"TAKE CARE OF MY LITTLE GIRL",
A Novel by Peggy Goodin

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by

Peggy Goodin

The Queens are fictitious, and they are not intended to portray any specific sorority, living or dead. All of the characters and names of characters and the university called Midwestern are imaginary.

PART I

Chapter One

At the last census there were six thousand souls in Paris. It was a city as flat as the palm of your hand but most of the houses were on the Heights, an eminence relatively like the fat at the base of your thumb. A city of trees, surrounded by cornfields and clover, Paris was known in the Chamber of Commerce literature as "the Prairie Paradise". There was a bookstore, a municipal swimming pool, and a white stucco Country Club named Valhalla. There were no public bars, no New Deal Democrats, no factory smoke, and no strangers in Paris, Indiana. Everyone knew everyone else, and nearly everyone spoke to everyone else. A few people had a lot of money but they weren't ostentatious about it.

There were no maids and no butlers in Paris, only men who "helped out" and hired girls who "lived in". Although one family (newcomers to Paris) had built a comfortable house back of their own and called it "servants' quarters", nobody approved at all. Paris often had trouble with newcomers, but not for long.

Above all, the people of Paris approved of Paris. If they were a little defensive it was because Paris was small and because traveling salesmen had been known to intimate unkind things in comparison with Detroit, Michigan, and Marietta, Ohio, but their defensiveness was clearly superficial. No defense was necessary because the people of Paris loved Paris. It was more than community spirit. It was like being a member of something.

In addition, most of them were members of the Elks, the Moose, the Lions, the Legion, the Rotary, the Kiwanis, and the local philanthropic clubs, Xi Pi Xi, Alpha Beta Psi, Upsilon Mu, or Eta Rho. They held meetings and gave speeches, pledged and initiated, ran for President and, eventually, joined the Country Club. It is possible that in Paris some people went to heaven, but practically everyone went to Valhalla.

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Liz Ericson was not a typical Parisian, but momentarily she was the victim of a syndrome not unusual to Parisians. She was about to enter college and she was about to pledge a sorority. The important thing to most Parisians was the sorority.

Elizabeth Elaine Ericson had inherited at birth twelve silver baby-spoons, a small piano, a leather-bound

book suitable for infant shapshots, a father who was a newspaperman, and a mother who had been a Queen. Liz learned about the Queens early in life, along with "Mother Goose" and "A Child's Garden of Verses." Above her bed hung a printed scroll covered with baby-figures rolling in and out of the margins. It read "Ten Verses to a Baby Queen" and it was signed by Elizabeth's mother's Home Chapter down at Midwestern University, where Mamma had been a co-ed and a Queen. If you're a good girl and do what I say, Mamma would promise, you'll be a Queen too. By this ruse she persuaded her daughter to eat turnips and milk of magnesia mixed with orange juice.

As she grew older Liz discovered that Queenhood was something secret that certain people knew and certain other people did not know. The Queens had been founded in 1899 by a lady named Alma Calendar-Queen. They wore special pearl pins, lived in a house by themselves, and never forgot it. Whenever Mamma went to the Queen House she came away sentimental. She cried at a spot in the back-hall carpet made by a girl called Cookie Bellows with a bottle of peroxide. Then there was the swing on the patio (changed since Mamma's time but identically located) where she'd accepted three fraternity pins, including Father's. The swing made

Mamma cry, too. By the time Liz graduated from high school she knew quite a lot about the Queens, and, of course, the Queens had heard about Liz. Mamma, whose name was Olive, had taken to sending annual checks to the Queens, contributing items for the Queen-Mothers' Column, published in a newspaper twice a year by the Home Chapter ("My little girl is sixteen now"), and filling out rushing forms for friends. Things were shaping up and so, hopefully, was Liz.

Decidedly, Liz's shape was not her mother's. Olive was a still pretty, dark-haired woman, given to large gestures and delicate perfumes. She was talkative and energetic and she did not love her enemies. She did love her girlhood, which had been a period of great personal satisfaction, and in remembering it Olive was loyal to the Queens, to Midwestern, and to Pan-Hellenic. This group, comprised of members from all sororities, stood for Fraternal Life, and, more particularly, saw to it that nobody cheated during Rushing.

Not only did Olive trust the Queens to take care of her little girl; she hoped they'd improve on her. Liz was freshly-turned eighteen, black-haired, tall and angular. She played the saxaphone and dated a boy named Joe.

Quite soon after Liz graduated from high school Olive made a list. In part, it read:

Liz perm early so can be cut August
Teeth
Shop luggage
Dressmaker begin black suit, white and blue two-piece jumper.
Fur coat. Muskrat?
Slips, white (4), pink (2), black (1).

It had taken all summer. Shopping for Liz was difficult for two reasons: she was unnecessarily tall and she and Olive did not often agree. Liz liked to buy formals and flannel skirts and leather belts. She saw no reason to buy what her mother called "tea dresses" (she didn't drink tea), or what the College Shops called "date dresses" (it depended on what you did on the date, Lis said), and she was decidedly bored with velveteen and cashmere and hats that looked like derbys and handbags built like a briefcase. Liz's mother bought most of the clothes.

In high school Liz had been a member of the Honor Society, drunk a quart of milk a day, and felt generally like anyone else. She was, in Paris parlance, a shy one. That is, she had never driven a convertible, dated four boys at one time, or been adept at tea-table conversation with her mother's friends. Liz was matter-of-fact

about nearly everything; she was less shy than people assumed. She had never been farther from Indiana than Kansas, and she had been bothered only slightly with strong emotions. At thirteen she had fallen in love with her music teacher and composed a sonnet. When she was sixteen, Joe carried her over a mud puddle and they began, in Paris terms, to "go steady". There were no sonnets and Liz's appetite did not suffer. She presumed she was in love but somehow it didn't require discussion.

Joe was the first boy she'd consciously wanted to kiss and be kissed by, and it had meant enough to make her want not to call it "necking". A half-hour in a parked car was something personal, not clandestine. But very secretly (she would have admitted it to no one and never to Olive) Liz longed to be not just Joe's, but a creature of dash and aplomb, a woman of intrigue. She was not sure this transformation would ever take place. In Liz's mind, one simply was glamorous or one was not.

Olive had, without quite saying so, made it clear that a daughter of hers' ought to be many things... primarily, she would grow up to be a fascinating young woman with a variety of suitors. Liz felt, somewhat justly, and not without a certain sense of guilt, that

she was not born to the manner. She was young enough to be confused about it. It seemed to her that she ought to want what Olive wanted.

Otherwise she had not been confronted with many temptations. For this she had largely her father to thank. He had never pointed them out alluringly, after the manner of most parents.

John Ericson was part-owner of the Paris Herald-and-Bugle. He believed the world could stand improvement, which was an opinion some people felt verged on the Radical. He had been known to admit that business cooperatives might be the most ideal form of economic organization, and he had mentioned reading the Atlantic and the Nation. He worked long hours at the newspaper. Many Parisians were puzzled. They thought he was a fine fellow, but the concensus of opinion was that he sure had his head in the clouds.

He taught Liz jujitsu and how to putt. He, in turn, learned to tolerate Jelly Roll Morton on the vic, and in other less painful ways, retained his position in Liz's affections as a thoroughly acceptable human being. In a casual way he also approved of Joe. Liz's mother did not. Joe was one of the reasons Liz was being sent to college.

Nobody knew it better than Joe.

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At four o'clock Joe was waiting at Mac's Service, where he washed cars back in the shop from eight to five.

In ten days Joe would leave, too, for Agricultural College, 400 miles away. His Uncle Alfred, who was a jeweler in Akron, had promised to lend him money for yearly tuition but room and board were up to Joe. He'd saved over $500 and if he found a part-time job and worked summers and vacations, he thought he could cover expenses.

Joe had been twelve when his father died and their 60-acre farm sold to the bank to pay for a brown-frame house in Paris. Joe's mother took in boarders and sewing, and Joe got a job washing cars. Sometimes, secretly, he hiked 12 miles out to his father's old farm. The bank had sold it to a man named Honneger; something in Joe's stomach twisted when he saw the skinny pigs rooting in the orchard and the tractor lying idle in the yard. The house...Joe's house... had turned slattern; it leaned and gaped and gave off stale odors. It made him sick to see the screen on the front door swing in and out on one hinge.

Joe remembered the feel of riches...not dollars, but abundance: milk stacked for the Condensery's truck, sides of beef and whole hams and pickles and cheese in the cellar. There was little paper money, but there was corn and cream and machinery and manure. Joe drove the tractor and hoed the garden. The real thing was the land.

His father died one day pulling weeds, shocked at himself, unprepared. When Joe gave up grieving, he began to blame him for losing their farm to a bank. He felt disinherited and shamed, working indoors in grease at the new garage, where nothing was grown, only sold, and his mother sewed other people's clothes in a tight house with no yard. He grew up and forgot his resentment, but never the farm. Sometimes he talked about it to Liz.

Joe wiped the grease off his hands and yelled at Mac to ask if he could knock off for half an hour to tell his girl goodby. "Where's she going?" Mac was lying underneath a Mercury.

"College," said Joe bleakly.

Mac leaned out and looked at him. "If you wanna quit for the day, okay."

Joe considered. "I guess not. She's taking the train pretty soon and there's no use in my going down to the station. Her mother wouldn't like it. She doesn't like me much, anyway." He tore open a package of Camels and pulled one out. "Liz said she'd drop in for a minute."

Mac rolled himself out from under the car. "Why don't her mother like you?"

"Oh, well," Joe said, "I guess I've been going down there too long. She's afraid I might get serious."

Getting Serious in Paris was nasty business, and Mac understood. When a boy went steady with your daughter it was looked upon as either Temporary or Serious. Sometimes the two overlapped, and that was worse.

Liz came in wearing a fitted gray suit with a ballerina skirt and carrying her hat, a black one with two glistening feathers. She stood in the doorway looking at Joe. Mac shifted back under the Mercury and surveyed her ankles. "What you waiting for, chump?"

Joe hitched up his bluejeans and grinned. "Hi, honey."

"Hello," Liz said. She seemed to be looking for some place to put the hat.

"Let's go sit in Mac's office. He won't care," Joe said grandly.

The office contained a spitoon, a desk, metal file-cases and two swivel chairs. There were trade calendars on the wall and a picture of Harry's little boy on a tricycle. Everything smelled of stale smoke and gasoline fumes. Joe pulled out one of the chairs and wiped it off with his handkerchief. "Want a coke or something? I can run next door."

Liz sat down carefully and held her hat in her lap. "No," she said, "I'm too nervous. Everyone's been pushing me around."

Joe looked down at his shoes. "How's it going? All packed?"

"Mother sent my bags on ahead. She thinks everything ought to be there in case."

"In case of what?"

"I don't know. She's getting excited because I'm the last one of the crowd to go. Pat and Kay left for I.U. this morning. It starts earlier."

A silence fell.

"You didn't say what your address would be," Joe reminded her.

"The Murray Arms Hotel."

"Don't they put you in dormitories?"

"We live in the hotel during Rush. It lasts four days. You stay at the hotel till you know if you're going to pledge a sorority or not. Then you move into the sorority."

"What if no sorority takes you?" Joe was drawing circles on Mac's blotter.

"Move into one of the dorms, I guess. What've you been doing?"

"Oh, I've been getting around," Joe said.

"Who'd you take out?"

"Everyone, and the easy ones twice." He stopped trying.

"I just worked on Charlie Bennett's motor and drank beer with the guys. Hell, Liz, there won't be anything to do when you aren't around." He let her hand drop and went back to drawing circles.

Liz looked at her hat. "I'm not sure I want to go. It's beginning to sound too social."

"Yeah," Joe said, "you'll be social all right." His brow furrowed. "Listen, Liz. You'll have a perfect right to go out with anybody you want to. But I know how Chad Carnes and that crowd talk, and frankly, I don't know if you can handle it. Some of those guys...well, you'll have your problems."

"Don't be silly," Liz said coolly. "You'd think I hadn't been around at all. I can handle anybody. Grab my arm, just grab it."

"Ye gods," said Joe, "nobody's going to grab your arm."

Well," said Liz, "they might. What's wrong with my arm?"

Joe shook his head miserably. "Nothing. Not a thing."

Liz stood up. "I promised to be back in half an hour." She looked at Joe, at the shape of his head and the firm line of his mouth, at his greasy bluejeans and sloppy socks. He was standing with his back to Harry's old desk, with his hands in his pockets, not saying anything. "I'll miss you, Joe," she said. She had an uncomfortable moment in which she knew it was true. It would be difficult to leave familiar people (Joe, for example), to go off someplace where she'd be another person, not really herself (and certainly not Joe's). Liz strongly suspected that when she left Paris she would enter a vast Unknown, where the least known of the unknowns would, terrifyingly, be herself.

"So long," Joe said. He kissed her earnestly, as if she (or he) were going to die. He felt awful.

"I like you because your arm is the right length when we're walking along the street," Liz said mournfully. "To hold hands with, I mean."

"Would you like to take it with you?"

"You're crazy," said Liz, and walked out the door.

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"Darling," said Olive, "straighten up. Your shoulder-pads are slipping."

They were having coffee in the kitchen with their hats on, except Liz's father who never wore one.

"And another thing" said Olive, "maybe you'd better call us every night until things are settled. Tell me how you like the Queens but don't be specific on the phone. Sally Howe's a D.G."

Sally Howe was a female executive at the Paris telephone exchange.

Olive reached for the sugarbowl. "It might be a good idea to talk in code." She looked out the window thoughtfully. "Use weather, for instance. D.G. is cloudy, Theta is rain, Fog is...oh, Tri-Delt, I suppose."

"And the Queens?"

"Sunshine."

"Sounds a little prejudiced," John said.

"Well perhaps," said Olive, "she could simply say "All Clear."

"I'll sound like a landing-field," Liz murmured.

"This is no time to be flippant. I'll write it down for you." Olive finished her coffee and rinsed out the cup under the faucet. "I'm going to call Mr. Cleery and see if the train's late. It won't be long now, dear." Her eyes began to water in Liz's direction. She left.

John helped himself to more coffee. "I wonder if they still have t hat poolroom on Montrose Avenue. We always went down there on Saturday nights after we got rid of the girls. Used to drink beer with a man called Alfred P. Janzen. According to him, he'd been Woodrow Wilson's private chauffeur and the Duke of Windsor's secretary and gone to school with the Kaiser and prospected for gold in California with Rudolph Valentino. The Faculty could have used him in Public Relations."

From the front hall they heard Olive. "Hello, Mr. Cleery. Is the train for Brookdale on time?"

"I'd just as soon not go," said Liz suddenly.

"Yes, our Elizabeth is leaving for school..."

"After all, it's college you're going to.... not a tea-party," said John.

"Oh, of course she's thrilled -- I can remember how much it meant to me.... so many lovely girls and fine young men."

"Maybe," Liz said, "she'd like to go instead."

John found his cigarettes. "Maybe so," he said pleasantly. "The whole trouble is, she's been."

Chapter Two

The Murray Arms was an old woman of a hotel, turned prematurely grey with smoke from the valve factory. She appeared to have had mixed influences; her style was neither here nor there, a touch of Statler in the trim canopy, a touch of Brown County in the flower-walled diningroom and home-blown glass vases. The desk, located up a flight of stairs from the street, was business-like and small, but as the rushees approached it, peering behind the potted palms and fumbling with quarters for the bellhop, its expanse looked awesome.

Liz marched up the stairs with only "The Bedside Book of Famous French Stories" and an overnight bag under her arm. "Elizabeth Ericson," she said. "I have a reservation. Have my suitcases come?" They had not, and would Miss Ericson mind sharing a room with a Miss Swanson from Tucson?

Liz looked past the crowd of girls at Miss Swanson. She was sitting in an armchair in the lobby, holding a tennis racket and a pair of Western boots. Miss Swanson looked at Liz.

"Okay," Liz said. The elevator boy, who was sixty and called Mac, took them to their room. "It looks,"

said Liz, inspecting the daisy-splashed walls and the sprigged muslin bed-spreads, "like we got the little girls' room."

"Lousy idea, this hotel business," agreed Miss Swanson, tossing her boots on the bed. "You see those tennis courts alongside Hyler Hall?"

"I just got here," said Liz. "Aren't you going through Rush?"

"Hell, yes," said Miss Swanson, ripping off her shirt. "Kate never belonged to any sorority, so she's set on me getting in one. I don't care either way, but I think this hotel business is nuts." Miss Swansoh, whose name was Adelaide, turned her back on Liz and burst open a brown leather suitcase. "And I don't like most sorority women. This is just the kind of thing they'd think up...I've known a few of 'em." She seemed to be searching for words. "They just aren't anyone you'd care to meet."

She dug into her bag and came up with a small leather-bound flask. "One of the guys gave me this when he heard what was going to happen. Should we have a drink before we turn in?"

Liz had sipped wine in her own living-room, and now and then, on dates, drunk beer. She'd never seen

a flask in her life. "I'd be delighted," she said promptly.

"What's your name?" asked Adelaide, pouring. Liz told her. "Mine's Ad Swanson and I'm from near Tucson. I don't mind telling you I didn't want to come East, but Kate thinks it's the only place to finish your education. She's tired of me smelling like a horse." Adelaide smiled grimly. "I told her there were worse things. Well, good luck." She emptied her glass and stared at the bottom of it. "Had a pinto named Bob...I hated plenty to leave him." She put the cap back on the flask and began to undress.

Liz sampled the bourbon and walked over to the window. Outside the weather was still Indian-summer. She sat down on the window-sill and looked at Adelaide, who was combing her braids. "I never thought about being an Easterner before," she said. "I have a cousin in Massachusetts and she thinks this is 'out West'."

The phone rang and they looked at each other. "Go on," said Adelaide. "I hate phones."

Liz lifted the receiver.

"Elizabeth Ericson? This is Marge Colby, at the Queen House. We heard you'd be getting in tonight and we just wanted to say hello. Is your room comfy?"

"That's just the word for it," said Liz, downing her bourbon.

"Of course, it's against the rules for you to call us officially, but please give us a ring anyway if there's anything..."

Neither of them seemed to think of anything.

"You'll hear from us tomorrow," said Marge. "Officially. We're dying to meet you. Of course it's against the rules to issue any invitation before tomorrow, but we're expecting you for the opening tea. Are you free?"

Liz burped into the mouthpiece.

"That's lovely," said Marge. "Until tomorrow." The line went dead.

At nine-thirty Liz woke up. Adelaide was gone and so was her tennis racket. She got out of bed and peered at herself in the mirror. Her mouth tasted like an old blanket and she'd forgotten to pin up her hair. On the floor beside the chair where she'd left it was her suit, neatly folded into ten hours worth of wrinkles, not counting the train-time she'd sat in it. She picked it up, shook it, and called Room Service. "Have my bags come yet?" No, they had not. "Can you get a suit pressed for me right away?" The desk said they'd send up a boy. "And some breakfast," added Liz hastily. "Eggs and..." But of course, said the desk, they'd

send up a menu. Liz remembered what day it was and sat shivering in the morning sunlight.

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Before the initial tea on Sunday there had been much to do, and nearly all of it was done. Not only had it been necessary for the Queens to plan the rushing program, with committees for entertainment, decoration, finance, and alumnae-cooperation, but each day there had been Song Practice (with emphasis on three parts and humming in the middle).

The words were simple but Queen-style was more involved. The repertoire began with "Cleopatra Was a Queen," and shifted to the sentimental numbers, "Crown Her Gently, Gently," "Her Prince Will Come A'Riding", and "Swing The Scepter, Sisters". At the end of the program, the rushees were sometimes permitted to join in the chorus of "I Been Workin' on the Railroad."

