

ON WHITMAN AVENUE By Maxine Wood

KATE: That woman's insufferable. You'll have to put a fence across the entire lot to keep her out.

ED: Or take it down. It was a silly idea in the first place.

KATE: The hedge can go to wrack and ruin too! This letter came from Walt Lund today. I opened it. I knew it was something about them.

ED: Oh—thanks.

KATE: Aren't you even going to read it?

ED: I've seen it. You know that old bachelor who's always coming into the store to buy Lydia Pinkham pills for his lumbago? He's burned up about this.

KATE: That old crank!

ED: It's his opinion ---

KATE: I'm not interested in his opinion.

ED: No maybe you'll be more impressed by Frank Wilson's. After all, he's on the school board.

KATE: Ed, don't you realize that letter is a warning?

ED: If you mean the real estate company got Lund to get a committee of upright citizens together to send it out, I agree with you.

KATE: We've got to give them notice right away, Ed. We can't stall any longer. There's going to be a big meeting.

ED: Where'd you hear that?

KATE: Bernie Lund was here today and ---

ED: You should know better than to listen to that kid- ---

KATE: But he didn't make it up! He heard it at home.

ED: I hear things too, Kate. From the reactions I'm getting at the store, I think the company's afraid to have a meeting. They're not sure of their ground.

KATE: You don't intend to sign that clause, then?

ED: Why Kate, you didn't think for a moment - - -

KATE: Oh, I knew it would be against your principles.

ED: Surely it's against yours, too?

KATE: I don't care whether you sign it or not! Once they're out of here, we'll never be in a situation like this again!

ED: Kate, you don't mean that. That's a pretty corrupt statement. It doesn't sound like you.

KATE: I'm not just thinking of us, Ed. But of them, too! It's just not safe for them to live here. How do you know that a bunch of hoodlums won't mob them, or even stone the house!

ED: Stone! It's been struck by lightening!

KATE: That boy's not well, Ed. The strain might---

ED: If he's willing to take the chance- ---

KATE: But, Ed - - - - -

ED: I don't think anything's going to happen, Kate. Too many people know his story by now. When men like Frank Wilson come into the store to congratulate me. . . .

KATE: Because a few friends pat you on the back- - -

ED: No, casual customers, too. . . I wish you would spend an afternoon at the store just listening in - - - -

KATE: At your cigarette counter! No, thank you. I've heard all I want to hear. People whispering and snickering behind our backs. Belle Hall snubs me in my own yard!

ED: Tell that lady-bug to fly away South.

KATE: Don't toss her off like that. She's knifing us in the back. She's telling everyone that you're letting the Bennetts live here so you can get some free work out of the old man.

ED: No one will believe that lie.

KATE: You can never catch up with a lie. I told him, Ed, that I didn't want him working around the grounds.

ED: Kate, that was like cutting off his right arm.

KATE: I didn't do it to be mean. I was thinking of you. I just can't bear to have people say things about you.

ED: My reputation's sturdy enough to stand a few pinpricks.

KATE: But you're so easy-going Ed! Your first responsibility should be to yourself. If you don't watch out for yourself, nobody else will!

ED: This is for ourselves, Kate. For once let's somehow find the courage to stand up for what we know is right.

KATE: Oh, Ed - - why do you always feel that way!

ED: You did the other night. You wouldn't throw that family out in the street. You voted to have them stay here.

KATE: Only for a month. Until they found a place. But you haven't even given them notice, Ed. You could tell them in a nice way. - - - -

ED: How? I don't know a nice way of saying you can fight for your country but you can't live in it. I know you're scared, Kate. I am, too.

KATE: You admit that!

ED: Only to you. We've stood on the sidelines long enough shaking our heads. For once, let's do more than that. You'll try, Kate?

KATE: I've been trying, haven't I? . . . . These past few days have been a century. When Johnnie comes, tell him I want to see him right away.