

BINNIE

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GIRLS OF SUMMER

[HILDA starts clearing the liquor glasses.]

BINNIE. Here—let me do that.

HILDA. No—it's done. [With a forlorn little laugh.] I don't know what happened to my party. It just went to pieces. [Pulling herself together.] Well, Sunday's over. I'm going to bed. I wonder what church I'll go to next Sunday.

BINNIE. Can I do something for you, Hilda? Can I get you some hot milk?

HILDA. [With a smile.] No thanks, darling. I'm all right. You don't have to mother me.

BINNIE. Hilda—Mother and Dad—what were they really like? Jules asked me—and I suddenly realized I couldn't answer.

HILDA. But I've told you.

BINNIE. Not really. Didn't they ever fight—didn't they ever get mad at each other?

HILDA. Never! They were two quiet people! He had a quiet voice and she had a quiet smile. And I remember—when I was a kid—if I woke in the night—I'd hear the radio—the sweetest music—it would be coming from their bedroom—Oh, what a lovely perfect world they made! [With an outcry.] And then they left me to make it! And I can't—I can't do it by myself!

BINNIE. But you do, Hildy—you do!

HILDA. [Abruptly noting BINNIE'S fear, she pulls herself together.] It's all right, Honey—it's only a mood—don't be frightened—only a mood.

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BINNIE. Don't get that way, Hildy—please—

HILDA. [Putting her arms around her.] I won't. Don't be afraid—it's all right—it's all right. [Silence. They cling to each other a moment. When they separate, they are restless—some moorings have shaken loose in both of them. HILDA winds up at the open doorway, looking up in the direction of Sugar Lips' window.] Mickey says they call him Sugar Lips.

BINNIE. Who?

HILDA. That fellow who plays the trumpet. I wonder how he gets through the night. Probably sleeps on the floor—dreaming blue devils. [With a laugh.] Go away, blue devils! [Abruptly, down to earth.] Did you and Jules really get lost in the park?

BINNIE. [An instant. Then:] No.

HILDA. —Did you have a good time?

BINNIE. [Troubled.] Well—yes.

HILDA. That was a little hesitant, wasn't it?

BINNIE. No, we had a wonderful time—except—well, we were on a Hilda kick. We kept talking about you.

HILDA. Oh.

BINNIE. Say that "oh" again, Hildy.

HILDA. What do you mean, say it again? Just oh.

BINNIE. It sounded a little—pleased.

HILDA. [Irritably.] Oh Binnie! It doesn't give me any pleasure to have him talk about me. I dislike him very much.

BINNIE. I know you do. I don't. I'm crazy about him.

HILDA. What did you do? Where'd you go?

BINNIE. Well, that's what gets under my skin—where we went. The zoo. Peanuts to pigeons. Rowing on the lake.

HILDA. [*Pleased at BINNIE's reaction to his strategy.*] Oh, the romantic treatment—

BINNIE. But all that April-in-bloom stuff—that's not what makes him romantic!

HILDA. What does? His silk shirts? His yellow Jaguar?

BINNIE. No!—it's the truth in him! If he thinks something—he says it! But today he was different! He was tricky! No straight pitches—only curves!

HILDA. That's Step Two in The Treatment.

BINNIE. What do you mean?

HILDA. Throw her off balance.

BINNIE. [*Starting to cry.*] Oh, Hildy, he's knocking me out!

HILDA. Don't let him, Binnie—don't let him!

BINNIE. [*In real pain.*] Hildy, tell me—how do people get to know each other—I mean really know each other!

HILDA. [*Bowled over by the enormity of the simple question.*] Oh, brother!

BINNIE. That's why I let him talk about you. Because whenever we got on the subject of Hilda, he talked straight—I could see him!

HILDA. What did he say?

BINNIE. That doesn't matter—he's all wrong about you!

HILDA. What did he say, Binnie?

BINNIE. Nothing. I'm going to bed.

HILDA. Binnie, tell me!

BINNIE. [*Upset.*] I don't want to talk any more!

[*She starts for her bedroom. HILDA is a little desperate to keep her here. She abruptly changes her tone.*]

HILDA. [*Gently.*] Binnie—?

BINNIE. What?

HILDA. If he makes you this unhappy why did you ask him to call you again?

BINNIE. I don't know. [*Suddenly.*] If he calls me again, I won't be home.

HILDA. You mean that, Binnie?

BINNIE. What's the use? He'll be gone in a few days anyway. [*Then, quietly.*] He's going to Montauk for a week. And so long, Julesy!