Now, Song Practice over for the immediate season, the Rushing Chairman had important announcements. A quiet descended over the Queens as Marge Colby leaned against the piano and looked at them. "Girls," she said, "you've been real swell."

A happy squirm rippled her audience.

"I've had marvelous cooperation from everyone and the plans for the parties sound simply grand. I guess I've already told you about the Powers Model night and the Fox and Hounds luncheon and the formal dinner. Today I want to give you a few last-minute pointers on rushing etiquette. Some of the sophomores may be in doubt about details, and it won't hurt the rest of us to hear it again.

"I'm putting the Official List upstairs in the back room this afternoon, and as you finish a girl, go up and check her off. The columns are marked Superior, Ask Back, and Drop. "The procedure is this: Line up at the door, and for heaven's sake, fellas, don't leave me with less than three of you doing door-duty. Most of you ought to be able to handle two at a time. Take off their coats, bring them down to meet Merry and Mother Apple in the reception line, and then steer them into the diningroom for tea."

"There are three important things to remember... Get their names, look 'em over, and keep it smooth." She paused to light a cigarette. "I know we all tend to be a little careless at this first tea because we really don't have our lists thoroughly sorted and the majority of these first dates are Drops. But regardless of that,

whatever you do, keep it smooth. I know I can count on you. Naturally we'll have other problems later on... conversation, the necessity of rotating, and eventually, our songs.

"By the way, one thing I'd like to underline... when you come to a good part in the songs, and this goes for "Crown Her Gently, Gently" at the formal dinner, look into her eyes. If you're sitting next to her during the "Sweetheart Song" or saying goodnight after the "Lullaby," it's always a good thing to squeeze her hand. You all know what a little squeeze in the right place can do. Thanks a million, girls. I know we'll all be pulling together."

At two o'clock they began. The Queens wore pastel wools, fall prints, or appropriate black crepe. They were freshly bathed and pressed and perfumed. Their nails were immaculate and their eyes were shining. Upstairs the List began to be checkered-over with pencil-marks and cigaret-ashes. It contained roughly six hundred names. After some of the names were the initials J or C, and these (except for two or three C's) had already been marked Drop by the Rushing Chairman. This saved time and spared the Queens possible future embarrassment.

Not that the Queens disapproved of Jews and Catholics. It was written quite plainly in the Consti-

tution that Queens were democratic; it also said they were Christian, that is, Aryan. No special mention had been made concerning Catholic Christians, but Alma Calendar-Queen had realized the importance of keeping an eye on the Pope. The Queens stood for the Average American Girl, and while it was undoubtedly true that Roman Catholics were Christian, it was also true that they were a relatively small group. In the end, you were doing them a favor not to offer them membership. As dear Alma Calendar-Queen had so rightly put it, Jews and Catholics always felt more comfortable with their "own kind."

The Queens' own kind, among others, were arriving by the dozen. Marge Colby stood at the door and watched them as they climbed out of taxi-cabs and came toward her, down the cement-walk between the hedge-rows. They didn't hurry. Indeed, there appeared to be imaginary books balanced on their carefully combed heads; they came slowly, if somewhat shakily, loathe to appear eager. Invariably they turned on their smiles by the time they were halfway up the walk. Marge, an old campaigner, held hers until she saw the whites of their eyes.

As she opened the door she leaned forward slightly and pronounced the standard greeting. "Hello, I'm Marge Colby." The smiling rushee felt called upon to smile

some more and said hello, she was (in this case) Adelaide Swanson. Marge turned to a Queen on Door Duty--"Helen Burke, Adelaide Swanson." As the rushees entered Marge crossed them off the official Door List, which later would constitute the only absolute proof they'd been there.

Behind Adelaide, who was already being escorted upstairs, came Liz.

"I'm Liz Ericson."

Marge gave her the special Legacy Smile which was more intimate than the common kind and was usually followed by a wink. "We're so glad to see you," said Marge. "June, this is Liz Ericson. Do see that she has tea and meets a lot of people, won't you?" June, who was four feet nine inches tall, put an arm around Liz's waist (she had to reach for it), and led her to the stairs. "It's a beautiful first day, isn't it?" said June.

"Beautiful", echoed Liz, and then, more honestly, "but I'm awfully hot in this suit. It's the only thing I had to wear." June decided this was some kind of joke.

"Are you comfortable at the hotel?"

"If it doesn't last too long," said Liz.

June stole a look at her. She hoped she wasn't an Intellectual...(they already had one Intellectual)...

there was something about her...a slight tendency to disagree. "I'd love," June said, leading Liz into the hall, "to show you our house." She unloosed her arm and began to gesture. "That's Merry's room, where we'll put your coat, and that's Hat Barker's room...maybe you know her? Senator Barker's daughter.. and that's the freshman dorm, and that's the john. Would you like to powder your nose?"

Liz hesitated. "I powdered it before I left."

June giggled. She'd have to remember to say what a terrif sense of humor Liz had. The Queens loved terrif senses of humor. "I'll just take your coat and then we'll have tea."

One of the important functions rushing involved was known as "showing the House". There was a great deal of Queen House to show; three floors, not counting the basement recreation room or the attic where the cook and two maids lived. The house was built of bricks, colonial style, with two side-patios and a full-length sunporch. Inside it was carpeted two inches deep and the decor was rich in mahogany tones and copper colors. There was a livingroom, a diningroom with long tables polished to reflection, a beau-parlor with sliding-doors and a fire-place, and a music-room which adjoined the livingroom. Much of this display was left for the final parties, but

the Queen's own rooms were open to all. If possible each Queen directed her rushees to her room (it was more friendly) but if she lived on third floor she used somebody else's (less friendly but less exhausting). Today all any rushee could expect was a once-over lightly. Later, if she was invited back, she'd have ample opportunity to view the silverware.

June led Liz downstairs, up to the reception-line, and then toward the diningroom. From the mixed smell of Tabu and candle-wax, Liz knew she was approaching the field. The full-length draperies had been pulled to shut out the light of day, and the atmosphere was gently humid. Chairs had been placed against the diningroom walls, and in them reposed rushees, teetering cups on their knees, refusing cookies and almonds, less from lack of appetite than from hands to hold them.

Mother Apple alternated at the tea-table with Mrs. Madge Bellows and Mrs. Erskine Esketh, alumnae advisors. Mrs. Bellows was Financial Advisor. She had blue-gray hair, a politicians's voice, and she gave the general impression of a small locomotive. She owned a string of apartment houses in Indianapolis which she had rented during the war for considerably over O.P.A.; she was a wealthy woman and had once had her picture in the Washington newspapers presenting a medal to Mrs. Roosevelt (For Service).

Mrs. Erskine Esketh was young. Her husband was a Certified Public Accountant who wrote books; at any rate, he had written one. Since it had been about a sensitive young Certified Public Accountant who wrote a book, nobody could be positively sure he would ever write another. Mrs. Esketh, who was Social Advisor, believed strongly in the future of national sororities; she did not belong to any church and she was not politically-minded, so she had made of her sorority affiliation an outlet for spiritual intensities. Actually Mrs. Esketh loved working with young girls. It was Mrs. Erskine Esketh who entertained the Queens at Christmas eggnog parties, at Spring weiner roasts, and when Erskine Esketh permitted, at Saturday night get-togethers in front of her fireplace, with Twenty Questions and the latest hits from Tchaikowsky.

At the other end of the table Mother Apple was replacing Mrs. Bellows behind the pot. "Oh Mrs. Bellows," said June, "won't you have tea with us? This is Elizabeth Ericson."

"Well, well, well, well," said Mrs. Bellows.

"Thank you," murmured Liz.

"How's your mother, Elizabeth?"

"Just sugar, please," said Liz to Mother Apple, and "Fine, thank you," to Mrs. Bellows.

"I knew her before you did," answered Mrs. Bellows tartly. She fluffed her lace dickey into shape and frowned slightly. June promptly laughed. The Queens had grown to understand that if Mrs. Bellows frowned, it meant Mrs. Bellows was making a joke, When she smiled, she gave the impression of being vaguely dangerous. "No tea," she said. "I have a long drive before dinner and Charlie won't eat without me." She nodded at Mother Apple and Mrs. Erskine Esketh, waved at a wall-full of Queens, and allowed June to accompany her to the dining-room door. Liz followed because it seemed to be expected. Mrs. Bellows paused. "Tell Olive Cookie sent her best. Haven't seen her since the convention in '40."

With mild shock, Liz recalled her mother's "Queens of '24" picture; in the front row, their arms entwined, stood two girls with shingled hair and bare knees. One of them was frowning determinedly into the camera; over their heads, in white ink, was written "Ollie and Cookie". Surely there wasn't more than one Cookie to a class.

"But perhaps," added Cookie, "I'll see you again before you see <u>her</u>." She smiled dangerously and departed.

June, carrying tea for both of them, perched on the nearest chair. "How peachy! She knows your mother!" She surveyed Liz with sudden acute interest.

Liz drank her tea modestly, aware that the die had been cast.

Chapter Three

Two days later the Queens had an afternoon luncheon. A girl named Dallas, short for Dorothy Alice, was put in charge. Dallas had short blond hair, a long nose, very black eyebrows, and a Hollywood bra. She was interested in becoming a fashion writer and now and then she wrote columns for the Daily, playfully signed Alice Bluegown and Miss Muffet and Helen of Troy. She was fond of men (the Phi Delts had elected her Desert Island Date) but she was infallible about women. Since Dallas had become a Queen, the Queens had become truly swish. They affected ascots, ballet shoes, tailored boys' shirts, and wrinkled trench-coats. They were more like Dallas than Dallas was, with the possible exception of Ingrid Bergman. Since some things were useless from the beginning, it was only right that Dallas should have a look at any new material she'd be expected to take in hand.

With this in mind, Dallas served chicken salad to three rushees at once. Their names were Adelaide, Anne Marie, and Liz. "Milk or coffee?" asked Dallas huskily.

Adelaide took coffee; the others admitted to milk. "I'm crazy about ripe olives and brownies," said Anne Marie. Both were on her plate. Adelaide was too bored

to care, and Liz simply looked hungry. Of the three, Dallas preferred Liz.

Liz gave, by looking alert and saying practically nothing, the impression of being interested and respectful. (Later, the Queens would call this charm.) She smiled much of the time. Her skin and eyes were good, and when she moved it was with the awkwardness which is generally considered grace in a woman under thirty. (After thirty, of course, it's awkwardness.) She had decent legs, slim hips, and an only modestly discernible curve of breast beneath her jacket.

But it was obvious to Dallas that she badly needed training. Furthermore, she had a feeling she'd seen the suit before.

She had.

Back at the hotel Liz phoned the railway station for the fifth time. Her luggage had never arrived. Nobody knew where it was, including Olive, who had been informed long distance, and the Paris Express Company, who had been informed by Olive. Liz's mother urged her to go shopping for a new outfit at once, but Liz said she couldn't possibly because she was wearing her slip every day while the suit got pressed. Since there was nothing else to be done, Olive took aspirin and went to bed.

While Adelaide played tennis each morning, Liz sat in her ruffled petticoat and stared forlornly out of the window. She'd had three coke dates and a picnic supper with sororities other than the Queens; it was considered good business to be seen "around". Tonight were the final dinners, the last occasion at which amenities would be exchanged between rushers and rushees. Liz was uneasy. She had hoped to ignore the worst of rushing, like not scratching a hive, but the tension was enormous. Stories of fraternal perfidy had circulated hotly among the rushees, over tooth-brushes, across shower-curtains, and in the hotel diningroom, between orange juice and boiled eggs. Legacies of the very highest personage had been dropped without a qualm (so the stories went), for, after all, the best sororities had so many legacies they simply had to choose among them. They (the sororities) were getting more irresponsible every year. Sometimes they were downright independent.

At seven o'clock Liz, dressed in the same ballerina skirt and fitted jacket, waited grimly under the hotel canopy. The canopy, of course, was crowded, but the crowd had thinned. The atmosphere was heavy with perfume and meditation. There was a great deal of throat-clearing and deep-breathing. No one wanted to start smiling until she had to.

When the next cab arrived Liz and Adelaide climbed carefully into it and ignored each other's nervousness. Adelaide, whistling loudly, wiped the palms of her hands with a Kleenex. Liz, who felt queasy, stared stoically out the window at the streets, filling up with farmers come to town for Saturday night. Neon lights blinked over the campus restaurant--"The Danube, Beer and Wine, Steak and Chicken"; the benches beside the courthouse set in the middle of the town, were dotted with women and babies. Along the curbs in front of drugstores and pool-rooms and restaurants boys stood, smoking cigarettes and grinning, waiting for girls to walk by. On every side the streets and alleys were clogged with cars. It looked like Paris; it even smelled like Paris, and Liz felt a twinge of regret. She'd be going to the Orpheum with Joe right now, pushing through the Saturday night shoppers, with nothing to worry about but the double-feature. (One was always a murder.)

"Let's walk home," said Adelaide. "I'm getting flabby."

"Okay. I'll meet you on the corner afterwards." (It was considered bad form to wait for anyone, especially another rushee.)

The Queens' front door hung open, and from it seemed to shine every light in the house. "Liz!" said

Marge Colby, and hastily, "Adelaide. We're so glad you could come." A few Queens appeared behind her, eager to remove coats.

Safely inside, Liz and Adelaide took off hats and gloves and gave them into the waiting hands of Dallas and a girl named Casey.

The livingroom smelled of roast lamb and rose petals. In it sat clean little girls; their hair shone and their ankles were neatly crossed. From their wrists and earlobes came the innocent fragrance of five-dollar cologne. On the floor at their feet, scattered purposefully, sat the Queens. Talk washed them like a tide, receding only to roll again. Everyone wore a Great Big Smile.

In due time a solemn-faced boy in a white serving jacket appeared in the doorway and whispered briefly to Marge. Marge stood up, pulled down her girdle, and walked meaningfully in the direction of the diningroom. Taking the rushees gently by the elbow, the Queens followed. "Thank God," said the girl called Casey. "I don't know how people can put up with each other before dinner. It's almost as bad as breakfast."

Dallas smiled uneasily. "Now Casey, now, now."

There were four long tables set with white lace cloths, crested silverware, and heavy crystal. Tall

candles in silver candelabra lighted the room; ill-assorted shadows fell on the walls as everyone found their places. At each setting were place-cards, embossed with tiny crowns in the lefthand corner. Before pulling back the chairs, the Queens paused. Connie Benson led the musical grace, with a tremulo on Ah-men. There was a scraping of chairs. The party was seated.

It was, by and large, an untalkative dinner-party. The Queens were singing and dignified, and their guests were submissive. The roast came and went, the parsleyed potatoes, the Bird's-Eye peas. The jellied salads slipped down dry throats; the relishes were proffered and chewed.

At five-minute intervals the Queens put down their forks and sang. Between the entree and the dessert (frozen vanilla crowns) "Her Prince Will Come A'Riding" melted the meringue on the cupcakes.

"Her Prince will come a'riding
Out of the blue blue vast
Bringing loving tidings
Forever aye to last..."

Adelaide began to masticate celery. It bore a resemblance to hoof-sounds in gravel.

"Her Prince will a'calling come,"

"Cr-unch," chewed Adelaide.

"With his gold fraternity ring,
For every girl someone,
For every Queen a King."

"Crrr-unch, crrr-unch," swallowed Adelaide.

After the iced-crowns had been sipped, the Queens retired to the livingroom. Demi-tasse was served in little crown-cups. The coffee was hot but inadequate.

"Are you ready to dance?" asked Dallas, setting her cup aside.

Liz jumped, the hot coffee bubbled down her chin. "Right here?" Then she heard music on the screened-in porch and saw the waxed linoleum.

Casey turned to Adelaide. "Well?"

"I don't dance with girls," said Adelaide. "It ruins your technique."

Liz and Dallas made their way to the porch. Cigarettes were being lit; Marge and Jenny were sorting through the be-bop.

Resolutely Dallas opened her arms and began. It was a slow walk with a great deal of fast talk. After Dallas and Liz came others; the porch was largely open, but the heat increased. Liz grew tired; she couldn't have known, but the Queens were "circulating". Only by dancing could all of the Queens consecutively meet all of the rushees. Liz danced with girls who couldn't lead

and girls who didn't think it was necessary to try, short ones and impossible ones. (For Liz, anything under six feet was inconvenient.) Between records they drank fruit punch in tumblers.

At nine-thirty the music stopped. The rushees were escorted back to the livingroom. When everyone sat down, the lights went out. It was time for the Sweetheart Song.

"When a Queen looks into your eyes
What should you (and you!) surmise?

Chorus:
She loves you real-ly, real-ly dearrr
Don't ever leave her, don't ev-er go,
Cling to her al-ways, through smiles or a tearrr,
She loves you real-ly, don't you know!"

There was a moment of deathly silence. From beside the bay window and beneath the roses came a startled voice. "That's me!" pointed out Adelaide. Then the lights went on; blinking apprehensively, the rushees were led to the circular stairway. Halfway up the company paused. Already at the summit poised dramatically, was Dallas with a candle and a scroll. Again the lights were dimmed.

"A Queen always speaks good," spoke Dallas.
A Queen is selfless but not unmindful of the golden ore that lies buried within herself.
A Queen is not one but many.
A Queen lives by the unspoken rule of unspoken love.

A Queen is always patient with those less
fortunate than herself.
A Queen asks nothing but to be true to her
destiny.
A Queen is..."

The candle wavered, and Dallas hesitated softly:

"A Queen."

Dallas blew out the candle and the lights came on. The rushees wiped away nervous tears. The bolder ones whispered, "Lovely"; the one or two who remained dry-eyed met suspicious stares from the Queens.

Then the Queens sang merrily, interrupting the tears and the nose-blowing.

"Now run along home, and jump into bed!
And pull the covers up over your head!
For every last Queen will watch ov-er you,
And bring sweet dre-eems from our house to you!"

The rushees ran along upstairs as if chased by devils, gathered up their coats and tumbled back down.

The Queens were waiting. Lined up three-deep in the hall they chorused, "Goodnight, Betty, Goodnight, Thelma, Goodnight, Alice, Goodnight, Liz, Goodnight, Adelaide..."

Outside, Liz caught Adelaide under the street lamp. "That was awfully impressive, wasn't it?" she ventured.

Adelaide seemed strangely unmoved. "One of those fool women tried to hold my hand!"

.....

The hour had come for final decisions. The last hash session was not only the longest; it was invariably a severe strain on intra-group relations. From tonight's thirty dinner guests (the rushing residue of several hundred) only fifteen Queens-to-be could be chosen. Many of the thirty were either legacies or highly recommended, and so there was not much room for logical debate. Since their desirability was more or less a matter of fact, the choice became a matter of faction.

For instance, there were the seniors. As they would be graduated in the Spring, naturally they could have no truly personal interest in choosing the freshmen pledges, other than their wishing to apply a knowledge, acquired from experience, of what was "good for the house". The vote of these seniors, with a few earnest exceptions, was for sale. With smart manoeuvring, they could be swung en bloc to one of two sides when the voting began.

The sophomores were tougher. They generally could not be swung at all. It was their first rushing season and they were full of conviction. They were young and the future was theirs'.

Their rivals, the juniors, were smarter campaigners, having lived through it before, and they had the added prestige of approaching seniority. From among their

numbers would come the new president, the new treasurer, and the new rushing chairman.

Also to be considered was Mrs. Erskine Esketh, the alumnae representative. She sat in an armchair beside the cardtable, holding Recommends. It was Mrs. Erskine Esketh who read and re-read last-minute telegrams, the alumnae petitions, the lists of telephone calls. It was Mrs. Erskine Esketh who would, by mail and by wire, be responsible for the wrong omissions.

