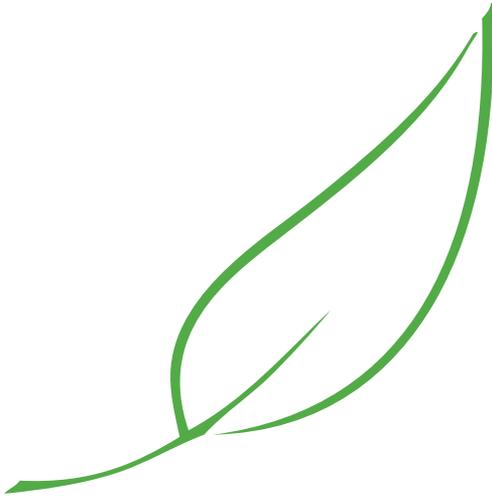


# Christie

By Thomas Hischak



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# CHRISTIE

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# CHRISTIE

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**SYNOPSIS:** From the world of “Little Women” comes another poignant story that will move your audience with laughter and tears. During the middle of the 19th century, the strong-willed, orphaned teenager Christie sets out to be her own person, not dependent on any relatives or a husband to support her, but to earn her own living and maintain her own self-respect. Over a period of twenty years she encounters times of happiness and hardship, meets rich and poor people who influence her life, gets involved with tragic and joyous events, and eventually finds herself as a woman. Based on Louisa May Alcott’s farsighted novel “Work,” this play will take both actors and audience on a journey that is filled with reaffirming life.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(4-8 males, 11-23 females)*

CHRISTIE S (f) .....	Aged 40, the play’s narrator. <i>(85 lines)</i>
CHRISTIE (f) .....	Aged 20, an independent young woman. <i>(306 lines)</i>
AUNT BETSEY (f) .....	A sweet, old-fashioned woman. <i>(18 lines)</i>
UNCLE ENOS (m) .....	A hard, stubborn farmer. <i>(8 lines)</i>
MRS. FLINT (f) .....	The landlady, cold, aloof. <i>(12 lines)</i>
MRS. STUART (f) .....	A wealthy, delicate, affected woman. <i>(18 lines)</i>
MR. STUART (m) .....	A stern, conceited businessman. <i>(28 lines)</i>
HEPSEY JOHNSON .....	A runaway slave, determined, strong. <i>(30 lines)</i>
MRS. BLACK (f) .....	A middle-aged actress, talkative and friendly. <i>(20 lines)</i>
LUCY BLACK (f) .....	Her daughter, an attractive actress. <i>(23 lines)</i>
MRS. CHARLOTTE SALTONSTALL (f) ..	A rich, distracted mother. <i>(26 lines)</i>
WILLAMINA (f) .....	Her pampered daughter, aged 12. <i>(17 lines)</i>

TAMARA (f) .....	Her pampered daughter, aged 10. (18 lines)
PHILIP FLETCHER (m) .....	Their uncle, cynical, bored, good looking, aged 33. (72 lines)
MRS. CARROLL (f) .....	A gentle, worried, secretive mother. (15 lines)
HELEN CARROLL (f) .....	Her depressed, sickly daughter, aged 22. (29 lines)
NURSE (f) .....	An elderly woman. (11 lines)
HARRY CARROLL (m) .....	A cheerful, if dissolute son, late 20s. (30 lines)
BELLA CARROLL (f) .....	A lively, attractive daughter, aged 18. (18 lines)
MRS. KING (f) .....	A hard, businesslike woman, owner of the sewing shop. (14 lines)
RACHEL (f) .....	A quiet, beautiful girl, aged 25 but seems older. (45 lines)
MRS. WILKINS (f) .....	A warm, friendly mother of six young children. (28 lines)
MRS. STERLING (f) .....	An elderly, but spry Quaker woman. (29 lines)
DAVID STERLING (m) .....	Her quiet, moody son, early 30s. (50 lines)
ACTORS (m) .....	In the company. (1 line for ACTOR.)
ACTRESSES (f) .....	In the company
SEAMSTRESSES (f) .....	In the sewing shop. (2 lines)
BOSTONIANS .....	At the flower show.
SOLDIERS (m) .....	At the hospital.
WOMAN 1 .....	(1 line)
WOMAN 2 .....	(1 line)
WOMAN 3 .....	(1 line)

**SUGGESTED DOUBLING:** *For a cast of 4 males and 11 females.*

CHRISTIE S.

CHRISTIE

AUNT BETSEY / MRS. CARROLL

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MRS. FLINT / MRS. STERLING  
 MRS. STUART / MRS. WILKINS  
 HEPSEY JOHNSON / MRS. KING  
 MRS. BLACK / NURSE  
 LUCY BLACK  
 MRS. SALTONSTALL / RACHEL / LETTY  
 WILLAMINA / HELEN CARROLL  
 TAMARA / BELLA CARROLL  
 UNCLE ENOS / MR. STUART  
 PHILIP FLETCHER  
 HARRY CARROLL  
 DAVID STERLING

### PRODUCTION NOTES

The story of Louisa May Alcott's *Work* takes place over twenty years, from 1846 to 1866, in various places in New England. The play works best with an open stage with furniture pieces and props brought on as needed. The period costumes need not be elaborate, but there should be a distinction between the working women, such as Christie, Rachel, and Mrs. Wilkins, and the wealthy women, such as Mrs. Stuart, Helen Carroll, and Charlotte Saltonstall. Casting notes on Hepsey and character doubling can be found at the end of the play.

### PROP & FURNITURE LIST

#### STERLING KITCHEN

- Fireplace
- Rocking chair
- Stool
- Table
- Two chairs
- Knitting (Mrs. Sterling)
- Needlepoint (Bella)
- Book (Rachel)
- Sewing (Mrs. Wilkins, Hepsey)
- Sheets of paper (Christie S.)

#### AUNT BETSEY'S KITCHEN

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- Same fireplace
- Rocker
- Sewing (Betsey)
- Carpetbag (Christie)

### STUART HOUSE

- Small kitchen table
- Two chairs
- Fainting sofa
- Large bowl and spoon (Hepsey)
- Umbrella (Mr. Stuart)
- Coat brush (Christie)
- Guest list (Mrs. Stuart)
- Candle (Hepsey)
- Theatrical helmet & shield (Christie)
- Large unpainted stage flat

### SALTONSTALL HOUSE

- One fancy chair
- Newspaper (Philip)

### SEASIDE RESORT

- Bench
- Letter (Christie)
- Letter (Enos)
- Handkerchief (Philip)
- Wrapped package (Philip)
- Book (*Jane Eyre*) (Christie)

### CARROLL HOUSE

- Settee
- Two fine chairs
- Fainting sofa
- Table with framed photo on it
- Blanket (Nurse)
- Envelope with money (Harry)

SEWING SHOP

- Chairs for seamstresses
- Sewing for seamstresses

MRS. WILKINS' HOUSE

- Bed
- Chair
- Knitting (Mrs. Wilkins)

STERLING KITCHEN (same as beginning of play)

- Breakfast dishes on table
- Box of seedling plants (David)
- Bench (to represent wagon seat)
- Reins (David)
- Crate of flowers (Christie)
- Bucket of water and ladle (Christie)
- Podium (Christie)

**NOTE ON THE CASTING OF HEPSEY JOHNSON**

If HEPSEY is not played by a persons of color, the following lines can be added to the script.

**CHRISTIE:** Hepsey, were you a slave?

**HEPSEY:** All my life, till I run off five years ago.

**CHRISTIE S:** Hepsey seemed as light-skinned as myself but she was Negro by birth so that made her a slave.

**HEPSEY:** My mother and my six brothers and sisters are still down South, waitin' for the Lord to set them free. And He gonna do it soon. I been saving my money and when I got enough I gonna go down and buy each and every one of them.

