of sunlight on them. Not a lash quivers.

James gives a scream that rings through the air. Then,
shrieking like the madman he is, he bounds away through the
hedge, sending old Phibbs whirling into a rose-bush, and
flees as if a thousand fiends are at his heels.

Uncle John and Silas burst through the hedge to see what is
happening. They see Jane is dead.

UNCLE JOHN

Poor Jane.

Uncle John tenderly closes her eyelids.

UNCLE JOHN (CONT'D)
Her fate's taken her unawares.

SILAS
Better so. She has found peace at
last.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Walking away from the grave site.

PATSY
I'm sure she had a good heart.

BETH
I hadn't noticed it.

PATSY
Oh, I did. And she made a new will,
after that awful one she told us
of, and tried to be just and fair
to all.

LOUISE
Tell us, Patsy, what does the will
say?

PATSY
Mr. Watson is going to read it.
Then you'll know as much about it
as I do. I mustn't tell secrets, my
dear.

Ken is looking especially gloomy and worried.

PATSY (CONT'D)
You know, Ken, whatever happens
we're always to remain friends.

KENNETH
(no eye contact)
Of course. I'll be sure to send you
my address.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - DAY

The girls, Ken, and Uncle John are present for the reading
of the will.

With much solemn ceremony, the lawyer opens a tin box and
pulls out the sealed envelope. He breaks the seal and pulls
the document out.

His face turns red with anger as he clenches his jaw. He thrusts it back into the envelope and tosses it onto the table top. The envelope skids off the desk and lands on the carpet.

Absolute silence follows.

PATSY

(whispers)

Is something wrong?

SILAS

Miss Merrick gave me this document a few days ago, leading me to believe it was her last will. I had prepared it under her instruction and understood that it was properly signed. But she has herself torn off the signatures and marked the paper 'void,' so that the will previously made is the only one that is valid.

PATSY

What! What do you mean? Isn't Kenneth to inherit Elmhurst, after all?

KENNETH

Me? Me to inherit!

PATSY

That's what she promised me. I saw her sign it! If she has fooled me and destroyed the signatures she's nothing but an old fraud and, -and I'm glad she's dead!

She throws herself down on the sofa and bursts into tears.

Her cousins look betrayed and stay away from her.

Uncle John comes to her side and pets her head.

UNCLE JOHN

Never mind, little one. Jane was always cruel and treacherous by nature, and we might've expected she'd deceive her friends even in death. But you did the best you could, Patsy, dear, and it can't be helped now.

The lawyer pulls out the genuine will.

SILAS

Give me your attention, please.

PATSY

(shouts)

I won't take a cent of it!

SILAS

Be silent! You have all, I believe, been told by Miss Merrick of the terms of this will, which is properly signed and attested. But I'll read it again.

PATSY

As far as I am concerned, you may as well tear up this will, too. I won't have that shameful old woman's money.

SILAS

That's a matter the law does not allow you to decide. You'll note the fact that I'm the sole executor of the estate and must care for it in your interests until you are of age. Then it'll be turned over to you to do as you please with.

PATSY

Can I give it away, if I want to?

SILAS

Certainly. It is now yours without recourse, and although you can't dispose of it until you're of legal age, there will be nothing then to prevent your transferring it to whomsoever you please.

Patsy turns to Kenneth.

PATSY

Ken, I faithfully promise, in the presence of these witnesses, to give you Elmhurst and all Aunt Jane's money as soon as I am of age.

UNCLE JOHN

Good for you, Patsy.

KENNETH

I don't want the money -- really I don't! The five thousand she left me will be enough. But I'd like to live here at Elmhurst for a time, until it's sold or someone else comes to live here.

PATSY

It's yours. You can live here forever.

SILAS

If that's your wish, Miss Patricia.

PATSY

Thank you. Can't you give to Louise and Beth the ten thousand dollars they were to have under the other will, instead of the five thousand each this one gives them?

SILAS

I'll consider that matter. Perhaps it can be arranged.

The cousins suddenly look friendlier.

LOUISE

Patsy, you 're so kind... thank you.

Duncan appears in the doorway and beckons Uncle John.

DUNCAN

Will ye' please come 'n see James, sir? The poor fellow's dying.

INT. JAMES' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Uncle John follows Duncan into the tiny room. Oscar is standing at the bedside of James.

UNCLE JOHN

Is he dead?