Deep down in their hearts, they may have wanted to get to bed before dawn, but each Queen remembered stories of past hash sessions, tales of black-balls, tears, and righteous wrath. It had become a kind of joute oratoire, in which all scars were honorable. They were like small boys bragging over a fresh black-eye. "If you think this one was rough, you should have been around last year," they'd confide. Thus, cheerfully, the Queens selected their heirs.

It went something like this:

The scene is the Queen's livingroom; there is, palpable as a cloud, that sense of total involvement common to a room lately inhabited, somewhat emotionally, by many freshly-bathed females (rumpled pillows, breathed-against mirrors, a lingering warmth, very miscellaneous).

The time is one of great solemnity, probably ten-thirty.

In front of tightly-drawn draperies and behind a card-table, upon which are stacked the Official Files, sit the Rushing Chairman and the President. To one side is Mrs. Esketh. Elsewhere, sitting cross-legged or lying on their stomachs, are the Queens, clad in pyjamas and bath-robes, holding pencils and Lists. Knitting and back-rubbing have been strictly forbidden.

Rushing Chairman: (glancing at her Files) We'll begin with Ann Bailey.

Jenny: (speaking for the juniors) She's darling! A doll!

Chorus: Darling! A doll!

Rushing Chairman: We had to wire the Texas chapter for additional information on Ann. Well, we got it and we're real tickled. The rushing chairman down there said it wasn't Ann's fault that she was so popular, and if people hadn't kept after her all the time, she probably wouldn't have flunked more than one subject. They felt pretty bad about losing her.

A Senior: We just love Ann, but after all, we'll be graduating and it's you younger girls who'll have to live with her.

(All eyes turn to the sophomores.)

Justine: (who weighs 160 lbs. without her shoes): I'm not sure there's anything to her.

Polly Burns: (formerly Miss Indianapolis, presently Sweetheart of Sigma Chi): Little too slick, if you know what I mean. Out for what she can get.

Mary Marilyn: Anythin' Ah don't like it's a girl callin' ever'body honeychile. Sounds affected, don't it, Sugah?

Sugah: (otherwise Mabel Madeline): Yes ma'am!

Dallas: Let's not waste time trying to agree. Would you blackball?

Mary Marilyn: Ah would.

Justine: I think perhaps I would, too.

Dallas: You might remember that we juniors have had more experience in sizing people up. We sized you up."

Mary Marilyn: (Yelling): You tryin' to insult me?

Rushing Chairman: Now girls, let's cooperate.

At midnight, nine names have been approved, only four Queens have resorted to black-ball and then, nobly, retracted. The room is full of smoke and Queenly sweat.

Rushing Chairman: Liz Ericson. Comments?

Dallas: It seems to me there's something gone about a

girl who wears the same suit to four parties. I simply can't see how her mind works.

June: (who will be the next president, and is beginning to campaign early): I know what you mean, Dallas and I feel the same way. But (remembering the tea and Mrs. Bellows) I think Liz is the kind of girl we Queens ought to help. I don't believe she's found herself yet. You know what Alma Calendar-Queen said in her inaugural address at the Niagara Falls convention..."Be a Queen, and let who will be clever." Why, with the right help, who knows that Liz might turn out to be. I think we ought to think of that.

(The Queens think of this.)

Rushing Chairman: Anything else on Ericson?

Jenny: Just who is she?

Rushing Chairman: Would you mind reading her Recommendation again, Mrs. Esketh? We haven't heard it since yesterday.

Mrs. Esketh (clearing her throat): Four telegrams, two notes of phone calls, and several letters. Elizabeth was a member of Hearts and Flowers, Sock and Buskins, Pen and Pencil, and The Girls' Octette. She is talented on the saxaphone and popular with boys. Her father owns the Paris Herald and Bugle, and her mother, as you all

must know, is a Queen, class of '24. (She pauses.) I also have a wire, sent this afternoon from dear Mrs. Bellows, who regrets that she's unable to be here. (Reading): "Forgot to say take Ollie Ericson's girl. Ollie old friend. Hope no trouble. Will be trouble if they don't. Madge P. Bellows."

Rushing Chairman: (hopefully, after a moment of silence): I think we all like Elizabeth. There's no feeling against her, is there?

(The Queens look feelingless.)

Shall we vote?

(Liz's name is added to the List.)

Rushing Chairman: Betty Purl.

Jenny: I was wondering if that was spelled P-e-a-r-l... (Looks indicating subtle understanding are exchanged.) Betty's really a doll, but she's olive-skinned and she has a nose. With a name like Purl, well it might make people think she'd just changed the spelling."

(Speculation)

Rushing Chairman: I don't think she could get away with it. After all, she's been vouched for, hasn't she, Mrs. Esketh?

Mrs. Esketh: (shocked): All our girls are vouched for.

Dallas: Of course it isn't anything against the girl herself, but if people are going to <u>think</u> she is, it's as bad as if she is. (Torn) Beautifully Mainbocher, though.

Rushing Chairman: solemnly): What do you think, Mrs. Esketh?

Mrs. Esketh: (looking at her hands): This kind of thing is always so painful. Betty seems quite acceptable, but I must admit she could pass for... Not that I noticed it particularly at the time, but...really, I think it's something you girls must decide for yourselves.

Rushing Chairman: (gently) Thank you. I don't think we need a vote, do we?

(There is a rumble from Casey and three or four Intellectuals-to-be.)

Rushing Chairman: (determined to be fair) Any additional comments?

One of Casey's Sophomores (bravely): I don't see what difference it makes. Some Jews are as nice as anybody.

Casey: Oh my God.

(The Sophomore wilts.)

Rushing Chairman: (determined not to be too fair) The next name is Adelaide Swanson.

Casey: She'd be a godsend around here.

Jenny: Personally, I hope God sends her back home.

Justine: She didn't seem to be a sorority type, somehow. I can't understand how she got this far.

Mrs. Esketh: The details on Adelaide's petition came yesterday. She was recommended by Mrs. Carter Stillson (you all know dear Mrs. Stillson) who says her mother operates a million dollars worth of ranching property in Arizona. Mrs. Stillson says Adelaide would have much to offer.

Jenny (lighting a cigarette): To be perfectly honest, I'll admit I didn't get to know her very well.

Justine: Of course, you can't tell a thing about people during Rushing.

Casey: You can from where I'm sitting.

Mrs. Esketh (firmly): I don't want to interfere in any way, but perhaps if you took a vote...?

(Adelaide's name is added to the list.)

At two o'clock in the morning the Queens struggle up to bed. The bids will be delivered at ten, and at four o'clock the new little Queens will be pledged.

June: (Hugging the bannister): Whenever we all meet like this, to discuss things openly, I always feel I'm seeing Democracy in action!

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At ten minutes past ten on Sunday, Liz called Olive.

"Hello, mother. All Clear."

"What? Speak up, Elizabeth!"

"I said the sun's shining."

"Baby," said Olive, "my little Queen!"

.....

"Not me," said Adelaide, eying her bid with something between hesitation and distaste. "I'm moving to Hyler Hall."

PART II

Chapter Four

During pledging everybody had yellow cornflowers to hold and grapejuice to drink. Liz was deeply impressed with the words. The Queens stood for High Ideals and Eternal Sisterhood and they told the pledges they must begin to Feel Their Responsibility. The pledges said "Yea," and "Amen;" their shoulders drooped but the weight was sweet.

At the end of it there were fifteen ladies-in-waiting, possessed of silver pledge-pins.

Nominally the new pledges were "little sisters"; the theory was that each Queen ought to be a big sister to someone smaller and weaker, thereby offering the benefit of advice and occasionally allowing her stockings to be borrowed. In practice the choice became one of alphabetical allotment, entailing no particular trouble for anyone.

Upstairs in a room with two double-bunk beds and a gingham-covered bulletin-board full of dance programs Liz sat talking,knee to knee, with Sister Dallas. "You've got it on wrong," Dallas told her. "Hook your thumb in the notch between your collarbones and spread your fingers. Put the pin where your third

finger falls...Like this. It's an easy way to tell. Sorry you'll be living with Casey, not that we aren't crazy about Casey...she's literary, or did you know?... but she won't be much help to you. How tall <u>are</u> you? Well, anyway, you have individuality. Stand up a minute. Now sideways. Ever tried these? Stick 'em inside and let's see. Don't be silly, some of our best girls do. Maybe you need something less pointed, but the idea's sound.

"Actually you're rather Vogue...it's a matter of starkness. There's so much you can do with it when it's unadorned. Why don't you wear your hair straight with a streak in front? You could bring out your eyes with gold suede. Your ears aren't pierced, I suppose... I use a hot needle and just wiggle the thread around inside for ten days. Painless. You can get a little tight if you're sensitive. I'll probably be doing two or three.

"You're not engaged or anything, are you? We could use it...gives you status. Your style definitely isn't jeune fille. You'll probably appeal to Phi Psi's, not Beta's. I'll take you along to the Jug to meet Sam. That's Sam on the floor. God, he falls off whenever the window's open. Cute, isn't he? Very Eastern, hates it out here, simply loathes it.

"What kind of men do you like?"

Liz didn't know, and her horizons had been stretched too far to hazard a guess. "What kinds are there?"

Dallas reached for a Pall Mall. "How true. But you'll be better off if you limit yourself, at least in the beginning. I'd suggest you pass up letter-men for activities-men. They're smoother. As I said, you're not jeune fille."

"I've gone steady," Liz ventured.

"Oh, I wouldn't worry about <u>sex</u>," said Dallas. "You can handle that. Unless, of course..." She looked at Liz. "Use discretion. Don't go after more than one pin in the same House. You know how men gossip."

"Did you bring your clothes?" Casey asked, coming in. "The closet's ready."

Liz explained. Dallas was clearly delighted. "If you have a charge at Claussons' we'll drop in and buy all new ones."

"Come, come, little fly," said Casey. "Crawl out of the web and follow me."

. . . . . .

Liz moved in the next night. Rooming with Casey was a mixed honor. Casey had short red hair, a square expressive face, and a squat body, too broad for her

height. She worked on the Daily and she wrote short stories which the campus literary magazine assured her were chock full of lyrical passages. In her spare time she dabbled in sculpture. Casey was not cordial to more than three or four Queens. Among other things, she said, she preferred tropical fish. No one quite understood why she stayed with the Queens. In a word, she felt martyred. After all, it was something of a compliment to be misunderstood by the Queens; and for an artist, Casey had been told, misunderstanding was inevitable. As a square peg in a round hole, she was conscious of both public and private distinction.

Spiritually it was a Spartan existence, but the meals were excellent.

Her room was on third floor. It had two beds, two chests of drawers, and, in the center of the room, two desks pushed together. On the walls were a Miro print (Person Throwing a Stone at a Bird) and water colors painted by friends. A Webster turntable sat on the floor beside a stack of records...Stravinsky, Bartok, Schoenberg, and Six Songs For Democracy. To the collection Liz added some early jazz and Marlene Dietrich.

"Junk, I suppose," said Casey pleasantly. "Especially Marlene. Who's Bessie Smith?"

Liz sat down on one of the delinquent suitcases, newly arrived. "A blues singer who recorded in the '20's. She's dead now. Bled to death outside of a hospital in Mississippi because it was a hospital for white people. Which side of the closet do you want me to take?"

"Put it anywhere." Casey swung open the door and kicked a laundry bag into the corner. "You sound promising, but we probably won't get along. Lots of people don't like me."

"How'd you get to be a Queen?" Liz grinned.

Casey raised one bushy red eyebrow as high as it would go and then dropped it and winked. "The same way you did."

It was a chilly thought. Liz began to hang up clothes.

"Maybe you'd better pile that on the bed. There's a cocoa-party in the kitchen."

"Aren't you coming along?"

"I usually pay my fifty-cent fine," said Casey, "and go out for coffee."

.....

Mother Apple stood in the kitchen doorway, pressing each pledge by the hand. She was the kind of woman who, whenever she had occasion to be sick, began at once

to think of herself in the past tense. Her skin, fed by Elizabeth Arden, mud packs, and vitamins, was as sweet as fresh biscuit flour, soft and white and evenly folded. The flesh on her arms seemed to slide gently up and down and her plump little hands were as boneless as spun sugar. Altogether, Mother Apple was delectable. She had a grown son but she did not wish to be dependent. She spent with him only her summers and holidays and a month every winter.

Having no daughters, (her son's wife didn't quite count) Mother Apple was happy among the Queens. She asked little of them except attention...a jumping up from chairs, a wishbone on Sunday, more coffee when her cup went dry, their escort to concerts. A Queen herself, Mother Apple wore a Queen Mother's Pin. She loved gracious living; each morning she could be seen watering a calla lily in the hall.

Liz accepted cocoa from Mother Apple and a sugar cookie from Gertrude, the cook, who then disappeared. Gertrude was not usually on duty after seven-thirty, but tonight it had been arranged that she meet the pledges. That is, they all looked at Gertrude and she looked out the window. Gertrude did not speak unless spoken to and sometimes not then. On her birthdays the Queens had a cake (baked by Gertrude) with candles, and on a strawberry

shortcake or a peach pie night, they sang here's to Gertrude, our Gertrude, dear Gertrude, but Gertrude stayed in the kitchen.

Smiling tentatively at her sister-pledges, Liz sniffed the cookie smells and looked around. Every pledge (including Liz) retained her rushing expressions, a slight flush, a nervous modesty. The reflexes of rushing flattery still lingered. Like well-adjusted bridegrooms, the Queens relaxed into coziness, but the pledges did not quite perceive that the courtship had ended.

The President, of whom the pledges were all very much in awe, leaned comfortably against the oven and hooked her arm in Liz's. Liz felt as if she were posing for a picture. "I hear you play the sax," said the President, whose name was Merry. "We'd just love to have you do a few numbers after dinner some evening. Claudia Newberry plays the piano and you two might work something up. We give a Christmas party for the alums every year and it would be darling to have you. They like Chopin and classics like that."

"On the saxaphone?" asked Liz involuntarily.

"Your clothes came," Dallas interrupted mournfully. "Oh, this is J.C. Carey...did you meet her?"

J.C. had a New Look slouch, not unattractive, a direct glance, and her skirt bagged. She was an architect, also female; the combination was something she couldn't get off her mind. J.C., whose high I.Q. was a comfort to her, cultivated detachment. Now and then she could forget she was a lady and those goddam boys didn't help her off ladders.

"Lit school?" she asked Liz. "Taking anything good?"

"Besides English, zoology and French and history."

"No math? I suppose you won't need it if you don't get into a man's field."

"I thought I'd like to teach. Maybe English or history."

"Do you know," said J.C., "in India women get equal pay...the same wages men do when they do the same kind of work. There's a woman who's a governor, one who's an Ambassador, and they did have a woman cabinet member who planned the public health program."

"That's very interesting," Liz said. "I know a missionary from there and she said generally the men had several wives. I suppose that gives them time for other things. The wives, that is."

"Of course," said J.C. coldly, "some women are unusually capable."

Merry began to tap her saucer with a spoon. "Listen everybody! Before you all get away, I'd like to say how happy we are to have our new sisters with us tonight. I think we have the cutest, nicest, pledge class on campus and we're awfully proud. We want you to feel, right away, that this is Home. The rules... I suppose we really ought to mention the rules...are on the bulletin board. Meals paid quarterly, and the maids clean twice a week. By the way, I hate to mention it, but please don't put apple cores down the toilet. Pledge duties begin tomorrow, phone-duty and door-duty and there's a small fine for missing house-meetings. We want you to feel absolutely at home here. If there's anything...anything at all...that bothers you, just ask our advice. Oh yes, this is sort of embarrassing, but Gertrude said if she found any more chewing-gum floating in the dishwater she'd quit so please remember. I guess that's all for now. It's been wonderful, hasn't it, girls, and let's thank dear Mother Apple."

"We love you real-ly, real-ly dear,
Don't ev-er leave us, don't ev-er go-o-o-"

The melody swelled happily, three parts and humming in the middle, as the Queens swallowed the last of the cookies and filed upstairs to bed.

Chapter Five

"Dearest Liz,

I got here three days ago, hitch-hiking. Feel like I've got six sore feet. I'm living in a kind of co-op with twenty other guys. We peel potatoes and fix stews and set tables. We've got a big kitchen and we can cook practically everything. The Super-Market gives us reduced rates if we buy their leftover vegetables...you'd be surprised how much stuff groceries throw away. We carry back whole basketfuls and toss out the rotten stuff back here.

Anyway, it's not going to cost me as much as I thought...about $5. or $6. a week, room and board. The house is run by a bunch of ex-army fellows and they're okay.

I miss you like hell. Why don't you write? I read in the paper you'd pledged Queen. It came out before I left. Congratulations. That's the one you wanted, isn't it? Saw your mother uptown one day and she said "Good luck, Joe," but she didn't exactly kiss me goodby. When will you get home? I'd like to make it Thanksgiving but probably won't before Christmas. In some ways I wish Uncle Al hadn't gone to State Ag... I'd have gone to Midwestern. Anyway, take it slow and <u>easy</u>..." (There was an inkspot)..."and write to me.

I'm lying on my bed writing this...Classes start at eight tomorrow.

All my love,

Joe"

Liz read it thoughtfully, sitting on the steps of President Wylie Hall. Joe seemed very far away. For no reason she understood, she had thought of him hardly at all.

The campus was full of Fall color, but the reds and greens were cold. There was too much stone and strong light and cement; it might have been a stage-setting or a cemetery. Liz felt, despite her books and classes, like an observer. You were not supposed to step on a plaque set in the floor of Wylie Hall (because it was the Official Seal of Midwestern and sacred) and you were not supposed to sit on the benches near the Kissing Well on lower campus, because it was suggestive.

She stuffed Joe's letter in her pocket and got up. She had just come from History II and she would now go to French 2. Midwestern was large, and there was a chilling amount of statuary and marble. The stone dogs reposing on either side of the Romance Languages Building looked more ominous daily. For the first time Liz felt the implications of her pledge pin. Sitting in a lecture hall, alone among strangers, you took off your jacket and revealed, oh jewel of jewels, your pin. It was the label that identified you as the genuine product, well-advertised, carefully packaged, guaranteed. A sorority girl. Other sorority and fraternity people felt quite free to borrow your pencil.

During the first few weeks of school, Liz took copious notes, bought six pairs of white wool socks,

painted her moccasins with ox-blood polish, and decided she liked French and English. Zoology demanded an effort she felt unable to make. It required looking at amoebae through microscopes and drawing their pictures. Liz's instructor, a Mr. Perkins, was young and cross-eyed. Whenever he adjusted her microscope she saw a blinding glare, generally pure white. It was difficult to reproduce on paper. But since the Queens had excellent notebooks in their Study Files, the amoebae were simply copied.

French was another matter entirely. It was taught by the French Flanagan: there were two teaching Flanagans, brothers, known as the English Flanagan and the French Flanagan. The French Flanagan was pudgy and given to spats and the patting of knees, if there were any, in the front row. Teaching, to the French Flanagan, was a restful occupation. As he phrased it, "You put your money down and you take your choice." (This referred to whether one wished to learn French or not to learn French.) He was popular at sorority dinners for his stories in dialect, usually Irish.

The English Flanagan was small and sardonic and it was considered a great honor to have one's themes insulted by him. Liz's first easay had been marked, "Kindly spare us your pre-puberty impressions of Kansas. This is not a class in geography."

"We have some lovely Shaw themes in the Files," Dallas told Liz. "Just change things around a little."

Liz conscientiously read "Back to Methuselah," but after a month of school, she felt no more a part of Midwestern than before.

.....

Traditionally every Queen affected bluejeans and pigtails and devoted the first Saturday in October to physical culture. The occasion, the yearly football game with the Lambs, was one of the biggest dates on the Queen's Fall schedule. The Lambda Psi Xi House was directly across from the Queen House; serenades were frequent, exchange dinners compulsory, and the Game was classic.