**ACT ONE**

**AT RISE:** *Lights rise on a group of six women gathered together in the simple kitchen of a rural house. Old MRS. STERLING sits in a rocker knitting, RACHEL is on a stool at her feet reading a book, HEPSEY and MRS. WILKINS sit at a table sewing with BELLA CARROLL who is doing needle point. CHRISTIE S. stands amidst them reading aloud from sheets of paper. Perhaps there is a fireplace with the glow of a fire seen.*

**CHRISTIE S:** “. . . for I have always been proud to be counted among those working women who have served since the times of antiquity, who have labored in order to make the world better and not just to survive it. But I will be even more proud if someday there is a true democracy, an Ideal Republic, in which each woman did the task she liked and was paid for it in liberty, equality and fraternity!”

**RACHEL:** Christie, that was marvelous! I can't wait to hear you deliver your speech on Thursday night!

**CHRISTIE S:** You don't think it was a bit too . . . highbrow? I don't want to talk over their heads.

**MRS. WILKINS:** I'm used to people talking over my head, dearie. I think I prefer it that way. But I love the words all the same.

**MRS. STERLING:** That last part about equality . . . Do you suppose folks will think you're talking about women's suffrage?

**BELLA:** Let them! It's a just cause.

**HEPSEY:** It's gonna take us another Civil War to get them rights. I can smell it. I already escaped from one kinda slavery, but this one ain't gonna go `way any faster.

**CHRISTIE S:** I don't want to sidetrack from the important issues. Maybe I shouldn't say “equality.”

**MRS. WILKINS:** You go ahead and say it, Christie. You'll be speaking to mostly women and maybe they got to hear the word if they're ever gonna start thinking about it.

**BELLA:** Well spoken, Mrs. Wilkins!

**HEPSEY:** *(To MRS. WILKINS.)* Maybe you ought to make a speech someday. They'll listen to you, no doubt about that!

**MRS. WILKINS:** Me? I'm lucky if I get my six kids to listen to me!

*They laugh; a child is heard crying offstage.*

**MRS. STERLING:** There's little Ruth. (*Gets up.*) She'll be hungry, God bless the child. You stay with your guests, Christie. I'll see to her. (*Exits.*)

**HEPSEY:** Maybe the world will be a whole lot different when that child is all growed up. I seen plenty of change in my lifetime. Maybe she will too.

**CHRISTIE S:** I certainly hope so, Hepsey. I want Ruth to feel happy and useful when she grows up. It took me many years to feel that I was both. Maybe she won't have to wait so long.

**RACHEL:** If she does . . . it will be worth the wait.

**MRS. WILKINS:** Amen to that.

*The WOMEN continue talking to each other in pantomime as CHRISTIE S. leaves the scene and crosses down to address the audience.*

**CHRISTIE S:** Happy and useful. It sounds so easy. At least I thought so twenty years ago when I first proclaimed to my Aunt Betsey what I was going to do. Twenty years ago . . . Can it be so long? And yet I recall it all so vividly. Of course I was a different person then.

*CHRISTIE enters; lights fade out on the kitchen.*

Younger, of course. But so different. It seems I can stand back now and watch that other person like a spectator in a gallery. I recognize her. But do I really know her?

*The WOMEN exit and take the furniture with them, leaving only the rocker and perhaps the fireplace. AUNT BETSEY enters and sits and sews. CHRISTIE joins her.*

**CHRISTIE:** Aunt Betsey, there's going to be a new Declaration of Independence!

**BETSEY:** Bless and save us, what do you mean, child?

**CHRISTIE S:** (*Still to audience.*) I was twenty years old and still living with my aunt and uncle who took me in after my parents died.

**CHRISTIE:** I mean that now that I am twenty, I'm going to take care of myself and not be a burden any longer!

**BETSEY:** Burden? Nonsense. You do your chores, you help me all the time –

**CHRISTIE:** Uncle wants me out of the way and, sooner or later, he's going to tell me so. I don't intend to wait for that!

**BETSEY:** Oh, it's just your uncle's way of behaving. Don't you pay any heed to it, Christie.

**CHRISTIE:** I won't be doing it for him. There's myself to consider. I must go out into the world and, like in the fairy tales you once read to me, I must seek my fortune!

**BETSEY:** Fortune! What crazy ideas you get!

**CHRISTIE:** I've thought it all out. If I had been a boy, I would be out in the world by now. And so I should be. I hate being dependent. And that's what I've been all these years. Well, there's no reason for it any longer. I shall go out and work. I'll leave this town and find a job in a city where I will be happy and useful!

**BETSEY:** But can't you do that here?

**CHRISTIE:** It's not the same. I must earn my own bed and board where no one knows me and does me any favors.

**BETSEY:** Maybe you should have married Joe Butterfield. He asked you twice. Then you'd be contented.

**CHRISTIE:** It would be another form of dependency and I won't have it! I've saved up a bit of money from those quilts I sold, and I've got the name of a rooming house from when the Harpers went to Boston for their son's wedding. I can leave in a moment's notice. (*Kneels down by BETSEY.*) But you haven't said I could go, Auntie.

**BETSEY:** I ain't got no right to keep you, girl, if you choose to go. But I will miss you. And I am sorry you ain't been happy here –

**CHRISTIE:** You have been more than wonderful to me, Auntie! I shall never be able to repay you for all you've done. And I will miss you something awful! But you understand why I must leave?

**BETSEY:** I can't say I do, Christie. But you've always been a bright girl and smarter than me, and I trust that you know best.

*They embrace.*

**CHRISTIE:** I am quite sure I won't hear Uncle say such words.

**BETSEY:** Shush! Here he comes!

*ENOS DEVON enters, sees the two WOMEN, stops.*

You're late, Enos. *(Rises.)* I got your supper warming.

**CHRISTIE:** I have something important to say, Uncle Enos.

**ENOS:** You always think you do. Let me eat first.

**CHRISTIE:** This can't wait. I will be leaving you, Uncle. I've decided I must set out on my own.

**ENOS:** Is that so?

**CHRISTIE:** Yes. This town is too small for me. Too small for my ideas and ambitions and my independence –

**ENOS:** Just like her mother. Full of highfalutin' notions, discontentment, and set in her crazy ideas. All that raving about independence and such, it'll all come to nothing and you'll make a failure of your life, just like her.

**BETSEY:** Enos!

**CHRISTIE:** I cannot think that my mother's life was a failure! She took care of herself, she married the man she loved even though he was poor, and she was happy! That's better than most people who frown on the world and only worry about having more money than their neighbors!

**BETSEY:** Christie, your uncle ain't saying – !

**ENOS:** I'm saying you'll come to no good. You'd best leave sooner than later so that you'll find out for yourself. *(Starts to go.)* Enough lecturing for one night –

**CHRISTIE:** Please, Uncle . . . *(He stops.)* We cannot part like this. I have so much to thank you and Aunt Betsey for. I have no cause to talk like that to you. Please forgive me. And say goodbye to me without anger.

**ENOS:** I generally get as good as I give, and I guess I deserved some of it. I wish you well, my girl. I heartily wish you well. And I say that this house will always be open to you and never forget that.

**CHRISTIE:** Thank you, Uncle.

**ENOS:** Enough said. I'm going in to my supper. *(Exits.)*

**BETSEY:** Oh, I am going to miss you, Christie! *(Embraces her.)*

**CHRISTIE:** I shall write you and tell you of my adventures!

**BETSEY:** Will you, my dear? I will like that. Of course, I won't be much good at writing you but I'll try –

**ENOS:** (*Offstage.*) Betsey! Where's that supper?

**BETSEY:** Oh! I'm coming, Enos – ! (*Rushes off.*)

**CHRISTIE S:** I thought to myself as I stood there that I could always come back to that house if I failed. Or I could even marry Joe Butterfield, if he'd still have me. But I was not going to fail!

*CHRISTIE exits.*

I was determined to make good and succeed. There would be no reason to ever return to that house and admit failure. I was invincible! Or so I thought.

*The Devon household is removed and CHRISTIE, wearing a coat and carrying a carpetbag, enters with MRS. FLINT.*

**FLINT:** The third floor rear is all I have at your price. But it's a nice room and supper is included.

**CHRISTIE:** I'm sure it will be fine, Mrs. Flint.

**FLINT:** One week's rent in advance, you understand. And payment every Friday.

**CHRISTIE:** I understand.

**FLINT:** Be sure that you do. This way . . .

*They exit.*

**CHRISTIE S:** It was a small, dark room and not at all what you'd call homey. But as luck would have it, I only stayed there for two weeks because a job came through that required me to live on the premises.