OSCAR

No, sir, but he's mortally wounded, I'm thinkin. Old Sam kicked him hard in the chest. Must've happened while we were at the funeral.

Jame's shirt, above the breast, is soaked with blood.

UNCLE JOHN

The doctor should be sent for.

DUNCAN

He'll be here soon. One of the stable boys rode to fetch him. But I thought you ought to know at once, sir.

UNCLE JOHN

Quite right, Duncan.

As they stand there watching the dying man, he opens his eyes and smiles.

JAMES

Ah, it's Duncan.

DUNCAN

Yes, old friend, and this is Mr. John.

JAMES

Mr. John? Mr. John? I don't quite remember you, sir.

(with a slight shake of his head)

And Dun, lad, you've grown wonderful old, somehow.

DUNCAN

It's the years, Jeemes. The years make us all old, sooner or later.

The gardener is puzzled. He examines his companions carefully.

JAMES

The dreams confuse me. I can't always separate them, the dreams from reality. Have I been sick, Dun?

DUNCAN

Yes, lad. You're sick now.

James closes his eyes.

UNCLE JOHN

(whispers)

Do you think he's sane?

OSCAR

I do, sir. He's sane for the first time in years.

James looks at them again.

JAMES

Master Tom's dead, ain't he?

DUNCAN

Yes, Jeemes.

JAMES

That's real, then, an' no dream. I remember it all, now... the shriek of the whistle, the crash, and the screams of the dying. Have I told you about it, Duncan?

DUNCAN

No, lad.

JAMES

It all happened before we knew it. I were on one side the train car and Master Tom on the other. My side were on top when I came to me-self, and Master Tom were buried in the rubbish. God knows how I got him out, but I did. Both legs crushed. I knew at once he were dyin'. I carried him to the grass and laid him down. The master knew he were done; and him so young and happy, and just about to be married to, to, the name escapes me, Dun!

He mumbles for a moment. His eyes slide shut. He stays perfectly still.

The men watch.

James moves again and opens his eyes. Speaking in even stronger tones.

JAMES (CONT'D)

It were hard work to get the paper for Master Tom, but he swore he must have it before he died. I ran all the way to the station house and back, a mile or more, and brought the paper, and pen and ink, besides.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

It were just a telegraph blank --
all I could find. Naught but a
telegraph blank, lad...

Again, James voice trails off to a mumble...

UNCLE JOHN

(Whispers)

He mustn't die yet.

DUNCAN

Yes, lad. I'm a listenin.

JAMES

To be sure. So I held the paper for
him, and the brakeman supported
Master Tom's poor body, and he
wrote out a will as clear as may
be.

UNCLE JOHN

The will!

JAMES

Sure enough; Master Tom's last
will. Isn't my name on it, too,
where I signed it? And the
conductor's beside it. Who should
sign the will with Master Tom but
me -- his old servant and friend?
Am I right, Dun?

DUNCAN

Yes, lad.

JAMES

'Now,' says Master Tom, 'take it to
Lawyer Watson, and bid him care for
it. Give my love to Jane -- that's
the name, Dun, the one I thought
I'd forgot -- and now lay me back
and let me die.' His very words,
Dun. And we laid him back and he
died. Poor Master Tom. Poor, poor
young Master, and him to be
married...

James trails off.

UNCLE JOHN

The paper, James! What became of
it?

JAMES

Sir, I don't know you. The paper's for Lawyer Watson. It's he alone shall have it.

SILAS

Here I am, James. Give me the paper. Where is it? I am Lawyer Watson.

James laughs a gruesome croaking laugh that ends with a gasp of pain.

JAMES

You Lawyer Watson? Why, you old fool, Silas Watson's as young as Master Tom. As young as I am! You? You Lawyer Watson?

James rises up upon an elbow.

SILAS

(gently)
Where's the paper?

James stares at him an instant, and then suddenly collapses back upon the bed.

UNCLE JOHN

Have you heard it all?

SILAS

Yes. I followed you here as soon as I could. Tom Bradley made another will, as he lay dying. I must have it, Mr. Merrick.

OSCAR

Then you must find it yourself, for James is dead.

Dr. Ellel arrives to assess. He nods his head solemnly.

UNCLE JOHN

He seemed to have recovered his memory or something at the end.

DR. ELLEL

He's been insane for many years. Sometimes, when a person regains consciousness, the mania will vanish and they remember the last scene of the tragedy that deprived them of their reason.

UNCLE JOHN

Could James' story be the effect of a disordered mind?