The day had arrived, and Liz, under Dallas' guidance, was dressing to play Queen quarterback. Dallas had a contribution to make, a Dallas-invented beauty secret. Sachet, used like talcum powder, exuded an odeur exotique (said Dallas) when the wearer indulged in strong exercise. "Try it, baby," she urged. "You know football."

Liz tried it but it made her itch. She then put on jeans, a softcollared boys' shirt, and saddleshoes. Casey, coming from the shower, sneezed powerfully into her sleeve. "You smell sexy but you look like Mickey Rooney."

As a matter of fact, Liz had been coached to this end. The Queen theory of sex-appeal-for-foothall was to look butch and play dainty.

"It's 'Candelabra on the Seine'," said Dallas. "Strictly an import. And doesn't she look cute?"

"Ducky. Did you tell her to throw the ball the wrong way?"

"Don't be silly," said Dallas. "We don't throw balls."

Casey sat on the bed and scratched her knee. "How long did this thing go on last year?"

Wearing gabardine knickers from Clausson's, $29.98, Dallas admired her fanny in the mirror. "Indefinitely. We played from two till four, drank beer from four till seven, and..."

"Played indefinitely," finished Casey. "I'd like to come back and work. And I'm meeting Jake for dinner." She picked up her jeans and scowled. "I've yipped and yelled at the Lambs two Springs in succession. It's beginning to tell." She pulled on her jeans and walked over to the desk. A half-finished plastocine head, obviously a model for something larger, sat on a folded newspaper. "I've been trying to get the chin for a week."

"I like it the way it is," Liz told her. "Is it for the Exhibition?"

"Don't know yet. Right now it's a mess. You could see it if you didn't have all that mascara in your eye."

"What precisely does it stand for?" Dallas had crossed the room and stood surveying it dubiously. "Don't they always stand for something?"

"She's the American College Girl...integrity, guts, and vitamins." Casey looked at Dallas, speculatively. "But maybe the wench is dead."

"You're too intellectual," said Dallas, going back to the mirror, "that's the main thing that's wrong with you. That and your friends. They drink sherry, of all disgusting things," she said, turning to Liz. "They don't believe in kissing and they all sleep together. Casey's a Bohemian."

Casey calmly buttoned her wool shirt. "Sometimes you display quite a gift for phrasing, but you get so confused. It's a state of mind, dearie, not a lay."

Liz was so intrigued she emptied "Candelabra on the Seine" into the rug.

.....

The Lambs were waiting, unshaved and masterful. Chad Carnes, Lamb captain, turned somersaults with Dallas, Ben Anderson wiggled his ears, and Merry Matthews, the Queens' prize tackle, sat on the imaginary sixty-yard line showing people how she sewed her fingers together. Usually she waited until she was drunk, but this was a special occasion. Somebody had piled wood and shavings under the barbecue grill, ready to light whenever the signal was given. There were cases of beer, discreetly unopened, two card-tables, and a pile of blankets. The field was ready.

The Lambs won the kick-off and gave it back to the Queens, who kicked and ran. Only Merry and a few earnest pledges played football, but there were tackles and hysterics. "People on their face look so fun-nee," screamed Jenny, and promptly fell on her face. Casey ran, allowed herself to be tackled, and disappeared at the half.

Liz was trying. Through Dallas she met Chad Carnes. Chad was three years older than Liz and once had lived in Paris, too, but he'd never let himself be assimilated. He dated Muncie girls and was considered beyond reach and dangerous. The introduction was a surprising success. Chad tackled Liz six times, four times when she didn't have the ball. It looked like a

touchdown. He left her, reluctantly, to open the beer. "We're gonna put one on," he shouted, and the chorus of Queens were ready.

It wasn't until much later, down at the Jug, that Liz began to fidgit. She'd sat at the long table and sung the songs..."Every Lamb sweetheart gotta be a Queen" and "Drink, chug-a-lug, chug-a-lug, chug-a-lug..." and she'd held two pledge's heads while they were sick in the john and she'd laughed at Chad's story about the Colonel's wife and the wounded soldier. ("My poor boy, did it break the bone?")

Now she was sleepy. She sat quietly, twisting her empty beer-glass. "Don't you like beer?" said Chad, leaning across the table. "What's your trouble?"

"Nothing." She looked around the table and everywhere she looked she saw Queens and Lambs, their faces red and laughing, their elbows on the wet table, arms entwined. It was depressing. Everyone went on and on, saying the same things...nobody wanted to go home. It's just me, Liz thought guiltily. I'm not really a Queen at all. I haven't learned.

At that moment Dallas said pointedly, "Let's go find some powder." In the john they stood looking at each other. "Are you sick or something? Gag yourself and get it out."

"I'm not sick," Liz said. "I guess I'm just sleepy."

Dallas eyed her kindly. "I don't want to hurt your feelings, angel, but you're not going over. Several of the girls have noticed, but of course I said I thought you were sick."

Liz began to fumble for her lipstick. She felt somehow undressed. "What am I supposed to do?"

"Don't overplay it, naturally, but with Chad's girl out of town, this is your chance."

"Maybe he's not my type," Liz said uncertainly.

"You'll get used to it. I should have warned you, but I told him you were witty. You know what a scream he is."

"If he's such a scream why can't I listen to <u>him</u>?"

"A little of both, baby. Come on, now. Are my seams straight?"

Back at the table Chad wanted to play footie. Liz took heart. She shoved her glass toward Chad and removed her foot. "Hey boy," she said. "My thirst comes first..."

Under the table Dallas kicked her approvingly.

An hour and five beers later Liz wondered why she'd been so thick. For Liz, footie and all, was singing "Every Lamb sweetheart.." and feeling exactly like a Queen.

.....

When Chad dropped by to ask Liz to the Lamb formal, Dallas was unflatteringly suspicious. "Well, I didn't expect this. What happened?"

"Nothing, really," Liz said modestly. "He thinks I'm mysterious."

"Very shrewd," said Dallas. "Did I tell you he's good advertising? Always dates the smoothest sororities... last year he had his pin out on a Kappa and an Alpha Chi at the same time. He's supposed to have a mistress on Salem Street, too, but nobody knows for sure."

Casey was sprawled on the bed drinking canned orange juice. "And nobody cares for sure."

Dallas shrugged. "Of course Chad doesn't work on View or paint or anything artistic...he's too normal."

"When I think of the future of the human race..." said Casey, and made a vulgar noise into her orange juice.

"Should I wear my taffeta formal?" Liz ventured.

"Taffeta is simply not Chad," said Dallas firmly. "I think we'd better try Clausson's. You can open a charge."

The night of the formal Liz wore Lost Horizon perfume, Cinderella's Pumpkin nail polish, her hair on top of her head (in addition to a switch of false hair),

a black faille dress, two cotton-filled items called cheaters, lent by Dallas, a gold lamé stole (borrowed), and stiff elbow-length gloves. On her third finger, over the glove, she wore a pale blue sapphire ring, her mother's. The effect was awe-inspiring. Liz had a feeling she'd seen something like it before...either Barbara Stanwyck or a Chesterfield ad. It was quite thrilling.

Chad arrived with an orchid and a taxi. "Jesus Christ," he said. He tossed Liz the florist's box and fished in his topcoat for a cigarette. "I'd never have recognized you."

"I change," said Liz coolly. "Shall we go?"

They had dinner at the Murray Arms where the Lambs and Lamb sweethearts sat at a long table decorated with a centerpiece of 'mums and Budweiser. Liz left her stole and her evening bag in the ladies' room but she wasn't sure about the gloves. In the end, she wore them. By the time the creamed chicken was served, she saw their disadvantages. It was twice as difficult to use a knife and fork when you couldn't bend your fingers. She peeled off the lefthand glove and folded it in her lap, but the ring on the right hand glove wouldn't budge.

Five minutes later Liz returned to the ladies' room and soaked the gloved hand in hot water. Then she

wiggled out of the ring, hung the wet glove on the radiator to dry and smiled at herself in the mirror. She'd miss her dinner, but she couldn't care less. Who ever heard of a Chesterfield ad that ate?

.....

The Lambs had hired a four-piece orchestra and removed the furniture and carpet from their diningroom. Chad sent two pledges to test the floor for dancing and to offer cokes to the orchestra. The cokes (with rum or rye added privately) were an obeisance to the non-alcoholic chaperons, who played bridge with the door open.

Liz clutched her second spiked coke and waved at Dallas and Jenny across the room. Then she drank it down. Chad put a hand on her shoulder and pinched it tenderly. "How about giving me some of this stuff to dance with?"

They danced until the room grew warm. "Now you're at it, baby," said Chad. "Let's have a drink." He led her into the kitchen and handed her a bottle concealed inside the empty garbage can. "It's the one we've been using, but I hid it. Guys trying to chisel."

Liz swallowed and returned the bottle. The kitchen smelled of bread crumbs and kitchen cleanser and reminded her of Olive. Sorrow engulfed her. Only

yesterday I was a child, she thought, and here I am drinking out of a garbage can. "Were you ever a snowflake?" she said wistfully.

"What?" asked Chad.

Liz giggled. "I was a snowflake once in the Santa Claus parade an' I won a whistle for shinging."

"You're kinda cute," Chad said.

"I feel like a little singing right now. Let's go in the other room and I'll sit on the piano."

"How about trying 'On the Steps of Psi U?' Say, what's the matter?"

"I must be getting homesick." Liz hiccuped gently. "This kitchen reminds me of my m-mother."

"Mother sounds like a great old girl," Chad murmured. He leaned down, turned up Liz's chin and kissed her.

"Whee," said Liz.

"We're not supposed to neck except on the dance floor, but..."

"Who wants to neck?" said Liz. "I only yelled because a pin stuck me."

They danced out the pantry doorway into the hall. "Come on, lovey. We forgot to shake hands with the chaperons. Smile and don't breathe on anyone. Keep your teeth closed, see? Like I do."

The door to the study was open; the chaperons were drinking coffee and tallying the score.

"Good evening," said Chad. "Mr. and Mrs. Pearson, Mrs. Benson, Professor James, may I present Miss Ericson?"

"How do you do," said Liz between clenched teeth.

They all looked; the gentlemen very shortly looked the other way. "Well, uh, goodnight," said Chad.

Liz smiled graciously. "It's an awfully nice dance, isn't it?"

"Ah...indeed," said Mrs. Benson.

They backed out. "For Cri'sakes," said Chad nervously, "what are those bumps in your stomach?"

Liz focused with difficulty. Dallas' "cheaters" had slipped to her waistline, where they reposed in buxom glory.

Liz sighed. "Barbara Stanwyck," she said enigmatically. "Pray excuse me."

Chapter Six

Liz couldn't spare time to go home before Christmas; she had become gloriously and unexpectedly, a party-girl. In competitition with Chad came Harold Swenson of the Grosse Pointe Swensons, Billy Bailey, a Deke, and Alfred (Buzz) Wilder, the trackman. Life took on a new hue and most of it was lived on weekends. No one could have been more surprised than Liz, but Dallas said she'd expected it, darling, but naturally.

But naturally the Queens were proud. It seemed quite possible that Liz would be voted Pledge Most Likely to Succeed. In addition to her effectiveness on and off pianos, Liz was named co-chairman of the Midwestern Freshman Frolic, a position won with loyal fraternity support.

All Fall Liz steeped herself in a fine mixture of importance and draught beer. By Christmas she had been thoroughly seasoned, a toothsome example of the Queen-to-be.

Olive was astounded. "Baby," she said over the last of the Christmas turkey, "I'm so glad you're happy."

"Why are you spending so much money?" asked John.

But Liz saw so little of them that nothing really needed to be explained.

.....

"You turning gray or something?" Joe asked on Christmas Eve. "What's that white streak in your hair?"

"Bleach. I just re-streaked it. Don't you like it?"

Joe mashed the straw down into his milkshake and frowned. "Where'd you get those corduroy pants you had on yesterday? The ones with the fly."

"I had them made over from somebody's. Practically everybody has a pair."

Joe plunged. "Does it mean you're tied up with one particular guy?"

"Well, hardly," said Liz. "Anybody can accept a pair of pants. It's not like being pinned."

They sat in silence. The girl behind the soda fountain cracked her chewing gum and eyed them. Liz looked at her nailpolish. "Maybe we ought to go," she said.

Outside they walked slowly, out of habit. The streets were thick with snow and Liz took Joe's arm.

"I suppose those corduroys belong to Chad Carnes," Joe persisted, in a voice pitched to indicate lack of interest. "You said in your letters you'd been going out with him."

"Yes," said Liz guardedly. She made a point of watching the cars go by.

"You wouldn't think of getting engaged or anything like that, would you?"

"We've never talked about it," Liz said, uncomfortable.

Joe stopped walking. "I didn't mean Carnes. I meant engaged to me."

"Now Joe," Liz said, "what good would that do? We couldn't even date much."

"Date much! Who's talking about dating?" Joe's carriage was military. "Skip it. If I wanted an answer I'd have to ask your mother. She's the one who'd know."

Liz turned on him. "Never mind my mother. All you think about is that co-op and how much money you can save and your professors. Who cares that much about professors, for heaven's sake? You're so serious all the time. Why can't you just relax and be <u>funny</u>?"

"Funny!" said Joe, stung. "You talk like a kid. Wearing other people's pants and fake eyelashes...Hell, you're funny all right!"

"I think I'd like to go home."

"Fine."

They went, each in dignified silence.

Chapter Seven

Vacation was over and the Queens, faced with approaching final exams, began at once to ease this unpleasantness by making plans for their mid-Winter Ball. This year it was to be a Pirates' Party; everyone was urged to wear eye-patches, false wooden legs, or slit skirts.

On Monday night, somewhat in advance of the party, the Queens held their fortnightly meeting. (The fifteen pledges were upstairs writing essays on "What Queenhood Means To Me.") At eight o'clock the Sister Grand Herald rang the Ancient Gold Gong and the Queens came tumbling down to the basement.

There they queued up solemnly in the doorway to the recreation room, from which, dimly, could be seen the Sister in Charge of Welfare and Arrangement striking a match to the candles. Before entering, the Queens exchanged (secretly and singly) certain communications with the Grand Guardian of the Archives (known familiarly as Secretary).

"Who is't?" hissed she of the Archives.

"'Tis a pearl from the Crown," came the answer.

The waiting Queen then twined her right little finger around the right little finger of the Grand

Guardian and they pulled at each other, somewhat forcefully. The little finger (which stood for Dedication) was then doubled into a fist and the fist protectively covered with the left hand. At this point the Queen was free to assume her place near the throne.

The throne, from constant use, had begun to look venerable. In other circumstances it served as a dining-room chair, but on meeting nights it was draped with a red velveteen robe smelling of mothballs and cedar. The velvet had worn thin with the weight of Queenly bottoms, and the royal hem was caked with candlewax. On either side of the throne were ordinary straight-backed chairs, arranged in a circle. In the flickering light the Queens sang "Hallowed, Hallowed," and chanted antiphonally Part Three of the Preamble to the Charter of the Original Vow.

Then Merry Matthews, the Grand Highest Queen, blew out her candle and struck the floor seven times with a purple scepter. The Financial, Social, and House reports were read and for one hour the Queens discussed the Pirates' Ball. In conclusion, the Grand Highest Queen spoke.

"Our activities," she said, "are falling off. When All-Campus Recognition Night rolls around, we may not even get a <u>thing.</u> Of course it would be simply

wonderful if we could win the Campus Activities Cup again. You know how handy it is during rushing, and the alums all love it. Now if any of you have only three or four campus activities, you can certainly take on three more. There are only ten Queens in the Riding Club, eight in the Players' Club, nine on Student Council, fourteen on the Women's Page, and twelve on the humor magazine. So far, we have only five on the senior editorial staff of the Yearbook. You know how important that is. Extra pictures."

"Incidentally, girls, I had a phone call from the Gamma Gams for an exchange dinner next month."

"The Goona Goons, you mean," murmured a Queen.

Merry looked sternly at the circle. "I know none of us would want to be accused of acting...well...superior. It's against our ideals. Personally I think it's up to us to give them a helping hand and pretend there's nothing wrong with them. It's part of Pan-Hellenic loyalty... and there's a fine for unexcused absences."

Silence.

Merry consulted her notes. "I have some good news from our National Philanthropic Project in the hills of old Kentucky. You'll be glad to hear that the Queens' Home for Wayward Girls is building a new wing. Mrs. Hobble writes to say they have twenty unfortunates now,

and the staff is giving them lessons in arts and crafts. When the girls aren't busy in their truck garden, they weave baskets and make all kinds of things to sell for profit. Most of the proceeds go into a Fund to help the Home, but each girl keeps five percent of the money from her own sales. This is to arouse individual initiative and stimulate a spirit of competition.

"The girls are also given talks on Character and Sportsmanship and they are told about Queen ideals. Mrs. Hobble says it is a real inspiration to them to know that thousands of girls like us are pledged to help them, and now that all sixty chapters of Queens have joined hands in this valuable contribution to society, she looks forward to the time when the National Council of Queens can help support twenty-five Wayward Girls instead of twenty.

"Mrs. Hobble also says she would be grateful for individual donations, as the mortgage is due. If there is no other business," finished the Grand Highest Queen, "may I have a motion that the Court disband."

The motion was made and seconded as the Queens chorused "Aye, Aye." Connie Benson led the musical benediction to the tune of "Lead, Kindly Light" and the Queens shuffled out.

"Cocoa party in the kitchen," yelled the Grand Highest Queen. "Everybody come to the cocoa party!"

.....

Liz and her fellow-pledges sniffed chocolate and hurriedly signed their names to "What Queenhood Means". At the foot of the stairs Dallas met Liz. "Where is it?" she whispered.

"In here." Liz pointed to her gold suede weskit.

"I've got it all planned. You just act natural and leave the rest to me."

They joined the Queens in the kitchen, where Mother Apple smiled and stirred the cocoa-pot.

Dallas, ever-poised, selected a solid chair and stood on it. She hit a water-glass several times sharply with a teaspoon and said,

"Listen closely, listen well
I will tell you something swell..."

The drinkers paused, cups in mid-air.

"A love that happened swish-bang-slam,
A Queen-to-be and her handsome Lamb.
He looked at her and in a whiz,
Chad Carnes had pinned our own dear Liz.
Shout her praises, all you Queens
Now that I have spilled the beans."

With this Dallas swung out a small bag of pea-beans and showered them gayly into the upturned faces of the Queens.

The noise was instantaneous and prolonged. Three girls who also wore Lamb pins felt impelled to kiss Liz, others to tear open her buttoned weskit for a closer look at the new jewel. Elbows rammed into eyes and heels stepped on toes. In a spasm of happy sympathy Mother Apple dropped a tea towel into the cocoa.

Panic was neatly averted by means of song...

"Here's to our Lizzie, our Lizzie, our Lizzie,
Here's to our Lizzie, she's with us tonight!"...

and a variation of the Sweetheart Song, kept for such occasions...

"He loves you real-ly, real-ly dear
Don't ever lose him, stay always near..."

Liz thought all this was much more exciting than when Chad gave her the pin. Of course he'd kissed her over the pork chops, and the Danube orchestra played "Every Lamb Sweetheart Gotta Be a Queen", but then it had been time for pledge-meeting. It took the Queens to make an occasion of it, to give it the real seal of triumph. The smell of fresh cookies and perspiring admirers was sweet in her nostrils; Liz's eyes grew moist.

"The Lambs are coming!" squealed Merry. The Queens dimmed the lights and rushed to the livingroom windows.

Outside, two by two they marched, their voices tuned to the night. They formed a squad in front of the porch and sang three haunting songs of love, pitched in a minor key with a sweet tenor on the crescendo and a dying-out in the end.