*A small kitchen table and two chairs are set up on one side of the stage while a sofa or fainting couch is placed on the opposite side. MRS. STUART enters and lounges on the sofa, then CHRISTIE enters and stands before her.*

The advertisement in the newspaper called for a "servant in a genteel household, good wages, light duties, and a respectful demeanor." I

was hoping for something more fulfilling than going into service, but it didn't take me long in the city to realize that employment, whether fulfilling or not, was hard to come by. So I answered the ad and presented myself at the fashionable home of a Mr. and Mrs. Henry Stuart.

**MRS. STUART:** Your name?

**CHRISTIE:** Christie Devon.

**MRS. STUART:** Too long. I should prefer to call you Jane, as I am accustomed to that name.

**CHRISTIE:** As you please, ma'am.

**MRS. STUART:** Your age?

**CHRISTIE:** Twenty.

**MRS. STUART:** You are an American?

**CHRISTIE:** Yes, ma'am.

**MRS. STUART:** A pity. We have just returned from Italy, and I got quite used to foreign servants.

**CHRISTIE:** I think I can suit you, ma'am.

**MRS. STUART:** Perhaps you can. There are but two in the family, so the work is light. But I insist on a neat, well-conducted person as I am so delicate of health and cannot tolerate fuss of any kind. The pay is two dollars and a half each week, one afternoon a week off, and time for church on Sunday.

**CHRISTIE:** Yes, ma'am.

**MRS. STUART:** I am much too fatigued to go into the particulars. Go see the cook in the kitchen and she'll get you settled.

**CHRISTIE:** Yes, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am.

*MRS. STUART falls asleep as CHRISTIE goes to the kitchen table. HEPSEY JOHNSON enters the kitchen with a bowl which SHE stirs vigorously.*

**HEPSEY:** You here to replace Katy, I suppose.

**CHRISTIE:** I guess I am. My name's Christie Devon.

**HEPSEY:** I'm Hepsey Johnson. Mrs. Stuart said she was gonna get a new girl once she come back from Italy and I reckon she did. I'd show you your room, but I can't let this set until I stir it a bit more.

**CHRISTIE:** How long have you been cook for Mr. and Mrs. Stuart?

**HEPSEY:** Goin' on three years now.

**CHRISTIE:** Do you like it here, Hepsey?

**HEPSEY:** I been at lots worse places. Lots worse. I can put up with this place just fine.

**CHRISTIE:** Mrs. Stuart seems to be . . . very fragile. Is she sickly?

**HEPSEY:** Nothing a doctor can fix. She just likes to put on how she's as breakable as glass. But she's plenty healthy, take my word for it.

**CHRISTIE:** And what's Mr. Stuart like?

**HEPSEY:** He's all right in his way. He don't pay no heed to anyone but missus Stuart. Just don't cross him and he'll leave you alone.

**CHRISTIE:** I don't suppose I'll have much dealings with him, as I'm really Mrs. Stuart's maid.

**HEPSEY:** Child, you is the only maid in this house. There is just you and me. You'll see him plenty. (*Bells rings offstage.*) There he is now. You go and answer the bell and be spry about it. He don't like being kept waiting.

**CHRISTIE:** Me?

**HEPSEY:** Who else?

**CHRISTIE:** But – !

**HEPSEY:** You hurry or you'll start out all wrong with Mr. Stuart.

*CHRISTIE crosses the stage and lets MR. STUART into the house. He wears a coat, hat and carries an umbrella, all of which he tosses at CHRISTIE after he is inside.*

**STUART:** You're the new girl, are you?

**CHRISTIE:** Yes, sir.

**STUART:** What's the name?

**CHRISTIE:** Christie . . . er, I mean Jane.

**STUART:** Well, whatever you're called, I don't like to be kept waiting. Don't you see it's raining? Better brush that coat, then dry it by the fire. I have to go out this evening.

**CHRISTIE:** Yes, sir.

*CHRISTIE returns to the kitchen with the coat as STUART goes to MRS. STUART, who awakes.*

**MRS. STUART:** Is that you, Henry?

**STUART:** I hope I didn't wake you, my dear.

**MRS. STUART:** Oh, I am so unsettled, I can hardly close my eyes!

**STUART:** What has happened, my dearest?

**MRS. STUART:** What hasn't happened! I couldn't get my needlepoint to come out even and Hepsey said there was no asparagus at the market, and then I had to interview the new girl and – ! Oh, I am so exhausted I can weep!

**STUART:** There, there, my dear . . . (*Sits next to her and pats her head.*)  
My delicate little precious . . .

*Light fades out on the STUARTS and rises on CHRISTIE, who brushes the coat.*

**CHRISTIE:** Am I to be a valet to that man as well? The next thing he'll have me polishing his boots!

**HEPSEY:** More than likely.

**CHRISTIE:** It isn't that I'm afraid of work, but the degradation of it all!

**HEPSEY:** As I sees it, when a person gets paid to work and does it by her own choice, there ain't much degrading to it. I know what it's like to get no pay and got no choice.

**CHRISTIE:** Hepsey, were you a slave?

**HEPSEY:** All my life, till I run off five years ago. But my folks and my six brothers and sisters are still down South, waitin' for the Lord to set them free. And He gonna do it soon. I been saving my money and when I got enough, I gonna go down and buy each and every one of them.

**CHRISTIE:** I feel pretty small complaining about boots and such . . .

**HEPSEY:** You go and complain all you likes. But while you do I'm gonna get you your supper. They won't be eatin' till late and I gots plenty to do. You sit here and I'll bring you something.

**CHRISTIE:** What about you, Hepsey? When do you eat?

**HEPSEY:** As soon as you're finished, I'll set down for a spell.

**CHRISTIE:** Why can't we eat together?

**HEPSEY:** Katy and the others before her wouldn't put up with that. Not at all, child. I'll just wait till you done. That's the way.

**CHRISTIE:** But I don't like that way and I won't have it! If we can work together, we can eat together.

**HEPSEY:** Well . . . it would give me more time to –

**CHRISTIE:** Settled then.

*Lights fade out on kitchen and up on the sofa where MRS. STUART sits going over a list on paper. CHRISTIE joins her.*

**CHRISTIE S:** Hepsey and I soon became fast friends and in our free moments she told me all about her life as a slave and what she had done since coming up North. As for the Stuarts, I found that Mr. Stuart was not so difficult as he was dismissive to all things and all people except his wife. They often had guests over for dinner and all the talk was about art and poetry as such. But what I heard of it, such talk sounded more superficial than stimulating. It seemed no better than the idle chatter at my aunt and uncle's house in the country.

**MRS. STUART:** And Dr. Howells and his wife must have the Bordeaux because white wine quite fatigues her, and she is not as strong as she used to be.

**CHRISTIE:** Yes, ma'am.

**MRS. STUART:** And Jane, when you take the ladies' cloaks upstairs, please be more gentle. I cannot abide all that tramping up the staircase.

**CHRISTIE:** It's just with collecting the gentlemen's hats and trying to serve the appetizer, I sometimes have to rush – !

**MRS. STUART:** Please . . . (*Hands to her head.*) No arguing. I have such a headache and don't know how I will survive the evening. All I ask is no tramping.

**CHRISTIE:** Yes, ma'am.

**MRS. STUART:** Thank you.

*MRS. STUART exits and CHRISTIE joins HEPSEY in the kitchen. It is late at night and a candle sits on the table.*

**CHRISTIE S:** Sometimes, after the Stuarts had gone to sleep, Hepsey and I would sit up late by candlelight and talk about our plans for the future. I told how I planned to someday find useful employment that would be helpful to others and fulfilling to myself. Hepsey talked of going back South and buying first her old parents and then, one by one, each of the rest of her family.