DR. ELLEL

Possibly, but I don't think so.

UNCLE JOHN

So, unless he's destroyed the paper in his madness, we should be able to find it among his possessions.

The body is removed and they systematically search the room.

SILAS

It was a telegraph blank?

UNCLE JOHN

Yes.

SILAS

Then we cannot mistake it, if we find any papers at all.

They continue the search. John holds up a paper.

UNCLE JOHN

I've got it.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

BETH

Where is Uncle John?

KENNETH

And Silas?

LOUISE

I saw them go into the drawing room earlier. It looked like they were discussing something of importance.

They begin eating and chatting youthfully.

Silas and Uncle John arrive at the finish of the meal.

SILAS

I have something very important to divulge. You know that James met with an accident and passed away?

They nod.

SILAS (CONT'D)

He spoke to us before he died and told us about yet another will. This one is from Mr. Bradley.

He holds up the will on the telegraph paper.

SILAS (CONT'D)

Please follow me to the drawing room.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They all take a seat expectantly.

SILAS

I will read the final will of Thomas Bradley.

He clears his throat.

SILAS (CONT'D)

I bequeath to Jane Merrick, my affianced bride, the possession and use of my estate during the term of her life. On her death all such possessions, with their accruement, shall be transferred to my sister, Katherine Bradley, if she then survives, to have and to hold by her heirs and assignees forever. But should she die without child previous to the death of Jane Merrick, I then appoint my friend and attorney, Silas Watson, to distribute the property among such organized and worthy charities as he may select.

UNCLE JOHN

And it's properly signed and witnessed. The estate is Ken's after all, for he's the sole heir of his mother: Katherine Bradley Forbes.

Blank looks follow this.

UNCLE JOHN (CONT'D)

Goodbye to my five thousand.

BETH
 (lips quivering)
 Don't we get anything at all?

SILAS
 No, my dear.

Patsy laughs merrily.

PATSY
 Wasn't I the grand lady, though,
 with all the fortune I never had?
 But 'twas really fine to be rich
 for a day, and toss the money
 around as if I didn't have to dress
 ten heads of hair in ten hours to
 earn my bread and butter.

LOUISE
 (smiles)
 It was all a great farce. I'll take
 the afternoon train to the city.
 How foolish of me to return her
 hundred dollar check.

BETH
 I used mine to get here. It's all
 I'll ever get, it seems.

She bursts into tears.

Kenneth sits doubled over in his chair, rocking.

PATSY
 Never mind, Beth. We're no worse
 off than before we came, are we?
 And we've had a nice vacation.
 Let's forget all disappointments
 and be grateful to have met each
 other.

BETH
 I'm going home today!

PATSY
 We'll all go home.

UNCLE JOHN
 For my part, I have no home.

Patsy runs to his side and Ken jumps to his feet.

KENNETH
 You can stay here!

UNCLE JOHN

No, the Merricks are out of Elmhurst now, and it returns to its rightful owners. You owe me nothing, my lad.

KENNETH

But I like you, and you're old and homeless. Stay at Elmhurst, where you're welcome.

John shakes the boy's hand heartily.

UNCLE JOHN

I've wandered all my life. I can wander some more.

PATSY

See here! We're all three your nieces, and we'll take care of you between us. Won't we, girls?

Louise smiles scornfully. Beth scowls.

LOUISE

My mother and I live so simply in our little flat, that we really haven't extra room to keep a cat. But we shall be glad to assist Uncle John as far as we're able.

BETH

Father can barely support his own family, but I'll talk to my mother about Uncle John when I get home, and see what she says.

PATSY

Oh, you don't need to, indeed! Uncle John is my dear mother's brother, and he's to come and live with the Major and me, as long as he cares to. There's room to spare, Uncle, and a joyful welcome into the bargain. No, no, say nothing at all, sir! Come you shall, if I have to drag you!

Uncle John swipes his moist eyes with his hanky.

UNCLE JOHN

Thank you, my dear, but where's the money to come from?

PATSY

Money? Bah! Doesn't the Major earn a heap with his bookkeeping, and haven't I had a raise lately? Why, we'll be as snug and contented as pigs in clover. Can you get ready to come with me today, Uncle John?

UNCLE JOHN

Yes, I'll be ready, Patsy.

EXT. STEPS TO KENNETH'S ROOM - DAY

Silas and Kenneth are sitting on the steps to Ken's room.