This caused the hair on their listeners' necks to prickle thrillingly.

Then out of the darkness and his assembled brothers stepped the Lover, the Onlie Begetter, the cause of it all. He tossed a White Lamb Rose through the now open window. Someone handed it reverently to Liz. (She must sleep on it and dream of the Lamb Rose Garden, where grew his heart.)

"Who was that?" asked Liz vaguely.

The sisters were aghast. "Your Pin-man," they said.

"Oh," said Liz, and her neck stopped prickling.

He was clearly an anti-climax.

Chapter Eight

Liz had overslept and the diningroom was closed, and so diabolically the blows fell on an empty stomach. From the Dean of Students had come a typed communication and an official record of her semester's marks, and from the Merchants Trust Company, a note withdrawing all further privileges and courtesies.

"In view of the January examinations, you are now," said the Dean, "on probation. However, it is our policy to grant students a second semester in which to prove themselves capable of maintaining University standards. We of the faculty," the Dean went on, "realize that the university world is large and diversified, often a sharp change from pre-college environment. In consideration of this, I should be glad to discuss with you any matters which may be causing undue difficulty. My office is in Wylie Hall and my secretary will arrange an appointment for you at an early date."

"As you know, residence in a sorority house is not permitted to freshmen whose academic rating has fallen below standard. You will be given a list of authorized rooming-houses where comfortable accommodations may be obtained at University-approved prices,

should the dormitories be unable to find room for you."

Liz was too startled to appreciate this gesture. She was, in fact, stunned.

No pledge...according to Midwestern and Pan-Hellenic (and Liz had been told this, somewhat blithely)... could live in a sorority house unless she "made her grades". Unfortunately, few freshmen (with good grades or bad) could get into a dormitory in the middle of the year. Midwestern, like most universities, had too many students and too few beds. Faced each Fall with a perennial shortage, the University smiled on the Greek-letter houses. After all, there they were, all furnished and mortgaged and privately supported. Why spend money on dormitories? They could rebuild the stadium or erect a statue.

The girls who were caught between...who didn't pledge a sorority or find room in a dorm...moved into the "authorized" houses. These were generally operated at a profit by business-like widows; paint-peeling frame houses with limited hot water, perhaps space for one student, no ironing in the rooms, please, or a big house reconverted, overcrowded. An "authorized" house was social Siberia. A girl lived there if she hadn't made a sorority or was Japanese or interested in studying.

Under the Dean's letter lay the bank's. Miss Ericson's account was heavily overdrawn, and since this marked the fourth time in six weeks, the Vice-President of the Merchants Trust Company suggested she send the remittance and henceforth discontinue her patronage.

At this Liz began to cry. She stopped abruptly, blew her nose several times and stared accusingly at herself in the mirror. After all, she'd memorized songs and names and rules, she'd done door-duty and phone-duty, run errands, polished silverware, attended committee meetings and pledge meetings. Of course she'd studied, but no Queen could afford to be dull. In the Queen House life was Many-Sided. Academically speaking, sororities weren't proud. They made a point of pupular-izing the well-rounded "C".

Guiltily Liz went over her expenses. There'd been the suede coat and jodphurs and boots and two formals and green shoes. And there'd been the weekend in Indianapolis; they'd stayed at the Grey Briar, shopped at Ayres and Block's and Wasson's, and drunk Pink Lady's at the Tic Toc Inn, waiting for the boys to come. There'd been all these new gloves and hoop-earrings and lunches on campus.

It had seemed altogether natural. Of course there were a few girls like poor Betty Bailey; she'd

been elected treasurer because the treasurer was paid. (Betty's mother was a Queen but her father was dead.) The Betty Baileys were charity, but most of the Queens were Queens.

Liz thought of her father and was ashamed of herself. He'd put money in the bank and told her to make out a budget. Why hadn't she? And why had she flunked a course? For the first time in her life Liz disliked Liz.

Casey came in, carrying snowboots and a drawing-board. "Tut, tut, kiddie. Had an argument with lover-boy?"

"Letter from the Dean," said Liz miserably. She handed her the envelope.

Casey read it and tossed in back. "I'm sorry, but you can't expect to pass a course by buying the book. I guess I should have told you."

"Well," said Liz irritably, "why didn't you?"

"You weren't listening. But don't waste time crying. It's happened before. You'll make it up next semester. I've got something worse to think about," Casey added. "You know Jake?"

Liz nodded. A tall gangly boy, all bifocals and teeth. The Queens called him a "howl". They didn't mean he was amusing.

"This morning they told me not to let him sit on the front porch because he embarrasses the pledges . An I.Q. of 185 and he embarrasses the pledges." Casey began to get red. "I ought to move out. This time I really ought to."

"That's crazy," Liz said. She felt as if she were on the brink of a discovery. "I think some people around here are silly."

"Ha!" said Casey. "Now we can both cry." They sat in silence. Casey looked increasingly more morose. "How about going down to the Jug?" she said. "We've got all afternoon to get drunk."

.....

At four-thirty Casey was saying, "That was the year I was appointed Night Editor on the Daily and the Queens asked me to pledge. At the time I thought maybe I needed it...Everybody at home said so, but the Daily crowd thought I was crazy. Anyway, I drank the Queens' cocoa and rushed the freshmen and paid the fines if I didn't. You think it stretched my soul? It wouldn't even get me a job on Life magazine! The thing is"... Casey paused for more beer..."I'm free publicity. They get their names in the Daily in the morning and tell me it isn't good enough in the afternoon. Besides that I don't curl my hair. I'm just a nasty ole frump."

"At least you didn't flunk out," said Liz glumly.

"You're not so dumb," Casey told her. "Just misguided. But right now you're lucky. You can get out for awhile."

"If that's the way you feel," said Liz, burping gently, "why don't you get out? For good."

Casey stiffened. "You sound like Jake. I'm in, that's why. My sister was a Queen and she broke her neck to get me a bid. She'd write personal apologies to every chapter in the country. Everyone back in Hollyville would say I was a Communist or a freak or I really wanted to pledge something else. Not that I care what Hollyville says."

Liz was puzzled. "Maybe it sounds corny, but don't you believe in friendship and charity and..." she paused..."scholarship? The Queens' ideals."

Casey stubbed out a cigarette. "I would if it meant anything. Every year they go to a National Convention and congratulate each other. What for? Actually," she signalled the waiter, "you're forced to live in your neighbor's girdle and then call it love. You want to stand for something, so you contribute as little as possible to a charity. In the meantime you have to pass a course or two, so you learn to be a high-class parrot with a pearl on your bosom."

Liz considered Casey very cynical. "But that's not the sorority's fault. It's the people in them. The ideals are all right."

Casey was getting impatient. "Don't be foolish. A sorority <u>is</u> people. If they're so idealistic, why don't they change some of those ridiculous by-laws? Never mind the old line that groups exist everywhere. Of course they do, and some of them depend on Mamma's social status or Pappa's bank account...but a college campus is a poor place to make that kind of group seem <u>necessary</u>.

"I used to think a university was an institution for thinking and expanding, not an initiation to bigotry. It's not the facultys' fault, it's the alums. Keep America free for Americans...but be sure they're white, Aryan, and Protestant. It's not just an undergraduate problem, either. Eventually we graduate and go into voting booths, and to the rest of the world we're mass inconsistency, race riots, and dollar-signs."

Liz didn't pay much attention to this. In Paris few people worried about the rest of the world. "If you don't care what your home town says, who <u>does</u> matter?" she asked finally.

Casey finished her beer. "Jake," she said, "and people who don't come around very much anymore."

Liz thought of Mr. Hemingway and Mr. Faulkner... not coming around anymore.

"That's too bad," she said feelingly. "but I still don't see...If you can't stand it, why don't you say so and live someplace else?"

Casey grinned. (It was not her martyr-look.) "In a phrase, I haven't the guts. I can't go back and I can't go on. So I might as well just bitch. Besides, it's my senior year."

A waiter leaned over the table and Casey and Liz tried to assume sober expressions. "Phone call for Miss Ericson. Booth on the right."

Liz weaved across the floor and complacently lifted the receiver. Chad was omniscient. He always seemed to know where she was.

"Baby," said Olive, "I've had so much trouble finding you."

"Ye gods," said Liz.

"Sally Hughes was driving down to see Mildred and she asked me to come along. They said you might have dropped in at the Jug for a coke after class."

"Uh-huh," said Liz. "How long are...can you stay?"

"Just for dinner. Sally wants to get home to-night."

"I'll be right back," said Liz. "It's awfully nice to hear you. I hope we're not having fish."

Olive laughed girlishly. "We always did on Fridays. Our three Catholics. Everything's so natural. I've seen your room and Chad's picture. Is he there now? Would you like me to say hello to him?"

"He's in the john," said Liz.

"Oh," said Olive. "Well, hurry home, dear. I'll be waiting."

Liz stalked back to the table. "My mother has arrived," she said, and ordered another beer.

"Good thing I've got my bicycle. You can sit on the handlebars. Save taxi fare."

"Save taxi fare," echoed Liz, who had seventy-three cents in her wallet.

They looked at each other solemnly and emptied their glasses. "Going to tell her you flunked zoology?"

"Not sure," said Liz. "Maybe I'll write her a letter."

They found Casey's bike propped against the plate-glass window. "There'll be kissing," Liz said. She found a pocket flacon of "Tigress". "Wait a minute, will you?" She gargled thoroughly, shivered, and spat. "Okay, let's do it."

Casey puffed on the hills but they did it.

PART III

Chapter Nine

Getting a room at Hyler Hall was largely a matter of luck. Luck and Adelaide. "Come on over," she said when Liz telephoned her, "and talk to Mrs. Harlow. She's one of the assistant deans, besides running this place. Tell her you want in so you can concentrate on studying. Maybe she'll be interested."

"I probably don't deserve it," Liz told her humbly. "Everybody around here is being so sympathetic I feel silly." Almost rebelliously, "Right now I don't care if I do move out."

"Then start moving, bird-brain. I'll meet you in the lobby at three."

Liz hung up, half-miserable, half-grateful. The past week had not been comfortable. Her mother had said several things beginning with "my poor baby" and her father had said nothing, with more effect. In conversation with John, Olive blamed Liz's professors.

"If anyone's to blame besides Liz," John said, "it's us. She's not like you. Maybe she's trying to be now. Maybe that's part of what's wrong."

"Good heavens," said Olive. "I didn't flunk any courses."

"No," John said bluntly, "but you didn't win any medals. She doesn't know anything except that she's supposed to have a good time."

Olive was hurt. "There are certain things you may not understand. Liz needs the Queens."

"It doesn't look like it. You can't make her into a replica of yourself. Leave her alone. Let her make some independent decisions."

"Everything I've done has been for Liz's sake," said Olive firmly. "I fail to see how I'm responsible for the inadequacy of certain professors. Now, of all things, they're insisting she move out of the House, away from her friends. I don't know what will happen, but I'm afraid she'll..."

"Don't tell her, for a change. Just let it happen. Let her figure it out. And stop yelling Queen at her. What difference does it make if she's a Queen? I don't care if she never goes near the place again."

"John!" Olive turned pale. She went into the bedroom and locked the door.

"Oh damn," said John cheerfully, and went off to the Elks' for a beer.

But Liz hadn't known any of this. What she remembered from that weekend she'd gone home to tell them was the peculiar expression on her father's face, as if he hadn't quite heard her. He seemed to be still listening for the thing she hadn't said. An excuse? Liz decided she had none. Superstitiously, she wondered if she'd had to fail one thing to be successful at another. She lost, in a week, a great deal of hard-won poise.

If Liz and her father shared the same bewilderment they were careful not to show it. Their surface attitudes were clear-cut; Liz was sorry and slightly defensive and John was disappointed and slightly impatient. He gave her a check to cover the semester's expenses and they spent one evening at the diningroom table planning a budget...books, room and board, tuition, laundry, recreation. The next afternoon before the train left they looked at Liz's zoology textbook. John asked questions. "You're just memorizing," he told her. "You know better than that. This prehistoric horse with the toes...Which toes formed the hoof? Why don't you make a drawing?"

Liz nodded. Well, why hadn't she? The truth was, she hadn't even read it. She didn't look him in the eye.

Later, as she and Olive packed, Liz attempted an apology. "I'm really sorry about those grades, Mother. I don't think it'll happen again."

Olive glanced in the mirror, patted her hair, and looked away. "I'd like to give that science professor a piece of my mind. Now where on earth are yourclean slips?"

Liz was suddenly tired. On the train going back she slept fitfully. By the time she reached the Queen House, she was thoroughly depressed. She'd called Adelaide the next morning, and three days later she moved into Hyler Hall.

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To begin with, Liz was shocked at the pleasure she felt in her room. It looked out over the campus at tennis courts, at people coming from Wylie Hall and the library. Towards the room, almost at once, she felt a sense of ownership...her vic in the corner, her own clothes in the closet, her own prints on the wall. She decided to put a colored map over the desk and buy a study lamp for the wall by the bed. (In the Queen House the rooms were papered and painted by the alums, the furniture decided upon, the decor prearranged.)

The east wing (Liz's room was at the end) jutted off to form a separate corridor. It had a kitchenette with a sink,, cups and saucers, a stove, three ironing-boards, a clothes' rack. The bathrooms were expansive... a dozen tubs and showers and basins, all immaculately clean. The halls smelled strenuously of wax and there was no dust. The rooms were almost all single, almost all neat. After the Queen House it was austere; Liz felt as if she'd been hospitalized.

Adelaide lived down the hall six rooms away. Tonight she knocked at Liz's door before dinner. "You ready? It's roast beef. Better if we get in the first line."

"Wait for me, Ad." Beyond the corridor and her room Liz had seen almost nothing.

Adelaide propped herself against the door and folded her arms. "How do you like it?"

Liz couldn't tell her. She wasn't sure. She grinned instead. "It's antiseptic enough."

"They've got those chintzy places over on Baylor Street, for real homey girls. Forty to a house. Rather try that?"

"I'm satisfied."

"It shrinks after a while. You get so you recognize faces and then names and if you trade tables every

night, you'll find people you like all over the place. Not that there aren't a lot of drips, and some pretty snobbish cliques, too, but the point is, you can choose your own poison. We have our corridor gangs but a lot of people from fourth floor hang out down here and some of us go up there after dinner to talk. And there's always the downstairs library and the smoker. You never have to get cornered with any special crowd. I like it."

Liz hesitated with her pledge pin. For just a minute she was tempted to leave it on the dressing-table. Would it be better, perhaps, to avoid questions? She wore it, straightened her sweater, and they headed for the elevator. The halls had come suddenly to life. The elevator was jammed. Two girls in sweaters told each other about their last night's dates..."I think he's a little effeminate," said the buxom one. "He took me to a movie that was all in Italian." A fat girl and a short girl were having an argument about whether or not to pick up someone called poor ole Louise. Adelaide sent the elevator to Ground Floor while they disagreed. The girls in the elevator eyed Liz, pretending not to. Adelaide said, over her shoulder, "Who won the game?"

"Drew House," said the short girl. Hyler Hall basketball fans sighed.

Downstairs they smelled the roast and the gravy. The crowd began to push. "Over here," Adelaide said. She took Liz by the arm and led her into the recreation room (deep chairs, coke-machine, radio). It was crowded and smoke-filled. "Hey Greasy," Ad yelled.

Greasy stepped aside to make room for them. The circle looked at Liz, interested.

"Liz Ericson," said Adelaide. "She's moved into 321. Carol de Grece, Becky Stone and Dot Wheeler."

They smiled at Liz, offered her a cigarette and went on talking. Dottie looked as if she had trouble getting through doors. Her wrists were as big as her elbows, and her glasses slipped down on a long thin nose. Greasy wore a tweed suit and her hair in a bun...a senior, science major, thought Liz, and was right. When you first glanced at Becky she might have been a Queen, but not, Liz decided, when she looked back at you. She didn't quite meet your eye; sometimes she stammered. She was very shy.

The buzzer sounded and Hyler Hall girls went into the diningroom. Liz was startled at its size...white linen on the tables, set for eight, high ceilings,

chandeliers, polished silverware. At each table stood a girl in a white serving apron, her hair tied in a colorless net. As Mrs. Harlow, at head table, was seated, the rest of the dormitory pulled out chairs. Liz looked around, wiggled a foot under the table. There was choice of roast beef or fish, and soup, salad, potatoes and squash. The waitress, a girl from Hawaii, talked to them as she poured their coffee.

After dessert they followed Mrs. Harlow from the diningroom and waited, pulling out cigarettes, for the elevators.

Liz had discovered she liked Dottie and Becky. Greasy was less appealing. Her major, she said, was zoology.

"Come on up to my room," said Dottie. More people joined them. Greasy turned on the news. People played bridge on the rug, someone left to wash her hair. On the floor beside Ad, helping her bid, sat Liz.

"Do you belong to a sorority?" asked Dottie, looking at the pledge pin.

"Not yet," Liz heard herself saying. "I flunked zoology."

There was a brief silence. Greasy turned away from the radio. "Too bad. Have trouble with the final?"

"I'm not sure. I think I didn't study enough."

Greasy eyed her. "Who was your professor?"

"Dr. Mackay, for lectures."

Greasy smiled. "Old Dr. Mac's been at it too long. He'd like everyone to memorize his textbook before class...then he'd lecture on the footnotes. I suppose, after forty years, he's bored."

Liz was grateful; no one else said anything about her pin.

"Please may I use your vic?" asked Sidney Goldman from the door. She carried, under her arm, an album from Burk's. "I finally got Peter Pears." She set the records tenderly on the desk. "Beautiful stuff. Like honey, or l@ving."

The rest of them were used to this, but Liz was startled. Meeting Sidney for the first time, people saw her, not in detail, but all at once. She gave the impression of beauty but it was never clear why. She wore glasses and was very tiny. She had the self-sufficiency of a child, or a cat. This either frightened or fascinated people, depending on their age.

Dottie lifted the phonograph cover. "What is it?"

"A tenor. Poetry by Keats and Charles Cotton and Tennyson, set to music by Britten. Hello," she

said, turning to Liz. "I watched you in the diningroom."

"You did?" (Uncomfortably.)

"I wait on table. I saw Ad pulling at you so I tried to decide if you were a guest. Usually you can tell by the way people eat, but you're borderline."

"More than somewhat," Ad said.

"I'm living here," Liz said firmly. "Just arrived." She looked at the album. "I'd like to hear it."

"Do you like music?" It didn't sound like an idle question. Sidney carefully slid out the first record.

"Yes," Liz answered. "In fact, I play a little."

"Good. I sing," said Sidney, "a lot."

Back from the shower, Becky sat listening, pinning her hair into round flat curls at the nape of her neck. Dottie changed into a bathrobe. She looked like a navy blue tent with a head. Ad counted trump and glanced at her watch.

"The shadows now so long do grow
That brambles like tall cedars show,
Low hills seem mountains and the ant
Appears a monstrous elephant..." sang Peter Pears.

For Liz, it was a new kind of music. She wondered what she thought of it and while she wondered, she had an unprecedented urge to think profound thoughts; she was ashamed of being young and comfortable.

She shifted uneasily, tried to laugh at herself. Chad would laugh. Perhaps Joe wouldn't. Liz lighted a cigarette, tossed the match into an ashtray. She felt a little guilty about Joe. They'd written, but rather coolly since Christmas. She hadn't told him about Chad's pin. Liz was honest enough to admit that she didn't want to lose Joe, but at the same time neither was she sure she wanted to give back the pin to keep him.

The record finished, Liz and Sidney smiled at each other, tentatively. Liz asked to hear more. At eight o'clock Dottie kicked them all out. She and Becky were studying history.