*HEPSEY puts her head on the table and sleeps. CHRISTIE yawns, then takes the candle and exits.*

It was on such a night, about a year after I had been working for the Stuarts, that I climbed up to my room and fell asleep without putting out the candle. My apron hung on the chair too close to the flame and caught on fire, soon setting my other clothes aflame. As I slept, smoke started to fill the room.

*HEPSEY awakes, smells the smoke, rises and shouts.*

**HEPSEY:** Mr. Stuart! Mr. Stuart! Fire! (*Rushes off stage.*)

**CHRISTIE S:** By this time, I awoke just as Mr. Stuart rushed into my room and put out the fire with his opera cloak.

*CHRISTIE enters the kitchen area coughing with HEPSEY helping her walk. The STUARTS follow.*

**HEPSEY:** You keep breathing that fresh air, child!

**CHRISTIE:** I am . . . (*Coughs.*) so sorry . . . (*Coughs.*)

**MRS. STUART:** I think I'm going to faint!

**STUART:** (*To MRS. STUART.*) All is under control, my dear. The fire is out without much damage –

**CHRISTIE:** Forgive me, Mr. Stuart . . . I must have fallen asleep . . .!

**MRS. STUART:** Just look at her! She's been at the wine, Henry! We might all have been killed!

**CHRISTIE:** No!

**HEPSEY:** You drink some of this water and you'll feel better. (*Hands her a cup.*)

**STUART:** We are all quite safe, my precious.

**MRS. STUART:** She must go, Henry! She must go! I cannot have my nerves shattered by such dreadful scenes! She must leave this house forever!

**CHRISTIE:** I didn't mean to – !

**STUART:** You are trembling, my dearest! Let me bring you back to bed. (*Starts to exit with her.*)

**MRS. STUART:** I shall not stop trembling until she is out of this house! Do you hear me, Henry? She must go at once!

**STUART:** Yes yes, dear. Let's get you into bed . . .

*They exit as HEPSEY and CHRISTIE turn and look at each other, then embrace.*

**CHRISTIE S:** And so ended my employment with the Stuarts. More upsetting was having to say goodbye to Hepsey. She was my first friend since I had left home and I could hardly bear to leave her.

**HEPSEY:** You know where I am and you come and see me when the missus is out of the house. It won't do no good writing me a letter as I can't read nor write. So you just come to the kitchen door and surprise Hepsey sometime.

**CHRISTIE:** Oh, Hepsey!

*They embrace again as the lights fade on the kitchen. HEPSEY exits as MRS. FLINT enters and joins CHRISTIE.*

**CHRISTIE S:** I found myself back at Mrs. Flint's boarding house and back in the same dark little room.

**FLINT:** The rent has gone up fifty cents since you were here last, Miss Devon.

**CHRISTIE:** I see . . .

**FLINT:** And payment one week in advance, just like before.

**CHRISTIE:** Of course . . .

*MRS. BLACK and her daughter, LUCY, enter and join them.*

**MRS. BLACK:** There you are, Mrs. Flint! I told you she'd be up here on the third floor, Lucy. Didn't I say it?

**LUCY:** Yes, Mama . . .

**FLINT:** What is it, Mrs. Black?

**MRS. BLACK:** Far be it from me to complain, Mrs. Flint! Never be it said that "the lady doth protest too much!" But I must mention once again that crack in the mirror. I myself am not a vain woman and can best prepare myself for both the real world and the greasepaint world without the most rudimentary of looking glasses. But it is dear Lucy that I am thinking of. She is, you will readily admit, a beauty and her public cannot be disappointed with a slovenly appearance from a shoddy mirror.

**FLINT:** Mirrors are expensive, Mrs. Black.

**MRS. BLACK:** That is perhaps the reality of the situation, but it was not what you said on the day we first rented our room. You proclaimed then that the mirror would be replaced and so we took our cue accordingly.

**FLINT:** A second-hand furniture dealer is coming tomorrow. I'll see about getting a new mirror.

**MRS. BLACK:** There will be much rejoicing if you do, Mrs. Flint! Rejoicing, I say! If not, my daughter and I may be forced to seek other lodgings.

**FLINT:** I'll see to it.

**MRS. BLACK:** Wonderful! But who is this enticing young woman? Quite the appealing ingenue, don't you think, Lucy?

**LUCY:** Yes, Mama.

**FLINT:** This is Miss Devon who is taking the corner back room.

**MRS. BLACK:** And so sad am I to hear it, my dear. How could a shining mademoiselle such as she hope to blossom in that dark closet of a room?

**CHRISTIE:** I don't mind it. Really I don't.

**MRS. BLACK:** Such innocence! Such attractive innocence! Let me embrace you, my dear! (*A big theatrical embrace.*) I am Mrs. Jerome Black, currently of the Prince Street Theatre. And this is my daughter Lucy, who graces that very same stage!

**CHRISTIE:** You are actors?

**MRS. BLACK:** First, foremost, and forever!

**LUCY:** Pleased to meet you, Miss Devon. (*Shakes her hand.*)

**CHRISTIE:** Call me Christie, please!

**MRS. BLACK:** Christie Devon. It does have a theatrical ring to it. I am sure you will go far.

**CHRISTIE:** Oh, but I'm not an actor! (*Laughs.*) The very idea of it! I've never even seen a play. Though I love reading my father's volume of Shakespeare and have even memorized favorite scenes!

**LUCY:** Mama, we must get some passes for Christie!

**MRS. BLACK:** Without question, Lucy! And as soon as possible.

**FLINT:** I like going to the theatre myself on occasion. Perhaps . . .

**MRS. BLACK:** The mirror, Mrs. Flint! That is your role. Play it with gusto! Come along, Lucy. We cannot be late for rehearsal.

**LUCY:** Yes, Mama.

**MRS. BLACK:** So pleasant meeting you, Miss Devon! Such a lovely creature. Shine, my dear! Shine! If you can in that dingy little room. (*A glance at MRS. FLINT.*) Let us go, Lucy. At least we will find a decent mirror at the theatre. Goodbye, all!

*SHE exits with a flourish as LUCY follows. Lights fade on CHRISTIE and FLINT.*

**CHRISTIE S:** Mrs. Black was as good as her word and I got free tickets to the theatre several times over the next month or so. And Lucy and I became good friends. She was not so flamboyant as her mother, but on the stage she shone like a professional and I was so envious of her talent and beauty. In the meantime, I searched for work and did not have as much success this time as when I first arrived in Boston. Jobs of any kind were scarce and, though I was willing to accept the most humble of positions, none were forthcoming. My spirits were soon as low as my savings. Then one day Lucy came to my room all excited.

*LUCY enters and joins CHRISTIE.*

**LUCY:** There you are! I have such good news for you, Christie! All hail the queen!

**CHRISTIE:** The queen? What are you talking about, Lucy?

**LUCY:** The Queen of the Amazons, of course! You are to play her in the new spectacle at the Prince Street Theatre!

**CHRISTIE:** Me? A queen?

**LUCY:** The pay is half a dollar a night for six weeks. Eight weeks if we're lucky! And you don't have to pay for the costume!

**CHRISTIE:** A half a dollar a night! But Lucy –!

**LUCY:** The girl playing the Queen got another engagement and Mr. Sharp was all upset about getting a new Queen of the Amazons at such short notice. So I told him all about you and he said to bring you over right away. Now, don't look at me like that and say no. You've only got to sing in one chorus, march in the grand procession, and lead your band of girls in the terrific battle scene! And the dress is splendid! Red tunic, tiger skin over shoulder, helmet, shield, hair down to your shoulders, and as much cork to your eyebrows as you like! Don't be prim now, Christie, but say yes and let's get over to the theatre!

**CHRISTIE:** But – ! But – ! Yes!

**LUCY:** What a lark we're going to have!

*She grabs CHRISTIE by the hand and pulls her off.*

**CHRISTIE S:** I must admit that I was a little taken with the theatre having seen Lucy on stage, but I never dared to consider myself up there. Yet there was very little talent necessary to play the Queen of the Amazons and the manager, Mr. Sharp, liked me enough to give me other roles over the next six months. They were small at first but with time I started to gain confidence and soon I was playing substantial parts. I even got to appear in some plays by my beloved Shakespeare.