SILAS

You ought to travel, and visit the art centers of Europe. I'll find a competent tutor to go with you.

KENNETH

Can't you come yourself?

SILAS

I am getting old, and my clients are few and unimportant. Perhaps I can manage to go abroad with you.

KENNETH

Oh, I'd like that.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

The Major is outside the train gates, his face red and beaming, and his snowy moustache bristling with eagerness.

At once Patsy drops her bundles and runs to the Major's arms, leaving Uncle John in her wake to rescue her belongings and follow after.

PATSY

Oh, Major, here's Uncle John who's come to live with us; and if you don't love him as much as I do I'll make your life miserable!

MAJOR DOYLE

On which account, I'll love Uncle John like my own brother. And surely, my dear Violet's brother must be my own. Welcome, sir, now and always, to our little home.

(MORE)

MAJOR DOYLE (CONT'D)

It's modest, sir; but wherever
Patsy is the sun is sure to shine.

UNCLE JOHN

I can believe that.

They board a street car.

INT. STREET CAR - CONTINUOUS

MAJOR DOYLE

But how about the inheritance,
Patsy dear? Did you get nothing out
of Jane Merrick's estate?

PATSY

Not a nickle, Dad. 'Twas the best
joke you ever heard. I fought with
Aunt Jane like a pirate and it
quite won her heart. When she died
she left me all she had.

MAJOR DOYLE

Look at that, now!

PATSY

Which turned out to be nothing at
all, for another will was found,
made by Mr. Bradley, which gave the
money to his own nephew after Aunt
Jane died. Did you ever?

MAJOR DOYLE

No, I never.

PATSY

So I was rich for a day, and then
poor as ever. And so is Uncle John.
She gave him five thousand, which
he didn't get after all.

MAJOR DOYLE

In your case, it won't matter. Our
house is yours, and there's plenty
and to spare.

UNCLE JOHN

Thank you kindly.

INT. THE DOYLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

After climbing the rickety stairs to the apartment, they come into the tiny apartment with all their packages.

PATSY

It's no palace, but there's a hearth, and it's our home as well as yours, Uncle John.

Uncle John looks around curiously. There is one good sized living-room, with an ancient rag-carpet partially covering the floor, an iron stove, a sofa, a table and three mismatched chairs. Opening from this are two small bedrooms.

UNCLE JOHN

It's cozy enough, my child; and I thank you for my welcome, but may I ask where on earth you expect to stow me in this rather limited establishment?

PATSY

Where? Have you no eyes, then? It's the finest sofa in the world, Uncle John, and you'll sleep there like a king... Where, indeed!

UNCLE JOHN

Ah, I see.

MAJOR DOYLE

And you can wash in my chamber, and hang your clothes on the spare hooks behind my door.

UNCLE JOHN

I haven't many.

The major coughs politely.

MAJOR DOYLE

You'll find the air fine, and the neighborhood respectable. Patsy gets our breakfast on the stove yonder, and we buy our lunches downtown, where we work, and then dine at Danny's place. A happy home, sir, as I hope you'll see.

UNCLE JOHN

I'm sure I'll be happy here.

PATSY

Oh, Major! What will the Uncle do all the day while we're at work?

UNCLE JOHN

No need to fret... I'll look around for a job myself.

MAJOR DOYLE

No need to worry, between the two of us men and Patsy, we ought to have no trouble at all.

PATSY

You know it won't matter, Uncle John, if you don't work. There will be enough for all, with the Major's wages and my own.

MAJOR DOYLE

Bye the bye, if you have any money about you, which is just possible, sir, you'd better turn it over to Patsy to hold, and let her make you an allowance. That's the way I do.

PATSY

The Major's extravagant, and if he has money he wants to buy every man he meets a drink.

Uncle John shakes his head, reproachfully, at the Major.

UNCLE JOHN

A very bad habit, sir.

MAJOR DOYLE

Yes, New York's a wicked city to be carrying a fat pocketbook around in, as I've often observed.

UNCLE JOHN

My pocketbook isn't exactly fat.

PATSY

But you've money, sir, for I marked you squandering it on the train, so out with it. We'll count it up and see how much of an allowance I can make you 'till you get the job.

Uncle John laughs and pulls his wallet out. Then he empties his pockets.

Patsy separates the jack-knife and keys from the coins.

PATSY (CONT'D)
Seven dollars and forty-two
cents... any more?

After a moments hesitation Uncle John pulls a thin billfold from an inner coat pocket. He extracts two tens and a five.