In her room Liz unpacked, set her books on the desk, stuck the snapshot of Joe in the mirror. The dorm had grown quiet. Only now and then were there voices, steps in the hall, doors slammed. Liz reached for an apple, sat down, opened Dr. Mackay's five-dollar textbook, and began to study.

When Chad called from the Jug, she talked only three minutes. "What's the matter?" he said. "What's the rush?"

"No rush."

"You sound funny. Well, I know how you feel," Chad amended. "I'm the same way when I'm back home.

Nobody around. Things aren't natural. You miss the House, don't you?"

Liz stared at the walls of the corridor telephone booth. "I don't know yet," she said finally, "but I doubt it."

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She did miss the House, but inconsistently, in spurts. Sometimes she was lonely: it would be easier if doors slammed louder, if interruptions were longer, if, like the Queens, you were never by yourself. In the Queem House no matter if you ate or slept, made love or took a shower, there was always someone looking, talking, standing in the doorway. If you overslept, the return address on your mail was read, and if you kissed your date goodnight it was compared with the last time.

There were so many people looking at you all day and all night, you didn't bother to look at yourself. It gave each Queen a kind of protective anonymity, a crowd mentality. She was not a person, but a part-of-everybody. (This was called Learning to Live With People.)

Occasionally Liz missed it. She had been used to authority. Now, on some days, she had whole hours to fill by herself.

She had fallen into a schedule. It was relatively painless. She got up at eight, went to classes until one, ate lunch at the dorm, studied until three-thirty, went to gym class or music lab on alternate days, ate dinner at six-thirty, loafed until eight, studied until bedtime. On weekends she went out with Chad. Every other Monday she ate dinner at the Queen House. As a flunked-out pledge, she had no duties but to attend meetings and pay dues. If she passed the zoology exam in the Spring, she'd be initiated.

Sidney took her, on Saturday and sometimes weekdays at noon, to listen to records at Burk's. It was a shop where students could buy things on credit, where anyone, if he were known to the owner, might play records simply to listen.

Liz began to learn about music. The sessions with Sidney augmented Music 48, in which Liz studied the major symphonies. They learned the usual words to identify them, passed down from class to class. "This <u>is</u>...the sym-phon-ee--that Shubert wrote and nev-er <u>fin</u>-ished..." Showmanship and performance, formerly so important to Liz, were now less interesting than substance.

Suddenly there were dozens of new albums she wanted. She was dissatisfied, not with the records

she had, but because of the ones she didn't have. It was like eating food with only one flavor. She had a talk with Sidney about money. Sidney largely supported herself by a university scholarship, by waiting on table, and with odd jobs.

"How'd you get your job waiting table?"

"Asked. It's up to Mrs. Harlow or the Student Association. Do you need it?"

Liz hesitated. "Yes." She knew she needed it, perhaps not to eat, as did Sidney, but for less obvious reasons. They were no less real. Buying records was only an excuse.

Two days later Mrs. Harlow told her there was no room for a waitress, but they could use people in the kitchen to serve plates and wash dishes. ("If there's an opening later, my dear, you may have it.") Liz accepted. From six-thirty until seven-thirty she served plates and stacked and wiped dishes. Surprisingly, it was no particular burden. She didn't like scraping plates, but she liked feeling a part of the group who worked in the kitchen, liked feeling necessary. It seemed, most of all, like paying a debt. She wasn't sure who she owed...her father or herself...but earning part of her board was satisfying. She began to feel more self-respecting, less apologetic. She didn't tell Olive.

Chapter Ten

Mrs. Harlow had called a special meeting before dinner. "We are to be visited on Friday," she said, "by Mrs. Harvard Bates Benton, the daughter of a former President of our United States." (She named him.) "There will be a tea in her honor at four-thirty, here in the Hall. I wish you all to be present."

They needed little urging. Mrs. Harvard Bates Benton had lived in the White House as the President's daughter, been married, and lived happily for many years afterwards as the President's daughter. She wrote and talked and traveled about. Recently she had completed a tour of the Eastern and Southern Women's Clubs and she seemed now, midway through the college circuit, to require conversation as well as monologue. She was used to being looked at, and dressed accordingly.

In the middle-western college towns she fulfilled the general idea of a lady-about-town-from-New-York. She did not actually converse with her admirers, but she told conversational stories. The stories depended largely on the air with which they were told, which was strenuously charming. The President's Daughter wore scarves wrapped dramatically about her head, a moist

powder base and blue eyeshadow. She lectured in a pleasantly sentimental style, which ostensibly had nothing to do with herself, but only with future daughters of Presidents.

Often she asked questions and waited intently for replies. She was very much interested in Youth, Virtue and Education, and spoke on these topics while glancing at prepared notes. She combined the celebrity of a movie-star and the respectability of a lady judge. In short, the President's daughter was an American Heroine.

On the afternoon of the tea every girl in Hyler Hall dressed, if not happily, in a mood of thorough anticipation. Sidney was overlooking the sandwich squad; there were also cookies with almonds, cookies with raisins, and round shortbreads modelled after Peek Frean and Company digestive biscuits. Mrs. Harlow donned her black crepe dinner dress and assisted in the placing of specially-ironed dormitory linen on the long tea-table. Heavy napkins and trays of china were stacked decoratively at one end, and for the occasion the Dean of Women donated her silver tea-service. (She had been invited to pour.) On the center of the table Mrs. Harlow placed a vase of pink roses; she spent fifteen minutes arranging the ferns.

The girls gathered in the livingroom at four. (If they had late classes they were to enter quietly from the east door.) Because dinner was served as early as six-fifteen, the guests would drink tea first, and talk afterwards. Mrs. Harvard Bates Benton arrived on schedule; she left her princess-style fitted coat in Mrs. Harlow's closet, pinned her gardenias to her bosom, and smiled her way through the hallways, flanked by the Dean of Women, a creator of character with the face of an invalid, and Mrs. Harlow, who might, in her youth, have been a lumberjack.

With this solemn support, Mrs. Harvard Bates Benton seated herself upon a tightly-upholstered settee near the fireplace...a central position from which she would speak to the clustered tea-drinkers.

Mrs. Harlow introduced her as "our great honor". Sidney, her white serving-cap set briskly on her head, stood ready to pull out the chair behind the teapot.

Things went smoothly. The tea was hot, the lemon tart, the conversation subdued. Everyone eyed the President's Daughter.

At four-thirty she faced them, standing midway between the fireplace and Mrs. Harlow. She spoke first of her pleasure at being present, second of her appreciation of Midwestern's reputation as a university

of purpose, and third, of her father, the late great President. It was a somewhat formal talk, based on the President's advice to young girls...words spoken to Mrs. Bates Benton on the occasion of her sixteenth birthday. "Be warm, be aware, be a woman." The text of her speech followed rather closely the latter two suggestions.

The thing to be aware of, said Mrs. Bates Benton, was the Truth. The Truth, she added, was not relative (a misrepresentation implied in some institutions of learning), but explicit and attainable. The precepts upon which a full life depended were love of one's fellows, discipline of oneself, and a sacrifice of the ego-appetites. But being a woman depended, said Mrs. Bates Benton, upon High Dedication. In this atomic age woman was more than housekeeper, cook and mother; she was Guardian of the Perilous Present, a Reader of Books, an Interpreter of Omens. Woman, the newly emancipated, the mother-wife-scholar, now could be the savior, the preserver, the school-marm goddess. In her, urged the President's Daughter, lay the seeds of our culture, the marrow of creation. Dressed severely in black, the President's Daughter exhorted them. She turned quite pale with the burden of her message.

It continued for twenty minutes. At the end of it the Dean of Women applauded weakly, Mrs. Harlow looked stern, and the girls clapped until their palms felt blistered.

No one in the room indicated having heard any of these sentiments before.

Mrs. Bates Benton sat down. The girls lined up to shake her hand. Becky, stammering, began to edge away. "I d-d-don't..."

"Oh come <u>on</u>" said Dottie. "Can't you see we're supposed to?"

Clearly, Becky could, but the thought of shaking hands with the daughter of a President filled her with panic. She both longed to and could not.

Liz watched her, puzzled. She'd seen Becky dress determinedly for the tea, listened to her talk about it, heard the questions she wanted to ask.

Adelaide, as if she were used to it, stretched out a hand. "Walk behind me, Beck. All you have to say is how do you do."

Becky fluttered, hesitated, subsided. She wanted terribly to say something impressive, memorable, perhaps brilliant to the President's Daughter. She knew she would say nothing at all.

Liz peered over the heads at Mrs. Bates Benton. Now in the darkening room, her speech finished, the President's Daughter looked used, a little blurred, almost pathetic. She was, in that moment, something Liz recognized. The President's Daughter was a name; she was no one real (she was someone's Daughter), she was nothing but what other people expected her to be. She was a polite reflection.

Liz and Sidney moved forward. Soon the President's Daughter looked straight at them, cordial, charming. Her glance, empty even of boredom, slipped over their heads, caught the clock on the wall, returned to the moving line, but she seemed never to change focus. She began to tell stories, to nod, to be amusing. Under her make-up she looked tired and old. Liz wondered what she did to be happy.

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Upstairs they sat on the floor in Adelaide's room, drinking George Washington coffee. It was midnight. Sidney lay flat on her back smoking. Adelaide let Dottie braid her hair. Only one light burned in the corner. Liz and Becky sorted out cookies from the box of stale ones in the closet.

Dottie had said no matter what, it must be nice to be a President's Daughter. Adelaide thought it would be a strain. "She looks old," said Becky, "but she's beautiful."

"It's an attractive age for a woman," said Sidney. This was somewhat controversial. They passed over it.

Dottie heaved herself off the bed. "She's travelled all over Europe and stayed with Kings and Queens. I suppose she's sort of American royalty."

"But hell's bells," said Adelaide, "she didn't have much to say. Funny. A woman like that."

Liz roused herself. "She makes you feel awful. I think she's sad. She's like a doll."

They stared at her. Finally Adelaide said, "Of course she's nobody you'd want to be <u>yourself</u>."

"That's exactly what I mean," said Liz.

Chapter Eleven

Except on alternate Mondays from across the Queens' table, Liz saw Casey infrequently. During the first week Liz lived in Hyler Hall Casey had telephoned; she said she was curious. Later they'd met once or twice in the library and gone out for cokes. Now, weeks later, Liz answered the phone and it was Casey.

"Your Big Sister Dallas has mumps. As next of kin, you're supposed to send her a flower."

"I just double-dated with her last night. Is she swelled up?"

"Beginning. She went off screaming in a taxi. I hope they locked her up in Health Service."

"That's too bad," said Liz feebly. "She probably breathed all over us. I'll send her a plant or something, anyway."

"How are you otherwise?" Casey asked. "Besides exposed. What've you been doing?"

"We were just having a discussion," Liz said, hesitating. "On friendship."

"Of course," pronounced Casey sagely. "It's the perfect thing to argue at your age."

"We weren't arguing," said Liz coldly, "we were defining. We decided that friendship is based on a common identification with a concentric division of the Universal Soul."

"My God," said Casey.

"We also think friendship must be voluntary, is independent of time and space, and can exist only between members of the same species. We had trouble over the species question. Somebody kept harping on an essay of Thomas Mann's about his dog and somebody else said she knew a cat that was crazy about a parrot. Another girl...a zoology major...said nothing in science proves animals can be friends, and that friendship between people and animals is too unequal to be valid."

"Too much like a benevolent dictatorship," Casey suggested helpfully.

"Exactly. We <u>did</u> think of ants. They work all the time and store up food and fight, quite a lot like people, but it isn't conclusive. And bees are highly organized, Greasy says, but feudal. The Queen is more important than all the workers and drones put together. She's...well, you know, she's the Queen."

"You blaspheme. What's come over you? Who are all these soul-mates?" Casey sounded pleased.

"Just some people."

"As a matter of fact, if you like discussions now, come on over to Maggie Menefee's Friday night. It's Jake's birthday and we're going to have herring and anchovies and sausage and junk. Bring a bottle of wine and any records you want to. You bought the Double Concerto, didn't you?"

Liz was struck speechless.

Well?"

"Your...<u>your</u> crowd?"

"Just some people," Casey said. "Anybody you want to bring?"

"I have a date with Chad, but..."

"Can't you get someone else?"

"No," said Liz. "I don't think so."

Casey sighed gently. "It's the basement apartment at 1430 Kingsdon. See you then."

"Goodby," said Liz. She rushed off to tell Sidney.

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Liz sat on Sidney's bed. It wasn't quite time for dinner.

"Too bad you can't sing," Sidney told her. "I've cut down the chorus to twenty and talked them

out of 'When Day is Done'. We could use you." She was grooming Hyler Hall for the All-Campus Song Festival.

"The Queens beat you to it. Pledges don't have to sing but we all have to be there. Sort of a show of strength."

"What're they singing?"

"The Sweetheart Song. They all know it but Casey says they've been singing it every night to practice expression."

Sidney tossed the pack of cigarettes to Liz. "You look a little wan, creature."

"The zoology re-exam is only a few weeks away," Liz said darkly. "Greasy's been helping me go over old exam questions and check my notebooks. She's as good as a tutor."

"She <u>is</u> a tutor."

Liz paused, blew out a match. "She just asked me if I wanted some help. I've been crawling around after her for weeks. She didn't say anything about money and neither did I."

"On, well, this is different. She wanted to do it. And you don't offer to pay people for something they want to <u>give</u> you."

"I know," Liz said, "but maybe I should have said something at the beginning. I didn't know she was a tutor. Maybe she needs the money."

"Maybe she does, but not that badly."

"I feel like a heel," Liz said.

"Look here." Sidney stopped smiling. "Cut it out. If you make Greasy think she ought to have charged you so much an hour for talking to you, the way she would a stranger, that's what you'll be. Greasy doesn't have many presents to give people, and I think it's a little insensitive of you to throw one back in her face."

Liz flushed. "If tutoring is her job and she needs the money...All right, I guess I made a mistake."

"Don't mention it," said Sidney. "I'm ahead of you. You <u>are</u> a Queen, even if you don't act like it, and to be honest, I was afraid you didn't want to take anything from Greasy because she's Jewish."

"I didn't know she was," Liz said shortly.

Sidney looked out the window. "I'm sorry. Somebody ought to kick me around a little. I never understood how easy it is to think you're on God's side until I came out here to school. You always think people who have to talk about it are too earnest

or just naive, but once in a while everyone has to talk about it. If you're looking for a fight you can usually find one."

Liz was a little defensive. "People are different in all kinds of ways, but not basically. That ought to be enough to settle the fight...on both sides."

"The devil it is," Sidney said. "Why do people from the border states and the South always say the world is better than it seems and people are all brothers under the skin? It's not true and they don't believe it or they wouldn't do the things they do, but apparently it's more genteel to pretend than to make it come true. People aren't alike and they aren't brothers. Tell me a place where people don't dislike each other if they disagree about money and marriage and God or voting. The world isn't old enough yet to appreciate <u>difference</u>. If we stopped kidding ourselves maybe we could do something about it."

There was an uncomfortable silence. "Okay," Liz said lightly, "we'll stop kidding ourselves. Is this a private team or can anyone play?"

Slowly they grinned at each other.

.....

On Friday night Liz and Chad rang Maggie's doorbell with two albums of records and a bottle of wine under their arms (Meier's Ohio Port, Ruby type). At first Chad had declined to come. On second thought he said he wouldn't mind having a look in. He only hoped there wouldn't be a lot of fairies and Socialists hanging around looking for a fight.

"What if there are?" Liz said suddenly. "Why should you care?"

Chad tightened his jaw in a fashion which caused the masseter muscles on either side of his face to swell. He did this several times threateningly, displaying a ripple of manliness in both cheeks. "Pretty funny friends," he said.

"Why don't you wait and see?" Liz said pleasantly.

Maggie answered the bell by means of a pulley tied to a doorknob. They walked into a dark hallway. From the bottom of the stairs, standing in the open doorway of her apartment, she called up to them. "Don't trip on the top step. It rattles but it's solid."

She shook hands with both of them, approved of the wine and indicated the couch. There were six or eight people on the floor and Richard Dyer-Bennet on the phonograph. Casey came in from the tiny kitchen with a tray of glasses and a bowl of something fishy.

"Hullo! Liz used to live with me, Jake. Let her sit by you. And that's Chad Carnes."

"May I see your records?" Jake asked politely. Chad handed them over. They were standard Brahms, one concerto and a group of lieder. "I see you weren't corrupted. Patricia's taste runs predominantly to the atonal."

Patricia, a name Liz had never before heard Casey admit, grinned happily. "I know," she said. "I suppose I have my limitations."

Liz smiled. Chad began to frown. Silently they examined the apartment. It was small and dark, full of the warmth of people and food smells and smoke. In the window, level with the sidewalk outside, were potted plants, blue against the monks' cloth curtains dyed Chinese red; the walls were light yellow, the couch and an armchair handcovered with bright blue sailcloth, the floor with woven matting. The table, pushed to one side, was low and round, set on four cinder blocks turned end up. It had been painted red to match the curtains, and highly lacquered. On the yellow walls were prints Liz didn't know..."The Gramineous Bicycle" and "Man With a Mandolin", along with heavy mugs hung on hooks and inscribed "Wer nicht liebt, Weib, Wein und

Gesang..." Books and magazines spilled over the wall shelves; several were piled on the floor.

Quietly, leaning against the couch and each other, the guests listened now to "Eili, Eili", reached for crackers and garlic roll. Nobody was necking and nobody seemed to be drunk.

Chad adjusted his bowtie. "Didn't hear your name," he told Jake gruffly.

Jake smiled. His eyes behind the half-inch lenses were oversize but kind. "Jake Gruber. Won't you sit down?" He pulled his long legs out from under him and stood up to shake hands. "It's crowded down here but it's worse if everyone tries to sit on the couch. Would you like a glass of wine?"

"Look," said Chad, "if anyone wants something a little stiffer, I can buy a fifth down the street from a fraternity brother."

"I think we're all right. Maggie has some beer in the kitchen if you'd rather have that."

"Well," said Chad gravely, "I'd be willing to get some rye." He looked at Liz. They sat down on the couch.

"Why don't you drink what you're offered?" she hissed.

Chad surveyed the group. It included two Negro boys and a Japanese girl. The boys all wore suit trousers and T-shirts and no ties. The girls wore slacks or jeans. "What are they doing?" Chad said. "They just sit there."

"They're talking," said Liz. "And listening to music." She looked at him. "Relax."

Casey appeared in the doorway. "Come on out," she yelled. "You can spread some crackers."

Maggie was opening a jar of pickles with a paring knife. The kitchen was the chief reason why the landlord called his basement an apartment. There was an old sink, some cupboards, a two-burner stove and a portable oven to fit over the burners. The apartment was cool in summer and hot in winter; the rent was low and Maggie and her roommate did their own cooking for less money than they'd be obliged to pay in an "authorized" house. Each night they put out a milk bottle and each morning they brought it in. It gave them the incomparable sense of householding. They strongly felt but did not always say that theirs' was the truly adult existence...a landlord, a milkman, a beanpot, and no radio.

Dormitories, with their rules and housemothers, smacked too much of boarding school, and as for sororities, they were simply unfortunate. In them healthy

girls were said to pay money to have their beds made and their dinners cooked and their houses cleaned. Maggie rather pitied them. Casey was an exception, but Maggie didn't quite understand her.

"Do you live here alone?" asked Liz.

"My roommate's gone for the weekend. How do you like Hyler Hall?"

"Fine." Liz glanced at Casey and back at Maggie. "How do people get permission to live in a place like this?"

"Find it, move in, and then get somebody from the Dean's office to approve it. Who knows, it may be the only chance I'll have to be poor and feel rich."

"You have to be an upperclassman," said Casey, "in case you're interested."