*CHRISTIE enters in Elizabethan costume and strikes a pose.*

**CHRISTIE:** "My father loved Sir Rowland as his soul,  
And all the world was of my father's mind;  
Had I before known this young man his son,  
I should have given him tears unto entreaties  
Ere he should thus have ventured."

**CHRISTIE S:** Lucy and her mother helped me immensely at first and were so proud of my success. But as my roles got better and Lucy's didn't, there was a strain between us. I regretted losing Lucy's friendship yet I was getting so caught up in my own glory that I was not aware of how unhappy I was making her.

*LUCY enters and goes to CHRISTIE.*

**LUCY:** Mr. Sharp sent me to ask you to see him before you leave the theatre today.

**CHRISTIE:** Thank you, Lucy. I wonder what it could be about?

**LUCY:** You know we go into rehearsal next week for *The Merry Princess*. I'm sure he wants you to play Catherine.

**CHRISTIE:** Do you think so?

**LUCY:** What does it matter what I think? *(Starts to exit.)*

**CHRISTIE:** Wait for me, Lucy! Mr. Sharp won't take long. Then we can walk home together.

**LUCY:** I'm not going home. I have an errand to run for Mama. (*Starts to exit, then stops.*) My mother played Catherine once, a long time ago. She always said I would make a capital Catherine.

**CHRISTIE:** Perhaps you will . . . someday.

**LUCY:** Not at this theatre, I am sure. (*Exits.*)

**CHRISTIE S:** How easy it was to forget the feelings of others when you are so wrapped up with yourself. And I was totally distracted and blinded by my sudden success.

*CHRISTIE exits.*

I was given the role of Catherine and Lucy was cast only as a handmaiden to the princess. She rarely spoke to me at the theatre or at the boarding house. Even her talkative mother shut up like a clam whenever I entered the room. But I was so involved in rehearsals that I seemed to have no time for anything or anyone else. A week before we were to open *The Merry Princess*, something happened at rehearsal that brought my vanity to an end.

*CHRISTIE, LUCY, MRS. BLACK and a handful of other ACTORS enter in rehearsal clothes and take their positions. A large unpainted flat is set up behind the ACTORS as they rehearse.*

**CHRISTIE:** "I will not hear anything said against the Duke, Lady Mountjoy! Not one word!"

**MRS. BLACK:** "But you must listen to my words, Princess! Only I can tell you the truth about the man you plan to wed."

**CHRISTIE:** "I will marry the Duke and not you nor any other gossiping fool will stop me!"

**MRS. BLACK:** "Gossiping fool? I am trying to help you, Princess!"

**CHRISTIE:** "Then leave my chateau at once and take your prejudices against the Duke with you. Where is Felice?"

**LUCY:** "Here, Princess."

**CHRISTIE:** "Ah, Felice . . . you will help Lady Mountjoy pack. She is in quite a hurry to depart."

**MRS. BLACK:** "I am nothing of the sort –!"

**LUCY:** "Come this way, my Lady. (*Crosses to the front of the flat then stops.*) My, Lady?"

*The flat starts to lean forward but LUCY does not see it. Only CHRISTIE does.*

**CHRISTIE:** Lucy!

**LUCY:** What is it? I did it right –

*CHRISTIE rushes over to LUCY and pushes her away from the flat as it falls forward. LUCY lands on the floor away from the flat, but it hits CHRISTIE on the head and SHE falls to the floor and is unconscious. Shouts as the OTHERS pull the flat off of CHRISTIE. LUCY rises and joins them.*

**ACTOR:** She's unconscious!

**MRS. BLACK:** Someone call a doctor!

**LUCY:** Christie! Can you hear me? Christie!

*Lights fade on the scene, the flat is removed and a small bed and a chair are set up.*

**CHRISTIE S:** I needed to have some sense knocked into me and that was exactly what happened. I had a concussion to the head and a fractured shoulder bone and Lucy went on to triumph as the princess. She visited me every day as I lay in my little bed in Mrs. Flint's boarding house and once again we were friends.

*Lights up on CHRISTIE in bed and LUCY next to her in the chair.*

**LUCY:** But Mr. Sharp said to Mr. Kent, "If you continue to play the Duke with such slobbering I shall insist that Miss Black be given an extra handkerchief!"

*BOTH laugh.*

**CHRISTIE:** Did it help?

**LUCY:** Only for a night or two. Then he was back to his weeping and wailing, worst than before!

*BOTH laugh.*

Oh, Christie, we miss you so! Everyone in the company does! As soon as you are well enough – !

**CHRISTIE:** Oh, let's not think of that. The season will be quite over by the time I am up and about. And a good thing too.

**LUCY:** Don't say that! Oh, I feel so guilty! It's you that ought to be playing the princess, not I. And when I think of how it would have been me under that falling scenery if you hadn't – !

**CHRISTIE:** We won't talk of that either. I am so glad we are friends again, Lucy. I don't think I much need the stage. But I do need good friends.

*Lights fade out on them as LUCY exits and AUNT BETSEY takes her place.*

**CHRISTIE S:** During the two months of my recuperation, everyone was so kind to me. Even the chilly Mrs. Flint seemed to smile and fuss, as long as she got her rent one week in advance. And there was a surprise visit from my dear, dear Aunt Betsey.

*Lights rise on BETSEY and CHRISTIE.*

**BETSEY:** So I said to Enos, if I'm not old enough to travel to Boston to see my dear Christie, when will I be? He didn't have a good answer for that one so he sulked for a day or two then gave me the money for the train and here I am!

**CHRISTIE:** It is so good to see you, Aunt Betsey! I've missed you so!

**BETSEY:** I wanted to come once and see you in one of them plays you wrote me about. But Enos would hear nothing of that kind of talk. I'll bet you were something to see on the stage.

**CHRISTIE:** I don't know, Aunt. It was fun and people seemed to like what I did . . . but I can't say I was all so accomplished at acting. It's all pretending, you see, and I don't think I'm cut out for pretending. You know how I always want to speak my mind . . .

**BETSEY:** That I know.

**CHRISTIE:** Well, with acting I felt I was just speaking other people's thoughts. I didn't realize it until I've had to lie here and think about it, but I was becoming rather selfish and self-centered.

**BETSEY:** You've always been headstrong, Christie, but never unkind.

**CHRISTIE:** But I was becoming unkind. I fear I hurt my friend Lucy more than just by overshadowing her. I was so caught up in my own ambitions and – Oh, Auntie! Looking back on this past year on the stage, I fear I lost more than I gained. Theatre people are so giving and warm, and they work so hard with uncertain success. Their life is an exciting one and, in its way, a fulfilling one. But it is not the life for me.

*Lights fade on them and the bed is removed.*

**CHRISTIE S:** When I was feeling much stronger I informed Lucy and the others in the company that I was finished with the stage. There were plenty of entreaties to stay on. Even the manager Mr. Sharp came to my lodgings and asked that I play a role in next season's spectacular. But my mind was set and I started looking for work that was more to my liking. Before long I discovered an advertisement for a governess to teach two young girls at the home of L. N. Saltonstall.

*Lights up on CHRISTIE, LUCY, and MRS. BLACK.*

**CHRISTIE:** I shall apply for the position and hope for the best.

**MRS. BLACK:** I played a governess once. It was in the *The Family Secret* and I married an earl at the end of it!

**LUCY:** Mama, this is a real governess!

**MRS. BLACK:** I was totally believable in the role! I even spoke a few lines in French!

**CHRISTIE:** I hope the Saltonstall family does not want too much French. But I know I could teach literature and mathematics and –

**MRS. BLACK:** Whatever you do, my dear, don't tell them that you were on the stage or it will be the end of you. People have such prejudices against the profession.

**CHRISTIE:** Oh, but I must tell them. I shall say so right at the beginning so that there will be no secret of it to come back later. If I am

personable and teach well, I'm sure the Saltonstalls will not care about my past on the stage.