HILDA. [*With a cry of relief.*] Good riddance, Binnie! Believe me, good riddance!

BINNIE. [*On the verge of tears.*] Hildy—Hildy—

HILDA. [*Comforting.*] Don't think about it, Honey—don't make it too important! This is the kind of thing that happens to young girls in the summer. There they were—sweet—in the middle of spring—and suddenly everything gets hot and a little wild—I I guess you've just got to sweat it out and then—

BINNIE. [*Quietly.*] Did you?

HILDA. Did I what?

BINNIE. Sweat it out?

HILDA. [*With an unsteady laugh.*] Me? Well—I guess I've been lucky—I'm not a summer girl, I guess! [*Forcing her laughter.*] Spring and fall, spring and fall! [*Then, embracing BINNIE again.*] Binnie—Binnie! —I'm so glad you've seen it through! And so quickly! And you'll never be sorry, darling—believe me, you'll never be sorry! Some day a man will come along and you'll be so glad you waited! He'll be everything you ever dreamed of! There won't be anything about him that you'll want to change! Nothing!

BINNIE. [*Half to herself.*] He'll be perfect!

HILDA. To you he will be!

BINNIE. Is that what you're waiting for, Hilda?

HILDA. What?

BINNIE. [*Breaking away—going to pieces.*] Oh Hilda, I feel sick.

HILDA. Don't baby—please don't! It's the best thing—the best thing that ever happened!

BINNIE. Hilda—I've made up my mind. [*With desperate calm.*] I'm going to Montauk with him.

HILDA. —Binnie, you're not!

BINNIE. Yes I am! Tomorrow night—I'm going to meet him at his hotel—and by midnight we'll be in Montauk!

HILDA. Binnie, you won't! You'll change your mind—you won't do it!

BINNIE. That's what he says—but you're both wrong!

HILDA. Binnie, you're only a child—

BINNIE. Stop saying that! Both of you—stop saying it!

HILDA. You're only eighteen! At eighteen—if you've got any sensitivity at all—you can go haywire! You're an easy mark for a man like that!

BINNIE. No! You've got it all wrong! You don't know what today was like! We were together all day—and after we left here—he didn't even kiss me!—not once!

HILDA. Of course! He's shrewd! It's a wonderful tactic!

BINNIE. And he didn't ask me to go to Montauk! I asked him!

HILDA. Binnie!—baby!—it's strategy! It's all shrewd strategy! He told me what would happen today! He drew a diagram of it! The zoo—pigeons in the park—every bit of it! And you know what he said? "I'll be going to Montauk! I won't ask her to go with me—she'll ask me!" Binnie, he planned it all—every step of it! And he had the gall to tell me!

BINNIE. I know— [*With a wry smile.*] He told me that he told you.

HILDA. [*Hotly.*] Well, doesn't it humiliate you? Doesn't it humiliate you to be part of his dirty little blueprint?

BINNIE. I can't help it!

HILDA. I'm not going to let you do it! I'm not going to let you hurt yourself!

BINNIE. Hilda, stay out of it!

HILDA. I won't let you go!

BINNIE. You won't be able to stop me, Hilda!

HILDA. Yes I will! You're a minor—I'm your older sister and your guardian. I won't let you go!

BINNIE. What'll you do? Call the police?

HILDA. [*Hectically.*] I don't know—I don't know! But I'll do something!—shame you out of this!—both of you!

BINNIE. No you won't! For the first time in my life—I feel something—deeply—

HILDA. *Because* it's the first time, you've got to distrust it!

BINNIE. You mean run away from it?!

HILDA. Yes!

BINNIE. That's what you'd do, isn't it? That's what you always do!

HILDA. Stop that!

BINNIE. Yes—that's what you always do! Is Jules right about you?—are you scared?!

HILDA. Don't say that!

BINNIE. Are you cold?!

HILDA. Binnie, stop that!

BINNIE. Are you jealous?!

HILDA. Binnie!

[*Her hand strikes out, a stinging slap across BINNIE'S face. The slap, once its shock is over, sobers BINNIE. Now, with cold deliberation.*]

BINNIE. I'm going to meet him tomorrow night.

[*She goes quickly into the bedroom. In an outcry, HILDA races after her.*]

HILDA. Binnie! Binnie, I'm sorry—I'm sorry! [*Trying the door—knocking on it.*] Don't do it, Binnie! Please don't do it! Binnie, unlock the door! Binnie—Binnie—I'm sorry—I'm sorry—!