"Not right now," Liz said. "One of the girls at the dorm knows you," she told Maggie.

"What's her name?"

"Becky Stone. She's in your writing class."

"Little shy thing? Pretty girl?"

"Blond. She's writing a short story about a girl who was raped, but you can't really tell what she means. It's rather vague."

"Good heavens," said Maggie. "How strenuous."

Maggie had once sold a story to The Woman's Home Companion but she didn't like to admit it.

"Slice some liverwurst, will you?" Casey handed the knife to Liz, pointed to the roll on the table. "By the way, you're being discussed lately in high places."

Liz paused with the knife. "Why?"

"Our sisters are getting anxious. They think you don't drop in often enough."

"I've been busy," Liz said. "They want me to pass, don't they? It's hard to take off an evening. I come to pledge meetings, don't I?"

"I wouldn't know," said Casey, "but I know people who would."

"Have a pickle," said Maggie.

In the livingroom Liz passed crackers and poured sherry and helped open beer bottles. A blond boy in the corner was describing a drink called Catnip. "You mix a glass of rye, a glass of gin, and a glass of sherry..."

"Jesus," said Chad, who had been silent.

"...And a dash of lemon. Put it in a milk bottle and jerk it around. My Uncle Harold invented it. Filthy stuff, really." He asked Liz for a sandwich and sat down beside her. "You're new. What do you do?"

"Pass sandwiches. What about you?"

The boy struck a match with his thumbnail. "My father's sending me through law but I'm going to dance."

Liz eyed him with interest. "Ballet?"

"It seems I haven't a logical mind. Father sent me to a psychiatrist and they gave me all kinds of tests. I had my choice between window-decorating or ballet. I took ballet. Now I can't imagine how I existed without it."

Liz sliced a dill pickle and looked at him. "Aren't you a little big for that sort of thing?"

"No," he said solemnly. "The theatre needs more truly masculine dancers. I'm studying five days a week now...everything. Eventually I'll go to England. I hope someday, you know, to have my own company. I want to do choreography, too."

"He just talks," said one of the Negro boys. He refilled Liz's glass. "Next time he'll tell you his father owns a diamond mine. He's only a pre-med."

Liz was rattled. "Is he dangerous?" They ignored the blond boy.

"He wouldn't hurt anyone. It's just that he bores himself the way he is."

"Oh, that's untrue," said the blond boy. "I'm mad for me."

"That's Billy Brown," said Casey, sotto voce, joining them. "His father owns a diamond mine."

"What is this?" said Liz. "A game you play?"

Maggie turned off the brightest light and turned up the phonograph. It was the Liebesnacht.

"I just bought an old Flagstad recording," said Liz. "It's warped but marvellous."

"I wish you'd brought it along," said Jake. "We could compare it with this one. Which singer do you prefer?"

"Oh, Flagstad. She's the greatest Wagnerian singer alive."

A few heads turned. "Do you think it's that easy to decide?" asked Henry. "It depends on what you want."

"I want..." Liz began.

"Later," said Maggie. "Let's listen."

Chad had been sitting glumly on the couch with the bottle of port. Now it was empty. He got up, stumbled over Jake, and tugged at Liz's arm. "Let's get outta here," he said.

Henry and the blond boy had moved away.

"Stop it," Liz told him. "Quit pushing."

"I don't want you playing around with any damn darkie."

Maggie passed the cheese and crackers. No one seemed to be paying any attention. Chad swayed uneasily. "Come on, get crackin'."

"Go on home by yourself," said Liz evenly. "I'm staying."

Chad looked at her, looked around the room. Liz walked away.

Chad grabbed his topcoat and left. Outside he was sick in the street.

Henry turned to Liz. "Now listen to that. Can Flagstad beat it?"

Liz knew she didn't have to worry about the effect of Chad on Henry. The problem, clearly, was Henry's effect on Chad.

Chapter Twelve

He called the next morning. "Rumor has it I was out last night. Off my feed. In my cups etcetera. You can consider this an apology." He sounded sheepish.

"I don't think he heard you," Liz said coolly. "Didn't you like Henry?"

"Oh, don't give me that line," Chad said. "I don't even know him. I wouldn't have said it if I hadn't been tight. I don't have anything against Negroes but it made me feel a little funny to see you talking to the guy like he was just anybody. If you hadn't left me alone with that musician none of it would have happened. Jesus, what a character. 'Who do you prefer,' he says, 'Bach or Bartok?'"

"I suppose you were insulted."

"He talked like a fruit. Maybe we've got one or two characters in the House but they know better than to ask you a thing like that. We beat it out of 'em when they're pledges."

"What <u>do</u> you like?"

Chad made the standard answer. "Women...wine and women. We're having an informal dance a week from

Saturday. How about helping me dig up some new women for a couple of the pledges? Anything good running around loose in your pledge-class?"

"Probably. How about somebody from the dorm?"

"Just be sure it's good. Get me some names and I'll call back in a couple of days. We'll take everybody to the Jug first for a warm-up."

On her way back to her room, Liz thought about Chad. The longer she knew him the less there seemed to be to know. He was presentable, easy to manage, and, progressively, a bore. He was sometimes not even likeable. He undertipped waiters and played practical jokes and wanted to kiss her in public. If he could, he bullied people, and he lied to strangers about being overseas during the war. He implied (in moments of so-called passion) that Liz was uncooperative, but this rarely caused trouble because at such times Chad was more often full of beer than passion. He then liked to fall asleep on her shoulder, like a dear little boy. When he was depressed or sober, he was less docile, but he was seldom depressed or sober.

Until afternoon classes began at three, Liz and Greasy worked on zoology. Liz forgot Chad. It was nearly April, and the exam wasn't far off. Her initiation

depended upon passing first-semester zoology, but like any other freshman, unless Liz passed her second semester courses, she might not be invited to remain at Midwestern another year. Actually she wasn't worried. The University no longer seemed quite so inhuman. She even knew a few of her professors. She still felt qualms about zoology but her mid-term marks were good.

"Write these up," said Greasy, "and we'll go over the answers when you finish. Time to quit now, if you're going to a class."

Liz yawned. "It's only gym. Maybe I'll cut. What good does it do to throw bean bags at each other?"

"Women are delicate," Greasy said solemnly. "If you stand up under the strain, maybe they'll let you take archery. It's pretty rugged. The bow-string is likely to hit you on the forearm."

"Yippee," said Liz. "Adventure." She curled up on the bed and fell asleep.

Minutes later she was wakened by Adelaide and Becky. They closed the door behind them with the attitude of conspirators. Adelaide's bangs stood out from her forehead where she'd pulled at them (a sign Adelaide had been deeply in earnest). She cleared her throat. "Do you know what a man looks like?" she said hoarsely.

Liz sat up.

"Ad's always so sure she's right," said Becky, "and I know she isn't."

"Ye gods," Adelaide said. "Any fool know there's only one."

"Two," said Becky firmly.

"Two what?" asked Liz uneasily.

Adelaide looked at her fingernails. "Well, have you?"

"Have I what?"

"Seen one?"

"Two," said Becky.

"Now shut up, Beck. I mean a man."

"I'm sure my father," said Becky, "is p-p-perfectly normal."

"You must have been very young," said Ad kindly. "Children always exaggerate. Good heavens, imagine a man with two!"

"Just what do you mean?" Liz demanded.

"Les organes sexuelles des hommes," improvised Adelaide. "Naturellement."

"Oh," said Liz, "mais oui. I'll be glad to draw you a diagram."

"I can tell you positively," said Ad, "all the mammals I've ever seen have one."

Liz was very business-like. "These things should be made clear from infancy. Don't you have any brothers?"

Ad did not, and Becky's it appeared, was never at home.

"Well, haven't you seen pictures or been told?"

They looked insulted.

"Never mind," said Liz.

She drew the diagram.

Ad and Becky looked at each other in consternation.

"Oh well," said Adelaide to Becky, "I thought you meant..."

"I thought you meant..." began Becky.

"Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny," interrupted Liz blithely. "Your untrained minds need the discipline of science." She handed them Dr. Mackay's five-dollar textbook with an air of fraternal affection. She was sure, momentarily, there was nothing she didn't know.

Chapter Thirteen

Liz was wiping dishes in the kitchen. The tin carts rattling with glasses, the wet towels, the rows of sinks all dimmed, wavered, tried to disappear. She could narrow one eye and the boy standing beside her moved three feet. If she swung her head around sharply, the walls bent sideways. It had been happening for almost fifteen minutes.

"...quit for the night, kid. Did you hear me? You've got a temperature." The boy moved back three feet beside her.

With a certain sense of importance Liz deposited her towels on the drier, smiled weakly at the boy, and wandered out through the door. I'm getting 'flu, she thought gravely. Or pneumonia. She met Adelaide in the hall.

"You look terrible," Ad said. "What's the matter?"

Liz reached up to feel the glands in her neck. Ad, cautiously holding her nose, led Liz upstairs to the nurse.

.....

Health Service for Students was a brick building run on the lines of a small town hospital. Liz was isolated, well fed, feverish, and content. Being sick, she decided, could be a rather cozy business. Especially if the weather was bad. Illness was necessarily a departure from the everyday world, but the fault lay clearly with the world. Liz, like all invalids, felt a vast innocence. The world was obligated to love her but she (full of aspirin and custard) was only a little less lovable than an enema-bag or a bottle of camphor.

Only an invalid can spend all day in bed doing nothing and being nobody. People who are too healthy suffer frustrations which the invalid tosses off lightly under the guise of boils, water on the knee, or a sluggish liver. In Liz's case it was mumps, but only one side. And not much.

She had received a great deal of attention...a wire, a letter, a dozen yellow jonquils, and a dozen white roses. The wire read:

Don't worry, we are coming. Can you call me. Keep warm. Love, Mother.

Liz wired back: They will not let you in. Very infectious. Plenty warm. Love, Liz.

On the third day, quite suddenly between Liz's afternoon nap and her alcohol rub, Adelaide arrived.

"Couldn't sneak by that beagle-nosed woman at the desk. She finally went to the john. How do you feel? You look scrofulous."

Liz sat up, weak and delighted. "You look positively beautiful, Ad. I'm so glad to see somebody human."

"Thank you," said Adelaide modestly. "What are you getting to eat?"

"Oh, eggs and tea and potatoes...the usual menus." Eagerly, "What's everyone doing?"

"I brought you a letter. We all wrote things. You can read it after I go. And," she added, tossing the envelope onto the bed, "I'd better get started."

"Oh," said Liz tragically.

Ad paused at the door. "Hurry up and get well. You certainly look funny." She peeked into the hall and disappeared.

Liz tore open the envelope.

Dear Liz (said the first entry),

> I'm awfully sorry you're sick. Did you kmow we're getting up bowling teams for the W.A.A. tourney this week? We could save a place for you if you aren't going to have any complications. I knew a boy from Indianapolis who got sterile because of having mumps at your age.
>
> Ever,
>
> Dottie.

Dear Liz,

Are you very sick? Was shocked when I found out you were gone. Mrs. Harlow asked me Monday night if I knew anyone who'd take your place in the kitchen. At first I said I didn't and then I decided that wasn't fair to you. I didn't think I'd go (you know me) but I did. I guess you'll be surprised! Missing you,

Lots of love,

Becky.

Cherie,

Am desolate. Burk's got in Wozzeck and it's really tremendous. I made them promise to save it for us. Chad phoned the night you left and I took the call. He said the idea of you having mumps gave him a "large charge" (?) Greasy sends love and says not to try to read. Eat your aspirin and come back soon.

Sidney.

I'll be delivering this (Adelaide had written) so there's not much to say. I sincerely hope you will recover rapidly.

Your friend,

Adelaide Swanson.

Liz giggled to herself, shakily. She re-read the letters, thinking of Becky forcing herself to work with people she didn't know, of Adelaide sneaking by the nurse. Liz looked away from the yellow jonquils, sent by the Queens with a florist's card, and past Chad's white Lamb roses. She wanted to get back to Hyler.

Chapter Fourteen

The floor of the telephone booth was littered with cigarette stubs from the last occupant. "Hello," Liz said.

"Well!" said Chad. "I was beginning to think you'd turned blue. Why didn't you call me?"

"I just got out."

"It's about time. I was ready to find a new woman."

"Go ahead," said Liz. "Shop around."

"I missed you. I'm practically two-twelve Fahrenheit. Look, how about those dates for the House dance? It's Saturday night."

"I asked Becky Stone and Sidney Goldman. They're five-feet-five and five-feet-two. Becky's blond and Sidney's brunette."

"Check," said Chad. "I'll talk to a couple of the boys." There was a pause. "Sidney who?"

"Goldman. She's a sophomore. Music school."

"Sounds kosher. Personally, I don't care, but I can't very well walk up to a pledge-brother and say, see here, chum, I've got you a good date. Her name's Goldman."

"Why can't you? What makes you think she wouldn't be a good date?"

"If you can't find a pledge-sister at least you can find somebody who'll fit in."

"When is this dance?" Liz said slowly.

"I told you. Saturday night."

"Isaac Stern is coming to the Civic Auditorium and I have tickets."

"To hell with him. I told you about this three weeks ago."

"Chad," said Liz, "I can't go to that dance and I don't think I can go anyplace else. If you'd like your pin, I'll be glad to give it to you. I'm getting a little fed up."

Chad maintained a dramatic silence for thirty seconds. "What's the matter?"

"If you'll come around about four tomorrow I'll give you the pin."

"Christ," said Chad, "don't be a little fool."

"That's what I mean," said Liz. "I'm tired of it."

"What would the fellas think if I told them my woman left me because I wouldn't fix a date for some Jew? I'm not going to play that game. Try again."

"That's not the reason. It's only one more proof that you don't like anyone I like. If you're afraid of being disgraced, I'll put your pin in some empty tree-trunk. You can sneak up and claim it when nobody's looking."

"Very funny," said Chad. "Have you thought this over?"

"Yes. I guess I have."

"The trouble with you," said Chad solemnly, "is that you've changed. If you want it straight, I'll give it to you. You're goddam close to being a goody-goody. Probably frigid, too."

Liz laughed. "Solid Bird's Eye, no good for nuthin'. Aren't you lucky? What would you have done if I'd been anything else?"

There was a long silence.

"I'm sorry, Chad," said Liz. "Let's skip it."

"Okay, fine. I don't want to argue. You go back to your freak friends and I'll struggle along with plain white ordinary Americans. Send me the pin in the mail."

"Chad," said Liz.

"Well?" said Chad.

"We don't have to be this silly, do we? Can't you pick me up for coffee or something and I'll just give you the pin when you're not looking?"

"Okay," said Chad grimly. "I'll be over in an hour.

.....

The All-Campus Song Festival was a yearly affair. Early in April every dormitory, house and sorority met in Curtis Auditorium and sang to each other and to selected judges. The Festival was all-female. In September would come the all-male Serenade.

Liz headed for the group marked "Queens"; they were identifiable by a placard mounted on a stick. Each group was allotted a predetermined amount of space. They all carried banners.

"You're late, angel," said Dallas. "Where've you been?"

Liz stepped over a row of Queenly knees and wriggled into the seat beside her. "I walked over with some people from Hyler."

"Oh, was <u>that</u> who they were?"

"Where are the judges?"

"Sitting in the front row. The Dean of the Music School and two professors. I think," she added comfortably, "we have a good chance. They've all been to dinner at the House this year."

"Don't be silly," Liz said. "Dinner doesn't have anything to do with it."

Dallas turned to look at her. "I simply meant they'd know us. They'll pay more attention. I can't

get excited about this, anyway. The Festival Cup doesn't carry much weight."

"Gee," said one of Liz's pledge-sisters, "aren't you glad we don't have to sing? I'd hate to stand up there with everyone looking at me." She eyed the active Queens enviously. Each of them wore, as her identifying emblem, a white blouse and pearls. Their stocking-seams were straight and their lipstick fresh. They would line up on the stage according to height.

In the rows ahead and behind, the Thetas and the Pi Phi's waved their banners. A crowd had gathered in the lobby and the cigarette smoke rose in clouds. Everyone chattered; there was an air of universal nervousness.

"Attention! Attention!" shouted the President of the Women's Union. She cleared her throat loudly into the loudspeaker. The singers, she said, would appear as indicated on the program. There was to be no applause.

Liz consulted her typed program. The Tri Delts, Jefferson House, the Chi O's, the Queens, Estabrook House (for student nurses), Minna Heller House, Hyler Hall...Liz stopped reading and looked for Sidney. Hyler Hall had been assigned seats just off the left aisle. Sidney, she saw, was unnaturally pale.

On stage the Tri-Delts had begun. It was something melodious about a boat. They all wore dark sweaters and pearls. Liz watched Jefferson House line up quietly in the wings (to be ready when the Tri Delts finished). They all wore suits. When their turn came, they sang "Ach, Wie Ist's Moglich Dann", directed somewhat athletically by a girl in blue serge. Next the Chi O's cheerfully sang "Billy-boy"; then the Queens sang the Sweetheart Song. Like a sniff of fresh popcorn, tempting and buttery, an aura of love permeated the first ten rows.

The nurses went flat on Brahms' "Lullaby", and a girl from Heller House sang "Softly, As In The Morning Sunrise" with her slip showing.

Hyler Hall, when they appeared, looked strained. Their postures were stiff, their faces intent. They huddled together on the stage, staring at Sidney like birds at a snake. Facing them, her back to the audience, Sidney took her time. From her pocket came a small harmonica. She sounded a note. There was a twittering from the chorus, a scattered humming. Sidney dropped the harmonica back into her pocket, raised both hands. A half-beat late, the chorus began "Shenandoah".

Liz began to perspire. She couldn't look away. They were lined up, not according to height and weight, but to how they sang. Dottie and Becky stood together, sopranos; in the group were a few girls Liz knew only by sight. They all looked over-anxious and vulnerable.

Sidney turned to face the crowd. The chorus behind her relaxed, waited. She began to sing. Her audience, restless, inattentive, whispered to itself. Sidney's voice was not strong, but it was as proud and clear as Sidney herself. The chorus joined her, backed her up, came together.

Sitting with the Queens, Liz unclenched a fist. She felt as if she'd been holding her breath. The relief was worse than the tension.

"Have any cigarettes?" asked Dallas. "Almost time for intermission. For God's sake, what's the matter with you?"

"Take the pack," Liz said quickly.

Dallas tamped a cigarette on her thumbnail and looked thoughtful.

Later the cup was awarded to the Delta Gammas for "Molly Malone". The Queens and Jefferson House tied for second place. Hyler Hall received honorable mention.

Chapter Fifteen

Physical Education for females was based on the premise that every able-bodied young woman ought to be trained in Relay and Party Games. This knowledge would conceivably be useful to anyone wishing, on impulse, to jollify a group of people who preferred not to speak to each other.

Sometimes the Games were played to music, with the aid of a bean-bag or a lightweight chair or someone's hat. Whatever the object, it was passed rapidly over one person's head to the person behind her, who rapidly did likewise. When the last person in the line received it, she galloped to the front of the line and passed it rapidly over her head to the person behind. This went on. Of course there was little sport involved unless a second line, similarly occupied, ran parallel to the first line. Whichever line finished first won the prize, if any.

Occasionally the procedure was reversed and everyone was instructed (devilishly) to run, not to the front, but to the back of the line.

Other Relay Games included circles, squares, the juggling of wooden eggs, rubber balls, or real oranges, and an offshoot called Mixing. Two lines, of just

unequal numbers, stood facing each other. The music began. Everyone (except the Extra One) danced for an indeterminate number of seconds with a partner from the opposite line. Then, without warning, the music stopped. This was the cue to change partners. Any partner at all, quick, girls! jolly Miss Binder would yell, shoving her T-shirt into her shorts. The unfortunate person left out in the original shuffle now tried to grab a partner, any partner at all, so that someone else would be Extra. Mixing of this kind could practically incite hysteria.