**MRS. BLACK:** You'll be sorry if you do tell.

**CHRISTIE:** I'll be sorry if I don't!

*LUCY and MRS. BLACK exit. A chair is set up and MRS. CHARLOTTE SALTONSTALL enters and sits as CHRISTIE stands before her.*

**CHRISTIE S:** Two days later I stood before Mrs. Saltonstall in her drawing room on Beacon Hill. The Saltonstalls were indeed wealthy, judging by the fashionable house and all the servants that were needed to run it.

**CHARLOTTE:** My two girls are much too old for a nurse and I worry about their supervision. Education is a very fine thing, I suppose, but I am more concerned about their demeanor. In a week we will be going to the seashore for the summer and I quite fear they will slip into wild and unmannerly ways. Do you understand me, Miss Devon?

**CHRISTIE:** Yes, Mrs. Saltonstall.

**CHARLOTTE:** They have no father to provide guidance and my brother, their uncle, is far too disinterested to become a father figure to them. It is all so distressing! I am looking for someone who can take charge of the little darlings.

**CHRISTIE:** I shall do my best, Mrs. Saltonstall. But before we go any further I feel I must tell you something about myself –

*WILLAMINA and TAMARA enter noisily.*

**CHARLOTTE:** Ah, here they are now! Come my precious ones and meet someone.

**WILLAMINA:** Mama, Tamara took my red hair bow and put it on her queen doll when I was going to put it on my gypsy doll because her shawl is red and – !

**TAMARA:** (*Speaking at the same time.*) Willamina won't share and you said we had to share like proper young ladies do, but she's not being proper and won't let me have anything – !

**CHARLOTTE:** Girls! Mother has a headache and proper young ladies do not argue when mother has a headache.

**WILLAMINA:** You always have a headache.

**TAMARA:** She does not! It's uncle Philip that always has a headache!

**WILLAMINA:** He just says that so he can go and hide in his study!

**CHARLOTTE:** That is enough! I want you to meet Miss Devon. She is to be your governess.

**WILLAMINA:** I don't want a governess!

**TAMARA:** I do! Mama, tell her she has to have a governess!

**WILLAMINA:** You may need a governess, but I don't!

**CHARLOTTE:** Please, girls . . . !

**CHRISTIE:** What is your name, young lady?

**WILLAMINA:** Willamina Semmatine Saltonstall!

**CHRISTIE:** Very pleased to meet you, Willamina. And you are . . . ?

**TAMARA:** Tamara Noellyn Saltonstall!

**CHRISTIE:** Such fine long names! I am glad to make your acquaintance, Tamara.

**TAMARA:** Mama, she's nice!

**WILLAMINA:** She is not! She's just pretending to be nice. Governess are mean!

**TAMARA:** Are not!

**CHARLOTTE:** I don't want to hear another word! Go and see if Justine has tea ready for you yet.

**TAMARA:** I don't want tea! I was to go outside and play in the garden!

**WILLAMINA:** I'm hungry for tea! I'll eat all yours! (*Exits.*)

**TAMARA:** You will not! (*Runs off after her.*)

**CHARLOTTE:** You see what I mean, Miss Devon? Supervision is needed.

**CHRISTIE:** I understand, Mrs. Saltonstall. But I hope to teach them to enjoy literature and music and –

**CHARLOTTE:** That is all very well. I leave it to you, Miss Devon. Can you start right away? Let us say tomorrow?

**CHRISTIE:** Tomorrow will be fine. But I must tell you something –

*PHILIP FLETCHER enters reading a newspaper.*

**CHARLOTTE:** Here is my brother now! Philip, I have just engaged Miss Devon here as governess for the two girls.

**PHILIP:** (*Head still in paper.*) Probably a waste of money. But it's your money, Charlotte. Not mine.

**CHARLOTTE:** Certainly it's mine. Miss Devon, my brother Philip Fletcher.

**CHRISTIE:** Good afternoon, sir.

**PHILIP:** What? (*Head out of the paper.*) Oh yes. Pleased to meet you and all that. Will you have the paper, Charlotte? There's nothing in it.

**CHARLOTTE:** I must see about the girls' tea. We shall see you tomorrow, Miss Devon. About nine?

**CHRISTIE:** Yes, Mrs. Saltonstall. Thank you.

**CHARLOTTE:** Jennings will show you out. Philip, don't be late for tea.

**PHILIP:** I have a headache.

*CHARLOTTE exits.*

**CHRISTIE:** Good day, Mr. Fletcher. (*Starts to leave.*)

**PHILIP:** Miss Devon, is it?

**CHRISTIE:** Yes.

**PHILIP:** Poor little wretch. What a time you'll have of it between Charlotte and those brats. (*Exits.*)

**CHRISTIE S:** Less than a week later we were all on the ferry boat to Cape Cod and I experienced my first summer at the seashore. (*Sounds of sea and seagulls.*) Still recovering from the accident, I grew physically stronger that summer and felt I could take on any task. I can't say that little Willamina and Tamara were much better behaved by the sea and away from the city, but I managed to gain their confidence enough to keep them under control.

*WILLAMINA and TAMARA enter arguing.*

**WILLAMINA:** I did not! What would I want with your stupid blue hat? It's ugly!

**TAMARA:** Is not! You took it and I'll bet it got blown out to sea and I'll never see it again!

**CHRISTIE:** What is the matter, Tamara?

**TAMARA:** Willamina took my blue hat and – !

**WILLAMINA:** Did not!

**CHRISTIE:** The hat with the daisies on it?

**TAMARA:** That's the one!

**CHRISTIE:** You left it in my room after your drawing lesson.

**WILLAMINA:** See!

**TAMARA:** I hate drawing! I will never draw a picture again in my whole life!

**WILLAMINA:** I love drawing! Please, Miss Devon, can we do drawing again today?

**TAMARA:** No!

**CHRISTIE:** Today the wind is not so strong so I've decided we will walk over to the North beach. Willamina, you will bring your sketchbook and do some drawings of the lighthouse and Tamara, I want you to search the beach for different kinds of shells we can use in our science lesson. Now run along and fetch your hats and parasols. Hurry!

**WILLAMINA & TAMARA:** Yippee!

*Both exit, then CHRISTIE exits the other direction.*

**CHRISTIE S:** I suppose Mrs. Saltonstall loved her children in her own way, but she seemed more interested in her many summer outfits, romantic novels, and her fashion magazines than any other people. As for her brother, Mr. Fletcher, he took no more notice of me than if I were some shadow that sometimes crossed his path. He was an attractive and aristocratic looking man but a melancholy one. He often seemed bored and when he did make an effort at conversation, he usually sounded pessimistic and cynical.

*CHRISTIE enters reading a letter.*

But halfway through the summer his behavior toward me changed.

*ENOS enters and stands at the side, speaking his letter.*

**ENOS:** My niece, I hope this letter finds you. I write to tell you that your Aunt Betsey died last Thursday. The funeral was Saturday and all was done as it ought to. She left you her silver locket and two hair combs. I'll send them when I get an address from you more recent than this one. I hope you are well. Your uncle, Enos Devon. *(Exits.)*

**CHRISTIE:** Oh, dear auntie! *(Sits on the ground, looks at the letter again, and weeps.)* My dear, dear Aunt Betsey!

*PHILIP enters and nearly passes her, but stops when he hears her sobs.*

**PHILIP:** Miss Devon? Is that you? What's the matter? Are you hurt?

**CHRISTIE:** No, Mr. Fletcher . . . ! *(Weeps.)* No . . .

**PHILIP:** Has my sister been scolding you? Or have the girls been too much for you?

**CHRISTIE:** Oh, nothing like that. Bad news from home.

**PHILIP:** Someone is ill, I suppose. We must hope for the best and –

**CHRISTIE:** No hope . . . ! My Aunt Betsey is dead! I loved her so . . . !

**PHILIP:** Dear me! That is very sad. I am sorry, Miss Devon. Here . . .  
*(Hands her a handkerchief.)*

**CHRISTIE:** Thank you . . . ! *(Takes it.)*

**CHRISTIE S:** When I looked up to him to accept his handkerchief, a strange expression came upon Mr. Fletcher's face. It was if he recognized me from somewhere far away and couldn't quite place me.

