

Jean & Kristin

KRISTIN. So--you're back at last.

JEAN. I went to the station with the Count and coming back I went in to the barn and danced and then I discovered Miss Julie there leading the dance with the gamekeeper. When she spied me, she rushed right toward me and asked me to waltz, and then she waltzed so--never in my life have I seen anything like it! Ah--she is crazy tonight.

KRISTIN. She has always been. But never so much as in the last fortnight, since her engagement was broken off.

JEAN. Yes, what about that gossip? He seemed like a fine fellow although he wasn't rich! Ach! they have so much nonsense about them. [Seats himself at table.] It's queer about Miss Julie though--to prefer staying here at home among these people, eh, to going away with her father to visit her relatives, eh?

KRISTIN. She's probably shamefaced about breaking off with her intended.

JEAN. No doubt! but he was a likely sort just the same. Do you know, Kristin, how it happened? I saw it, although I didn't let on.

KRISTIN. No--did you see it?

JEAN. Yes, indeed, I did. They were out in the stable yard one evening and she was "training" him as she called it. Do you know what happened? She made him leap over her riding whip, the way you teach a dog to jump. He jumped it twice and got a lash each time; but the third time he snatched the whip from her hand and broke it into pieces. And then he vanished!

KRISTIN. Was that the way it happened? No, you don't say so!

JEAN. Yes, that's the way the thing happened. But what have you got to give me that's good, Kristin?

KRISTIN. [She takes things from the pans on stove and serves them to him.] Oh, it's only a bit of kidney that I cut out of the veal steak for you.

JEAN [Smelling the food]. Splendid! My favorite delicacy. [Feeling of plate]. But you might have warmed the plate.

KRISTIN. You're fussier than the Count, when you get started. [Tweaks his hair.]

JEAN. Don't pull my hair! You know how sensitive I am.

KRISTIN. Oh--there, there! you know I was only loving you.

[Jean eats, and Kristin opens bottle of beer.]

JEAN. Beer on midsummer night--thank you, no! I have something better than that myself. [Takes bottle of wine from drawer of table.] Yellow seal, how's that? Now give me a glass--a wine glass you understand, of course, when one drinks the genuine.

KRISTIN. [Fetches a glass. Then goes to stove and puts on casserole.] Heaven help the woman who gets you for her husband. Such a fuss budget!

Julie & Jean

JULIE. She'll make a charming wife! Does she snore too?

JEAN. No, but she talks in her sleep.

JULIE [Cynically]. How do you know that she talks in her sleep?

JEAN [Boldly]. I have heard her.[Pause and they look at each other.]

JULIE. Why don't you sit down?

JEAN. I can't allow myself to do so in your presence.

JULIE. But if I command you?

JEAN. Then I obey.

JULIE. Sit down then. But wait--can't you get me something to drink first?

JEAN. I don't know what there is in the icebox. Nothing but beer, probably.

JULIE. Is beer nothing? My taste is so simple that I prefer it to wine.

[Jean takes out beer and serves it on plate.]

JEAN. Allow me.

JULIE. Won't you drink too?

JEAN. I am no friend to beer--but if Miss Julie commands.

JULIE [Gaily]. Commands! I should think as a polite cavalier you might join your lady.

JEAN. Looking at it in that way you are quite right. [Opens another bottle of beer and fills glass.]

JULIE. Give me a toast!

[Jean hesitates.]

JULIE [Mockingly]. Old as he is, I believe the man is bashful!

JEAN [On his knee with mock gallantry, raises glass]. A health to my lady of the house!

JULIE. Bravo! Now you must kiss my slipper. Then the thing is perfect.

[Jean hesitates and then seizes her foot and kisses it lightly.]

JULIE. Splendid! You should have been an actor.

JEAN [Rising]. But this mustn't go any further, Miss Julie. What if someone should come in and see us?

JULIE. What harm would that do?

Jean

JEAN [With deep pain and great chagrin]. Oh, Miss Julie, a dog may lie on the couch of a Countess, a horse may be caressed by a lady's hand, but a servant--yes, yes, sometimes there is stuff enough in a man, whatever he be, to swing himself up in the world, but how often does that happen! But to return to the story, do you know what I did? I ran down to the mill dam and threw myself in with my clothes on--and was pulled out and got a thrashing. But the following Sunday when all the family went to visit my grandmother I contrived to stay at home; I scrubbed myself well, put on my best clothes, such as they were, and went to church so that I might see you. I saw you. Then I went home with my mind made up to put an end to myself. But I wanted to do it beautifully and without pain. Then I happened to remember that elderberry blossoms are poisonous. I knew where there was a big elderberry bush in full bloom and I stripped it of its riches and made a bed of it in the oat-bin. Have you ever noticed how smooth and glossy oats are? As soft as a woman's arm.--Well, I got in and let down the cover, fell asleep, and when I awoke I was very ill, but didn't die--as you see. What I wanted--I don't know. You were unattainable, but through the vision of you I was made to realize how hopeless it was to rise above the conditions of my birth.

Julie

JULIE. And for that matter I have no secrets. You see, my mother was not of noble birth. She was brought up with ideas of equality, woman's freedom and all that. She had very decided opinions against matrimony, and when my father courted her she declared that she would never be his wife--but she did so for all that. I came into the world against my mother's wishes, I discovered, and was brought up like a child of nature by my mother, and taught everything that a boy must know as well; I was to be an example of a woman being as good as a man--I was made to go about in boy's clothes and take care of the horses and harness and saddle and hunt, and all such things; in fact, all over the estate women servants were taught to do men's work, with the result that the property came near being ruined--and so we became the laughing stock of the countryside. At last my father must have awakened from his bewitched condition, for he revolted, and ran things according to his ideas. My mother became ill--what it was I don't know, but she often had cramps and acted queerly--sometimes hiding in the attic or the orchard, and would even be gone all night at times. Then came the big fire which of course you have heard about. The house, the stables--everything was burned, under circumstances that pointed strongly to an incendiary, for the misfortune happened the day after the quarterly insurance was due and the premiums sent in by father were strangely delayed by his messenger so that they arrived too late. [She fills a wine glass and drinks.]