PATSY (CONT'D)
Good gracious! All this wealth, and
you pleading poverty?

UNCLE JOHN
I never said I was a pauper.

PATSY
You couldn't, and be truthful, sir.
Why, this will last for ages, and
I'll put it away safe and be
generous with your allowance. Let
me see, you just keep the forty-two
cents, Uncle John. It'll do for car-
fare and a bit of lunch now and
then, and when you get broke you
can come to me.

John meekly gathers the coins.

UNCLE JOHN
Thank you, Patsy.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Uncle John strolls down the New York City streets. He turns into a building with "Isham, Marvin & Co., Bankers and Brokers" printed above the door.

INT. BANK - CONTINUOUS

He goes up to the counter and gives his name then takes a seat and waits. A guard looks at his disheveled attire and dirty tie in disdain.

The bank president's door opens and John is ushered in by a man in a suit.

A couple of hours later John exits the office. He stops in the doorway to shake the man's hand.

Simultaneously Major Doyle is coming out of his little office and sees John Merrick talking to the president. He stops in shock to watch, unseen.

UNCLE JOHN

Don't delay on purchasing that property. I need it and the price is right.

BANK PRESIDENT

Of course Mr. Merrick, it will be done by tomorrow.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - CONTINUOUS

Uncle John exits a tailor shop and walks slowly down the street.

He comes to Danny's restaurant, where Patsy is waiting for him in the doorway.

PATSY

Oh, Uncle John, I've been really worried about you; it's such a big city, and you a stranger. Don't you know you're ten minutes late?

UNCLE JOHN

I'm sorry to worry you, Patsy.

INT. DANNY'S - CONTINUOUS

They enter and sit at the table. The major is already seated.

The major looks suspiciously at Uncle John.

MAJOR DOYLE

How was your day? Did you get anything accomplished?

UNCLE JOHN

Oh, yes. I went to the bank to check on my finances.

PATSY

Finances? Do you have money there?

UNCLE JOHN

A bit. I opened an account with them many, many years ago.

Major Doyle's expression relaxes, and Patsy looks curious.

INT. DOYLE APARTMENT - DAY

The two men are sitting in the den, smoking cigars. Patsy is curled up on the sofa, reading. It's a Saturday.

A knock sounds at the door. Patsy hops up and opens the door to reveal a delivery boy, who extends a package to Patsy. She accepts it and turns to the men, who are watching her.

MAJOR DOYLE
What is it, Mavoureen?

She comes to the table and sits down with her bulky envelope.

PATSY
I don't know, Major.

She opens the envelope and pulls a thick document out and then spills a key onto the table.

All three stare silently at the key.

MAJOR DOYLE
What's the papers say, Patsy?

She reads them and puts a hand over her mouth in confused astonishment.

John watches calmly with a slight smile as he puffs his cigar.

The Major gets up and takes the papers from Patsy.

MAJOR DOYLE (CONT'D)
What be this? It looks like the deed to a house.

Patsy holds up the key.

EXT. NICE STREET - CONTINUOUS

The three stand staring up at a large brownstone building with one common front door and six addresses.

INT. BROWNSTONE APARTMENTS - CONTINUOUS

They enter and see a list of residents next to the stairs.

Patricia Doyle is printed below a large number three.

Patsy timidly leads the way up the stairs to the door with a three on it.

She glances at Uncle John and Major Doyle, and slides the key in. With a deep breath she turns the key and the door opens to a gorgeous roomy apartment.

INT. NEW APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

They wander around the furnished flat. Uncle John opens a cigar box and takes out a cigar to smell it appreciatively.

PATSY
(in alarm)
Don't light that! We don't know if
this is ours.

UNCLE JOHN
Patsy, it's not ours, it's yours.

She shakes her head with big eyes.

PATSY
This can't be mine.

MAJOR DOYLE
But, deary, you have the property
deed, the key, and your name is in
the hallway and on your door--

A knock on the door interrupts him. NANCY, a young female in a maid's costume is standing there.

NANCY
Miss Doyle?

Patsy nods. Nancy steps in and bobs a curtsy.

NANCY (CONT'D)
My name is Nancy, I'm your maid.

PATSY
My maid?

NANCY
Yes, miss.

No one moves.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Well, I'll get your supper
prepared.

Nancy bustles past them through a swinging doorway. They follow and watch her working. She is familiar with the kitchen.