**PHILIP:** You were very close . . . ? Your aunt and yourself?

**CHRISTIE:** Yes. *(Stops crying.)* She raised me after my parents died. She was so loving, without any thought of herself but only for others. I shall miss her so . . .

**PHILIP:** She sounds like a special person. I envy your knowing someone like that.

**CHRISTIE:** Please don't mention this to Mrs. Saltonstall or the children. I am used to bearing my troubles alone and time will help me do so.

**PHILIP:** Very brave. If there is anything I can do for you, Miss Devon, you will let me know?

**CHRISTIE:** Yes, Mr. Fletcher. Thank you.

**PHILIP:** Very good then. *(Tips his hat.)* Good day. And again, my most sincere sympathies. *(Exits.)*

**CHRISTIE:** O, Mr. Fletcher . . . ! Your handkerchief! *(He is gone; she looks at letter again and the lights fade out on her.)*

**CHRISTIE S:** From that day on Philip Fletcher no longer ignored me when we happened to pass each other on the beach. Sometimes just a smile and a nod of the head, others times a cheerful greeting and even a few words of conversation.

*Sound of the waves and an orchestra in the distance.*

One Saturday night there was a dance at the beach club on the pier. I did not attend, of course, but after Willamina and Tamara were in bed, I walked down the beach and sat near the pier, listening to the music.

*Lights up on CHRISTIE sitting on a bench in the moonlight. PHILIP enters.*

**PHILIP:** Miss Devon? Wisely listening to the lunatics rather than joining in their antics?

**CHRISTIE:** Nothing like that, Mr. Fletcher. I am very fond of that sort of insanity but there is no place for me there tonight.

**PHILIP:** I don't care for such doings, but if it is an escort that you are lacking— ?

**CHRISTIE:** No, not that. Governess are usually kindly treated in America, but ballrooms are not for them. So I enjoy listening to the music all the same.

**PHILIP:** May I sit and enjoy it with you?

**CHRISTIE:** Yes. Please do.

*He sits next to her on the beach.*

I believe the breeze is lifting the music and carrying it right here, it sounds so close!

**PHILIP:** To listen to you one would think music is a glorious thing.

**CHRISTIE:** But isn't it?

**PHILIP:** I suppose so. I forget. Remind me why it is so glorious.

**CHRISTIE:** Why, music is —! Oh, you are teasing me, Mr. Fletcher.

**PHILIP:** Only a little. I have forgotten the joys of so many things. And you seem to have forgotten nothing. I envy you that.

**CHRISTIE:** No reason to envy me, Mr. Fletcher. My life is rather . . .

**PHILIP:** Rather what?

**CHRISTIE:** Simple.

**PHILIP:** Tell me about it, Miss Devon.

**CHRISTIE:** I mean, not really simple . . . I have ambitions like any other person!

**PHILIP:** Tell me about them.

**CHRISTIE S:** So I told him. All about wanting to find a useful and happy life, and not be dependent on anyone and . . . oh, all sorts of words came out of my mouth! I had never had such a conversation with a

man before. And as for him, he told me a little about himself too. His schooling, the death of his parents, and his life with his sister and nieces. Not an awful lot, but for a man of few words it was considerable. We sat near the pier and talked and talked until the orchestra had played its final tune and it was time to return home.

*Music and lights fade out and CHRISTIE and PHILIP exit. Lights rise on CHARLOTTE, WILLAMINA and TAMARA.*

**WILLAMINA:** But I don't want to go to town! You only go there because Tamara wants to! She gets everything she wants!

**TAMARA:** Do not!

**WILLAMINA:** Every time she wants to go to town – !

**CHARLOTTE:** Please, girls! Mother has a headache today.

**TAMARA:** I won't go to town if *she* goes to town – !

**CHARLOTTE:** Where is Miss Devon? I cannot believe she has deserted me like this – !

**WILLAMINA:** There she is! (*Points off.*) With Uncle Philip!

**CHARLOTTE:** I need her here!

*CHRISTIE enters with PHILIP, who carried a wrapped package.*

Where have you been, Miss Devon? The children have been ever so difficult, and I understood that it was a governess's job to –

**CHRISTIE:** I am so sorry, Mrs. Saltonstall! I – !

**PHILIP:** It was quite my fault, Charlotte. Don't blame Miss Devon. I asked her to accompany to town to pick out a birthday present for you.

**CHRISTIE:** Willamina and Tamara were sound asleep and I thought – !

**PHILIP:** You always complain that I have no imagination when it comes to your birthday gift. So this year I thought . . .

**CHRISTIE:** I shouldn't have left. I am sorry, Mrs. Saltonstall.

**PHILIP:** It's no use blaming the girl, Charlotte. It was all my fault.

**WILLAMINA:** Did you buy me a present, Uncle Philip? My birthday is in September!

**TAMARA:** I want a birthday present if Willamina gets a birthday present!

**CHARLOTTE:** Please take the girls, Miss Devon. I am quite beside myself this morning! Go to Miss Devon, girls! And Philip, I think it best if you keep out of the running of this household.

**PHILIP:** As you wish, Charlotte.

**CHARLOTTE:** How I wish the summer would end! The girls are much better behaved in the city. I blame it all on this fresh air . . .! (*Exits.*)

**WILLAMINA:** What about my present, Uncle Philip?

**TAMARA:** *My present!*

**PHILIP:** Run along, you little heathens, or I'll eat you! Boo!

*The GIRLS run off shrieking and laughing. CHRISTIE and PHILIP laugh also.*

**CHRISTIE:** Mr. Fletcher, you shouldn't – !

**PHILIP:** Sorry to get you into trouble with Charlotte. But I do not regret our little shopping spree together.

**CHRISTIE:** Neither do I. Thank you.

**PHILIP:** No, thank you, Miss Devon. (*A pause as he smiles at her.*)

**CHRISTIE:** I'd better catch up with the girls before they find your sister and start tormenting her. Good day. (*Exits; lights fade out.*)

**CHRISTIE S:** Was I falling in love with Mr. Fletcher? I don't think so. It was more a novelty than love, for I had never known a man very well before. Our friendship was new and exciting to me. But love? No. As for what Philip Fletcher thought of it, I didn't know.

*PHILIP exits.*

At least not until one evening late in August, soon before we were to return to the city. I had just gotten the girls to bed and was reading by the lamp on the porch.

*Lights up on a porch settee where CHRISTIE sits with a book. PHILIP enters.*

**PHILIP:** What book now, Miss Devon?

**CHRISTIE:** *Jane Eyre*, sir.

**PHILIP:** What is your opinion of Mr. Rochester?

**CHRISTIE:** Not a very high one.

**PHILIP:** Then you think Jane a fool for trying to make a saint of him?

**CHRISTIE:** I haven't much faith in those kind of saints. Besides, she is only a governess and he is . . . Well, it is fiction.

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**PHILIP:** Yes. A strong, independent girl brings new life to a jaded, morose man. Definitely fiction. And yet . . . when I approached you a moment ago I thought perhaps you smiled and looked happy. I would like to think that it was because of me.

**CHRISTIE:** I . . . I was thinking what Mrs. Saltonstall said to me this morning.

**PHILIP:** And what was that?

**CHRISTIE:** She asked me if I would be interested in accompanying her and the girls to Paris in the fall. It has always been my dream to go abroad and – !

**PHILIP:** Don't go, Christie.

**CHRISTIE:** I beg your pardon . . . ?

**PHILIP:** Instead . . . go to Paris with me . . . as my wife.

**CHRISTIE:** I . . . don't know what to say . . .

**PHILIP:** Don't say anything for the moment. Just listen. I think I am not mistaken in believing that you care for me a little. And you must know how fond I am of you, how you have taught me to want to enjoy life again. Perhaps I was no better than gloomy old Mr. Rochester, and I certainly don't expect you to try and make me a saint. But I think I can make you happy, Christie. We shall travel, if you'd like. And I'll give you whatever you like. My money has always been more an annoyance to me than a blessing. But if it will help to make you happy, then I am grateful for it. (*Pause.*) You may speak now, if you like. And I'll hope you'll smile and call me Philip and say yes.