Sometimes, for purposes of raising a sweat, everyone lay on their backs and rode imaginary bicycles.

If, after two semesters of this, members of the class cared to continue, they were permitted to indulge in Individual Sports. Then they thrust and parried, shot arrows, or lost twenty pounds under the guise of Modern Dance. Upon completion of these courses, they were Athletes.

"I like golf," said Liz obstinately, "and gin rummy." Adelaide grunted. They changed from navy blue shorts and shirts to skirts and sweaters, slammed shut their locker doors, and left the gym. Outside the sun was shining, the air soft with smells of thaw and new

grass. It was Spring, almost Easter. Liz and Adelaide stopped at Wilker's Drugstore and bought icecream cones. They walked along, absorbed in themselves, giddy with their release from the airless gymnasium and the soap-smelling lockers. The letdown was always predictable, sought after, but today something in the Spring warmth left them dissatisfied. "I wish I was home," said Adelaide.

Liz tossed the empty cone into the gutter. "What would you do if you were?"

"I'd sleep and eat and ride and when night came, I'd go to the Little Pig and drink beer with somebody," Ad said slowly.

Liz turned. "Somebody in particular? Are you in love with anybody?"

Adelaide snorted. "Don't be corny. He's the guy I'm going to marry. We decided when we were ten."

"Oh," said Liz. "You never mentioned him. Is he the boy in that picture...the one with you and the horse?"

Adelaide nodded. "I've told you," she said casually. "I said I'd grown up with him."

Liz laughed. "Is that all?"

Adelaide shoved her hands in her pockets. "Well, no," she said. "You're such a goon. Come on out to

Tucson this summer and you'll see what I mean. There aren't any men like him around here."

Liz said nothing.

They walked into the dorm and on a chair in the lobby sat Joe. "Hi," he said. "You busy?"

Adelaide walked off, looking over her shoulder.

"Joe," said Liz, uneasily.

"I was hitching home, but I detoured. I thought if you weren't too busy I'd stay around for the weekend. We have Easter off."

Liz stared at him. He wore flannels and a soft-collared shirt and a sport jacket she'd never seen. He looked tan and sure of himself. She began to be nervous.

"I'd be glad to have you stay," she said formally.

Joe grinned. "What will your little chum say?"

Liz started. "Who?"

"I heard about your pin," Joe said lightly. "I came up to beat hell out of you. Look, quit stalling. Do you want me to stay or don't you?"

"I want you to stay," Liz said.

They looked at each other in the dim light of the lobby. Several people brushed by them, carrying books and coke bottles. The girl at the front desk began to sharpen a pencil.

"Where can we have dinner?" said Joe. "Any place around here where they serve good steaks? I can get a room at the 'Y'."

Liz took the elevator upstairs and threw her books on the bed. She realized Joe was as nervous as she was. For the first time since she'd known him, they were unsure together. She carried her towel and soap into the shower. It was silly to be this upset by Joe. She had difficulty with the hot and cold water and twice she dropped the soap.

They went to the Danube for dinner. Joe ordered a pitcher of beer and they drank it before they ordered. The orchestra played "Oh Tannenbaum" and outside in the streets the Spring turned to rain. "I got a scholarship," Joe said, dispassionately measuring the foam in his glass.

Liz was pleased. "How'd you win it?"

"University grant. It's not much but it'll help. I'm glad I can swing it. Farming isn't a lot of dirt and luck anymore. If my father had known the things they teach about chemicals and crop rotation, maybe Mom and I'd still have the farm. I've got the idea now I'd like a fruit farm. My own orchards, apples maybe. Winesap or Jonathan or McIntosh."

"Why is it," Liz said, "every farmer paints his barn before he does anything else? The house can look like a pigpen, but the barn is always beautiful."

"Ever seen a pigpen? When Dad was a kid he used to go to school in the little red schoolhouse across the road. Later he bought the twelve acres around it and turned the old schoolhouse into a pigpen. Retribution, maybe. Anyway, those hogs had part of the orchard to run in and a good place to live. In the Fall they were pork and scrapple and sausage. Barns and pigpens are a farmer's capital. The house comes second."

"What about your mother?" Liz said. "Didn't she ever want a Bendix? Or a pressure-cooker? Or a new lineolum?"

"Maybe," said Joe. "But it didn't do her much good. Men of my Dad's generation called a convenience a luxury. They'd rather save for a milking-machine than a diningroom suite."

"Good heavens," Liz said. "Who'd call a diningroom suite a luxury? That's an anachronism."

"A what?" said Joe.

"A woman wants a utilitarian house. What I mean is, she wouldn't want to think her husband thought more of his pigs than he did of her. I mean of her welfare."

Joe signalled the waiter. "Oh, he thought of her. But women on the farm used to be people who worked all day and washed out the milkcans in their spare time."

Liz felt pleasantly mellow. "And what do you think they ought to wash out?"

"Socks. If I ever have a wife, I suppose she'll get a Bendix before I repaint the barn. Maybe I'll be sorry."

They ordered sirloins, medium-rare.

"Is your mother all right?" asked Liz.

"She's going to get married again," said Joe. "She never felt right in town. She's marrying a man from out near Stonewall. I guess it's okay. He's a nice guy."

They began to eat. "Joe," said Liz, "have you learned to rumba?"

Joe looked at her, fork in mid-air. "Have you?"

"Well, more or less. There's a dance at the Union tonight. I thought we might go."

"Swell, but I can't rumba. Do I have to?"

"No, but I could teach you."

Joe reached for a roll. He thought of his feet. He'd hitch-hiked...and a lot of it was hiking...two hundred miles to Midwestern. "Great. What do you say

we finish off with a scotch and water?"

"We can't get it on campus," said Liz, "unless you're a member of the American Legion. They have a club."

Joe wasn't.

The Union was jammed when they arrived. Joe and Liz crowded up to the bandstand. A singer named Rosie wriggled gently to "Body and Soul" while a boy with circles under his eyes played the drums. Later Liz and Joe danced.

"This is my old one-two-three-twirl," said Joe, apologetically. "When do the lessons begin?"

Her chin against his shoulder, Liz fell into the rhythm of Joe's familiar steps. His arm tightened. He grinned down at her.

"I don't know," she said, "maybe you don't need any."

On Saturday afternoon they went bowling. "Bend down," Joe said. "You can't just walk up there and drop it like a tennis ball."

"I know how to bowl," Liz said grimly. In the fifth frame she bowled a strike.

They ate hamburgers at the Grill, standing up. Liz hesitated over the possibility of the concert.

"It's awfully short," she said. "Just the Music School. If you'd rather not..."

"Okay," said Joe. "Fine."

They sat on the balcony in Curtis Auditorium listening to Brahms. At the beginning of the fourth movement they held hands. Neither of them pretended to notice, as if it were accidental.

The house lights came on and they walked out with the crowd, through the lighted lobby into the street. It was still early.

"How about a walk?" Joe said.

They stopped for coffee and then walked down the Boulevard, away from the city. "You're not the same," Joe said suddenly. "I didn't know whether I'd stay or not. I wanted to, but I didn't know if I would."

"What do you mean?"

"Christmas. You wanted me to be funny. Amuse you. Maybe I didn't but you made it worse."

Liz withdrew her arm. "You weren't much help."

"I know I wasn't any Bob Hope," Joe said, obviously not believing it.

Out of the corner of her eye Liz looked at him. "I'm sorry about Christmas," she said with unusual humility. "It was a bad time all around."

"It wasn't just you," Joe said, magnanimous. "It

was both of us. This weekend has been like...well, old times. Only maybe a little better."

"I know," Liz said. "I think so too."

They passed the Arboretum. "What's this?" Joe wanted to know. "Lovers' Paradise?"

It was. "Flowers," said Liz. "Hills, Picnic grounds."

"Let's try it. I'm a Nature-lover," Joe said.

They walked down the gravel-path to the end of the road. It was unlighted and Liz stumbled as they crossed the underbrush into the grass. "Any waterfalls?" asked Joe. "Any buttercups? Let's sit down."

"Farther on," said Liz. "It might take fifteen minutes."

"I'm not sure I want to waste that much time," Joe said. "The ground's dry here." He spread out his coat on the grass and they sat down. He put an arm around her shoulders. "Hey," he said, "come here. It's been a hell of a long time."

He kissed her, his lips moving against hers'. Slowly Liz relaxed and they lay back on the coat. She was quiet, her arm light on his back. "Look," he said, "I wish you'd say it and get it over with. Are you tied up with Carnes?"

Liz felt his weight against her, his hand on her shoulder. He smelled, as she remembered, of warmth and cigarettes. "I gave that pin back two weeks ago. I'd have written you, but it didn't seem worth saying. It didn't even when I took it."

Joe was very still. At last he said, "I was afraid everything had changed." He put his lips against her ear. "I suppose it would sound silly if I said I loved you?"

"No," said Liz, "it wouldn't sound silly."

They lay quiet in the grass, shocked at their own earnestness. "I love you," Joe said. "I don't care what you do about it. But there it is."

"I love you too," said Liz. It was true and she wanted to say it. She felt weak. Only part of it was surprise.

Joe couldn't say anything. He half-lifted her off the ground and kissed her. "Joe," Liz said finally, "I've got to get back."

Slowly Joe stood up and looked down at her. "Jesus," he said. "What an Easter!" He kissed her again.

Before they left Liz leaned down to feel the grass where they'd been. It was still pressed flat, warm from their warmth. She didn't want to leave. Now she wanted

to talk and she didn't want to stop holding him.

"I wish I didn't have to take you home," Joe said.

They looked at each other helplessly. "Let's follow the river," Liz said. "It takes longer."

They began to walk.

Chapter Sixteen

Liz's summons-to-Hell-Week came by special messenger. It was written on brown wrapping-paper which had been burned in scallops around the edges. The special messenger deposited it, tied to a rock, on Liz's bed.

"Minion!" (it said in red-penciled letters) "The Royal Court of Queens requires your lowly presence. You shall henceforth be known as Lowly Elizabeth Ericson. You will announce this name in a loud voice whenever and wherever you encounter a Queen. Each evening at five candlewicks past hightide you will report to the Grand Royal Pledge Mistress who will advise you concerning specific duties. Refusal to obey will invoke the wrath of all good Queens, and you will be sentenced to hard labor in the scullery. Enter the House only by the back door, bowing three times to all Queens, with one hand on your lowly head and the other on your heart. Look neither to the right nor to the left. Be of true heart and no harm will befall you, but should you disobey any Queen during this Week of Trial, the Crown-to-be will never be yours and surely goodness and mercy will forever forsake you. Beware."

Liz read this with something considerably less than ectasy. Hell Week preceded Initiation in almost all sororities. As Initiation came closer Liz began to wonder if she wanted it. She had no precedent to reinforce her doubts. Any girl who didn't want to be a Queen was clearly a little crazy. Everyone would say so. Liz didn't allow herself really to think about it.

She had received her mark in zoology five days ago. It was a B plus, but it would go on her transcript as a C because she'd repeated the course. The Queens sent formal congratulations and added her name to the list of members-to-be for the coming year.

She reported on Tuesday night at five o'clock. She and her pledge-sisters waited outside the back door beside the garbage cans. They were undecided. Ought they to be hilarious or humble? The ones who lived in the House thought humility was wiser. At five-thirty the Pledge Mistress solemnly opened the door. "Enter," she said, "and remember your instructions."

The pledges bowed three times with their hands on head and heart, announced their "names" and looked neither to the right nor to the left. They were conducted to the back room on the third floor, where they

were told to put their clothes on backwards. This they did, giggling nervously. After dinner, which they ate under the table, each pledge shined shoes, sewed hems, pressed skirts, or copied classnotes. The Queens made it clear that the worst was yet to come.

The three days the pledges polished and scrubbed, carried trays of dishes, and sang songs. They scrambled like an egg and flushed like a john and made like a goldfish. They wrote essays on "Does Mildew Does or DO?" and prepared lists of original jokes for each member. They wrote prophecies and told fortunes and presented skits. By Saturday everyone was bored, including the Queens. Liz was tired. Exams were coming up and she missed Joe.

Saturday afternoon the pledges gathered in the Queens' livingroom for final tests. On sheets of official bond they wrote the name and location of every chapter of Queens in the United States, the list of national officers, the founders, the objectives, and the Queens' colors, flowers, and Ideals. At the bottom of the sheet they wrote three hundred words on "How I Can Be a Good Queen".

Afterwards Mother Apple served cocoa and doughnuts and Mrs. Erskine Esketh and Mrs. Bellows arrived. (They

would help officiate at Initiation on Sunday.) The Queens relaxed with cigarets and looked expectantly at their Little Sisters. Full of hot milk and a week of authority, they fluffed and preened themselves; in retrospect, everything the pledges had done and said seemed worth repeating. They wanted dear Mrs. Esketh and dear Mrs. Bellows to see how simply cumning it had been. Accordingly, skits were re-played, songs re-sung.

Dallas, carried away by the spirit of it all, pointed a long finger at Liz. "Do some imitations," she demanded. "Some funny ones."

Liz grinned. "Who do you want? Garbo?"

"That's old stuff," said Dallas. "Give us your Hyler Hall pals. Do a take-off on that enormous fat girl and that funny little intense thing with glasses."

Liz looked at her expressionlessly.

"Come on," said Dallas. "I saw you with them in the drugstore. Let's have some Brooklyn accent."

Casey stood up. "Don't be sillier than you are, Dallas."

Dallas' jaw sagged. "I just want her to show everybody that fat girl and that intense-looking little thing with the horn-rimmed glasses and..."

Off in a corner Mrs. Esketh and Mrs. Bellows, sensing something uncomfortable, looked inquiringly around the room for it.

"What's so horrible about that?" said Dallas, irritated. "You always try to make something out of nothing, Casey. It isn't as if they were her friends."

"It's up to you," Casey said to Liz. "I guess it's none of my business."

Liz felt, in the moment that she faced Dallas, a sense of having lived through it a long time ago, on some forgotten afternoon exactly like this one. She saw the room and the ashtrays and the faces and Mother Apple's cups and saucers as if she'd seen them all before, in the same position, in the same light... something not quite remembered, something known. She knew she was tired, knew, in fact, the feeling... nervousness, tension, all transient. But then the faces took on an insistence. A silence stretched out between Dallas and Liz. "What makes you think they're not my friends?" Liz said suddenly. It was a momentary flaw, a detail out of place in a room of polished floors, smooth faces, acceptable talk. She was tired of hedging, tired of trying to be herself and pretending to be a Queen.

Dallas looked at her, partly irritated, mostly curious.

"They're good friends," Liz said, "and if you want an imitation you'll have to do it yourself." She walked out of the livingroom. She knew, as she reached the hall, she might just as well keep walking. It seemed like a good idea.

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In her room back at the dorm Mrs. Esketh (who understood young girls), Mrs. Bellows (who knew Liz's mother) and Merry (who was President) came to call. They closed the door behind them and smiled. "We had to pick up initiation robes at the cleaners," Merry began, "so we thought we'd stop and pick you up, too."

Liz swept her dirty socks off the bed and pulled out a chair for Mrs. Bellows. "Liz," said Mrs. Esketh, drawing her mouth into a smile, "Dallas is so sorry she hurt your feelings. She had no idea you felt so strongly about these dormitory girls. I'm sure there are lovely girls in Hyler Hall too, and if there are, naturally, they'd be your friends."

"You shouldn't have left the House on the eve of Initiation," said Mrs. Bellows. "Of course, Ollie was impetuous, too."

"I'm not very impetuous," Liz said mildly. She offered Mrs. Esketh a cigaret. "But I'll admit I didn't intend to leave that way. I didn't really know I was going to leave."

"We just won't talk any more about it," said Mrs. Esketh kindly, looking in her purse for a match.

"You don't want to get off on the wrong foot," said Mrs. Bellows. "Bad beginning."

"Where are your p.j.'s?" asked Merry. "We'll just pack you up. Everyone's staying overnight."

"I don't believe I will," Liz said. "I've been awfully slow to realize it, but I'm afraid I'm not really a Queen."

Mrs. Esketh fumbled with the matches. "Why not?" she asked. She looked bewildered. "Why on earth not?"

For a minute Liz enjoyed it. "I don't think," she said carefully, "I could live up to the ideals."

Mrs. Esketh looked away. It was an embarrassing thing to hear. Poor girl.

"Pshaw," said Mrs. Bellows. "Go get your tooth-brush."

"Now look," said Merry earnestly, "you didn't let anyone scare you, did you? Our ideals aren't hard. Why, they're <u>simple</u>. Anybody could do it."

"I wouldn't quite say that, Merry," said Mrs. Esketh gravely. "They're very inspiring ideals. They give our whole lives purpose and meaning. Why, if I didn't have the Queens I don't know what I'd do!"

"I'm sorry," Liz said, "but I probably wouldn't fit in any place where I'd have to apologize for my friends and my opinions."

Merry looked unhappy. "We never have any trouble about people's friends and opinions. We usually agree."

"That's very convenient," said Liz.

"What would your dear mother say?" asked Mrs. Esketh reproachfully.

"I don't know," said Liz. That was what she'd been worrying about.

"Ollie'll tan her hide," said Mrs. Bellows. "Lot of nonsense."

Mrs. Esketh and Mrs. Bellows exhhanged looks. Mrs. Esketh took out a handkerchief and delicately touched her upper lip. "Liz, I won't appeal to you on practical grounds. It's fundamentally a spiritual decision. But it is true that your Queen pin will be of great value to you in later life, both professionally and socially. You may move to a large city, without friends or contacts, but if you wear a Queen pin you will always find your

own kind. Fine college-bred women who work together for worthy causes. Your pin might even lead to a job. These are things you may have forgotten, in your present state of excitement."

"Now look here, Liz," said Mrs. Bellows, "at your age you couldn't be expected to know. But we know. We know the kind of background you've had and we know the kind of community you'll be expected to fit into. You'd be a sorry girl without a sorority behind you. You'll find our alumnae are one of the most powerful women's groups in any community in the Middle West. We perform a great service to this country of ours by protecting our way of life for our kind of people."

Liz hesitated. "I'm afraid a sorority wouldn't give me anything I really want...not understanding, not even tolerance."

Mrs. Esketh looked unbelieving. "That," she said, "wasn't a very nice thing to say. If you have a daughter, you wouldn't want her to be without sorority affiliations, would you? It's so much easier for the girl who has a mother or a sister."

"If I ever have a daughter," said Liz, "I'd let her decide for herself. If she were a legacy, she might not have much choice."

Merry shifted uneasily in her chair. "The thing is," she said, "this won't look very well for the Queens. It hasn't happened since 1939. After all, didn't you have a lot of fun? Didn't you meet a lot of fraternity men and have a good time?"

"That's not enough," said Liz.

They suspected then she'd become Radical. Merry was glad they'd found out in time; she knew now what she could tell anyone who asked. Mrs. Bellows was as annoyed as she ever allowed herself to be. Mrs. Esketh looked on the verge of tears. Their parting was not sisterly. Liz wished she'd known how to say it better.

She went to the phone booth. She knew Olive would leave early the next morning to be on hand for Initiation Breakfast at eleven. "Where?" said the operator. "Paris, <u>France</u>?"

The connection sounded as if it were. "Oh dear," said Olive, "I can't hear you. I'm right in the middle of packing. Aren't you at the House?"

Liz knew how she'd look, could imagine her excitement, the suitcase lying open on the bed. She knew now that she and Olive might some day be friends. Not because they were mother and daughter, but because they were, finally, two individual people.

"I'm sorry, Mother," she said, "I guess I have something awful to tell you." Liz felt genuinely sorry for her. Almost at once she began to like her.