Going back to the front room they sit down and say nothing. Finally Patsy looks to Uncle John.

PATSY

Do you think this may be related to the gift of art supplies given to Kenneth?

UNCLE JOHN

That's a reasonable guess.

INT. LOUISE'S HOME - DAY

A couple of days later, Uncle John is announced by a maid to Louise and her mother.

Louise stays on the couch, but lays her book down. Mrs. Merrick rises and approaches her brother-in-law.

MRS. MERRICK

Hello John. Have a seat.

LOUISE

Yes, do sit. How are you, Uncle?

He sits down in his rumpled suit.

Mrs. Merrick cringes.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Have you settled in at Patsy's home? I wish you could stay with us, but we don't have much space for company.

MRS. MERRICK

No, indeed... I wish we could help you, but--

She shrugs delicately.

UNCLE JOHN

(cynical smile)

I have a lovely place to live. Thank you anyway.

Louise offers him a cookie from a crystal plate. He takes one and munches on it.

LOUISE

What do you think of grand New York City?

(MORE)

LOUISE (CONT'D)

It's a bit different from what
you're accustomed to, I imagine.

UNCLE JOHN

It certainly is a big city.

MRS. MERRICK

(pointedly)

Louise is expecting a suitor for a
visit any moment now.

Uncle John stands up. Louise rises.

LOUISE

I wish I could visit with you more.
Give Patsy my love, will you?

MRS. MERRICK

Please come again soon.

He bows politely and exits.

Louise goes to the window and looks down to the street below.
An elderly couple is seated on their balcony below her.

Uncle John walks out the front door and turns on the
sidewalk.

MALE NEIGHBOR

Good lord, Edith! Did you see that
man? Wasn't that John Merrick, the
billionaire?

FEMALE NEIGHBOR

Oh my! Are you sure?

MALE NEIGHBOR

Indeed it was him. I saw him
downtown at the tailor's last week.

FEMALE NEIGHBOR

You know, the ladies one floor up
are named Merrick. They must be
related.

Louise draws back quickly with a gasp as the couple looks
upward toward her window.

Her face is flushed as she sinks into the closest chair.

Mrs. Merrick rushes to her side.

MRS. MERRICK

Are you well, my dearest?

INT. PATSY'S NEW APARTMENT - DAY

Uncle John enters the new apartment to find Patsy curled up on the Major's lap, her head on his chest. She has a book in her hand.

They both look up at Uncle John.

Patsy gasps and hops up.

PATSY

Good Golly! Look at that swanky suit. How in the world could you afford that?

Major Doyle raises his eyeglass and looks sternly at John.

MAJOR DOYLE

That's a very, very good question. Out with it John Merrick! What are you up to? Is this some kind of trickery?

UNCLE JOHN

I've bought a new suit with the money I got from the bank.

John pulls a cigar out of the engraved cigar box and slides it under his nose.

PATSY

You look like a millionaire!

MAJOR DOYLE

You better tell her, or I will, John. No more shenanigans. Spill the beans.

UNCLE JOHN

I've got some money set aside.

Major Doyle thumps his fist down on the end-table loud enough to make Patsy and John jump.

MAJOR DOYLE

You're a billionaire, and that's the truth of it! You didn't know that I clerk at Isham, Marvin & Company. I saw you there and I did a little snooping around. You've been dishonest with us!

Patsy stares in wonder at her father's flaming cheeks and Uncle John's placid expression. John sits down and lights his cigar.

UNCLE JOHN
I deceived no one.

PATSY
But you're rich?

MAJOR DOYLE
As Croesus.

UNCLE JOHN
I never said I was poor. You assumed I was poor. It gave me a marvelous opportunity to watch my nieces without you being aware.

He blows a cloud up toward the ceiling.

UNCLE JOHN (CONT'D)
I never married and therefore have no children. I've spent my entire life working. I created a factory for making tin cans and I opened another factory in California. Well, that kept me busy, but one day I realized I'd no one to benefit from my money. So I came back home to see if I had any family.

PATSY
So this is your apartment?

UNCLE JOHN
No, it's yours. Yes, I bought it for you. I'm also going to give one-hundred thousand to each of your cousins. But this entire building is yours, free and clear. It is up to you to manage it and the tenants. It should bring you in a nice little income.

Silence.

UNCLE JOHN (CONT'D)
And if you don't mind I could live here with you and the Major.

Patsy flings her arms around him and bursts into noisy tears.

Fade Out