**CHRISTIE:** You are very kind, but you may repent it, you know so little of me.

**PHILIP:** I know more about you than you think. But it makes no difference to me.

**CHRISTIE:** What do you mean?

**PHILIP:** I am not a frequent theatergoer, but how could I forget that face glimpsed across the footlights?

**CHRISTIE:** You knew . . . all the time?

**PHILIP:** Not at first. But that day you received word about your aunt's death and were crying, I looked carefully for the first time and recognized you. I think I even started to love you.

**CHRISTIE:** I meant to tell Mrs. Saltonstall all about it –

**PHILIP:** You were wise not to. Charlotte is not so open minded. But we are not talking of her or your acting career. I asked you a question and am still waiting for an answer.

**CHRISTIE S:** He could give me anything I wanted. I could travel. I could see things and do things I've always wanted to see and do. But I did not love him. I would be forever dependent on him. I would cease to be myself totally and completely. I would have everything . . . and nothing.

**CHRISTIE:** No. The answer is no. I am sorry.

**PHILIP:** You are in earnest?

**CHRISTIE:** Perfectly so.

**PHILIP:** And am I to understand that to be your final answer?

**CHRISTIE:** Distinctly and decidedly my final answer.

**PHILIP:** Well . . . I've made many blunders in my life, but this has been my greatest. I believed in a woman, was fool enough to care for her with the sincerest love I ever knew, and I even fancied that she might care for me. Well, Miss Devon, I am disappointed in the woman but I compliment the actress. I leave the stage for another and a more successful Romeo. *(Starts to leave.)*

**CHRISTIE:** You will tell Mrs. Saltonstall. That will be your revenge.

**PHILIP:** No. I'll not interfere in your life ever again. You may go to Paris with her two brats. Or you may go to the devil . . . I am out of it all. *(Exits.)*

**CHRISTIE S:** As angry as he made me, I couldn't help but feel sorry for Philip Fletcher. And I felt sorry for myself as well. Had I done the right thing? Should I chase after him and beg his forgiveness? No.

*CHARLOTTE enters and CHRISTIE goes to her.*

Instead I went to Mrs. Saltonstall and told her about my past on the stage and apologized for not telling her sooner. Her reaction quite surprised me.

**CHARLOTTE:** I see. I value you as a governess, Miss Devon, and feel you are quite accomplished with my girls. So I am willing to bury the past if you are. No one need know of it and it is my hope that you will remain with us.

**CHRISTIE:** Thank you, Mrs. Saltonstall. I greatly appreciate your understanding. But I fear it will be awkward for me to continue on as governess in this household.

**CHARLOTTE:** Awkward? Why?

**CHRISTIE:** I'd rather not say –

**CHARLOTTE:** Come, come, Miss Devon. We'll play no games in this matter. What has happened?

**CHRISTIE:** I . . . That is, Mr. Fletcher –

**CHARLOTTE:** Philip? What has he to do with this?

**CHRISTIE:** He has asked me to marry him.

**CHARLOTTE:** What!

**CHRISTIE:** I have refused him. But all the same –

**CHARLOTTE:** I should hope so. He had no business proposing to a governess! Perhaps he was just amusing himself. In either case, it was not wise. He has a fortune of his own, you understand, and that money should go to my two darlings, not to . . . to . . .

**CHRISTIE:** I quite understand.

**CHARLOTTE:** Then understand this, Miss Devon. I would like you to pack your things and be on the ferry back to Boston in the morning. I think it will be the best thing for all concerned.

**CHRISTIE:** Yes, you are right.

**CHARLOTTE:** I'll have your last month's salary ready by supper.

**CHRISTIE:** Thank you, Mrs. Saltonstall.

*Lights fade out and CHARLOTTE exits. CHRISTIE picks up a suitcase and moves to another part of the stage. The sounds of seagulls and a boat whistle are heard.*

**CHRISTIE S:** And so ended my career as a governess. I was getting on the ferry the next morning when Philip Fletcher chased me down once again.

*PHILIP enters.*

He looked haggard, as if he had not slept any better than I had during the night.

**PHILIP:** Will nothing change your answer, Christie?

**CHRISTIE:** Nothing, Mr. Fletcher.

**PHILIP:** Please forgive me . . . what I said yesterday . . . I am so sorry . . .  
goodbye . . .

*Boat whistle blows; CHRISTIE exits.*

**CHRISTIE S:** He stood on the pier and watched as the ferry pulled out to sea. He had a heart after all, and he was willing to give it to me. Had I done wrong? It was too late now. Don't look back. Look only to the future.

*Lights fade on PHILIP. The Carroll sitting room is set up: a settee, a few chairs, perhaps a fireplace. MRS. CARROLL sits on the settee and CHRISTIE stands before her. On the other side of the stage a chaise lounge or fainting couch is placed and HELEN lies on it in the dark. There is also a chair and a small table with a picture on it.*

I returned once again to Mrs. Flint's boarding house and began looking for work. Without a favorable reference from my last governess position I learned that no one would consider me for such a job again. But I did find an advertisement for a lady's companion and quickly answered it. I soon found myself in the well-appointed home of Mrs. Carroll.

**MRS. CARROLL:** It is not for myself, Miss Devon, but for my daughter, Helen. She is not a well person and she has a nurse available at all times. But I feel she needs a younger person, someone her own age, to keep her company. She is prone to depression and rarely leaves the house.

**CHRISTIE:** I see.

**MRS. CARROLL:** Perhaps you can read to her. Or tell her stories about your life on the stage. Anything to take her mind off of herself.

**CHRISTIE:** What is the nature of her illness, Mrs. Carroll?

**MRS. CARROLL:** Not completely physical. Yet she is physically weak and suffers from anemia. I will hint to you, Miss Devon, that the loss of a very dear one is what started my daughter's melancholia. I do not think it wise to try and discuss the matter with Helen, but you should know that this loss is at the heart of her illness.

**CHRISTIE:** Thank you for telling me.

*The NURSE enters.*

**MRS. CARROLL:** Nurse, how is my daughter today?

**NURSE:** Poorly, Ma'am. I've gone in three or four times but she only sends me away, saying "Let me be quiet."

**MRS. CARROLL:** Oh, dear. Perhaps today is not a good day to start.

**CHRISTIE:** All the same, may I try? I too was ill for quite some time and know all about the loneliness that allows one to sink deeper and deeper into oneself.

**MRS. CARROLL:** Oh, if you would try, Miss Devon! Nurse, take Miss Devon into Helen. Then leave them alone together.

**NURSE:** Yes, Ma'am. This way, Miss.

**MRS. CARROLL:** Thank you, Miss Devon.

**CHRISTIE:** I cannot guarantee success, but I will do my best.

*The NURSE and CHRISTIE cross over to HELEN and MRS. CARROLL exits.*

**NURSE:** There's someone to see you, Miss.

**HELEN:** I told you to go away. I am too ill today . . .

**NURSE:** This is a Miss Devon who's come to sit with you a while and to cheer you up.

**HELEN:** Cheer me up? Such nonsense! *(Sits up and looks at CHRISTIE.)* Miss Devon?

**CHRISTIE:** Yes. But please call me Christie.

**HELEN:** I had a bad night. I am too ill to talk with anyone.

**CHRISTIE:** Then I shall just sit here quietly then and not disturb you.  
*(Pause.)*

**HELEN:** Very well. Leave us, Nurse.

**NURSE:** Yes, Miss. *(Exits.)*

**HELEN:** There are some books there. You may read, if you please.

**CHRISTIE:** I will, thank you. *(Picks up a book and reads as HELEN lies back down.)*

**CHRISTIE S:** I believe we stayed liked that, without uttering a word to each other, for over an hour. I read a silly romance novel, so poorly written, yet it made me think of Philip Fletcher and I started to wonder again if I had made the biggest mistake of my life in refusing him. I



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