

HUTCHISON. That story's all right for the women. I know better. You knew the Lottery was today.

TESSIE. Well, it don't matter now. So long as I'm here.

HUTCHISON. What about Davy? Why'd you try to hide him?

TESSIE. Hide him? I didn't hide him. What makes you say that?

HUTCHISON. I found him in the stable loft. He said you told him to wait there—

TESSIE. Yes, but I was goin' to get him, Bill. I was goin' to bring him—honest.

HUTCHISON. What reason did you have to put him there?

TESSIE. Oh, Bill, he's such a little boy! And his birthday just last month. I hate to see the children takin' part in grown-up ructions before they've even put aside their toys.

HUTCHISON. I went through it when I was little.

TESSIE. I know, Bill. I guess I was born and brought up with it, same as yourself.

HUTCHISON. Then how did you think you could get away with such a thing? You know Davy's name has to be there along with ours. And you know how careful Joe Summers is. Why, we'd have been a laughin'-stock in front of everybody.

TESSIE. But I told you I intended to bring him. You got to believe me, Bill.

HUTCHISON. Talkin' a lot of sentimental tommyrot. I always gave you credit for more sense than some of these other females. What's come over you lately, anyway?

TESSIE. I told you—nothin'.

HUTCHISON. Next thing you'll be sayin' we ought to give up Lotteries altogether—like poor Joe Summers' sister.

TESSIE. Well, I've not come to that yet. But some places have given them up. Lots of little towns up to the north—

HUTCHISON. No good'll come of it, either. You wait and see.

TESSIE. I don't say it will. No, I reckon the Lottery serves its useful purpose. When a custom's been handed down from generation to generation, there must be good in it.

HUTCHISON [*wagging head, grinning*]. Then you shouldn't be

so cussed busy, findin' fault. [*Crosses to R C with TESSIE, and DAVY joins them.*]

JOE [*clearing throat*]. Well, now, guess we better get started—get this over with—so's we can get back to work. Anybody ain't here?

VILLAGERS. Dunbar! Clyde Dunbar! Dunbar ain't here.

JOE [*glancing at list*]. Clyde Dunbar—that's right. He's broke his leg, hasn't he? Who's drawin' for him?

MRS. DUNBAR. Me, I guess.

JOE. Wife draws for him? Don't have a grown boy to do it for you, Hazel?

MRS. DUNBAR. Ralph's not but sixteen years. Guess he got to do in for the old man this year. [*Mild chuckle from VILLAGERS.*]

JOE [*making note*]. Right. Jack Williams, you're drawin' this year?

JACK [*blinking nervously*]. Yes, I'm drawin' for my mother.

MARTIN. Good fellow, Jack. Glad to see your mother's got a man to do it.

JOE. Well, I guess that's every one. [*With a wink, he reads the name Warner.*]

WARNER [*raising hand*]. I'm here!

JOE [*nodding*]. Keep your wits. [*Raises box.*] All ready? [*Whisper runs through VILLAGERS; then a hush follows. Everyone is quite serious now. There is no more laughter.*] Now, I'll read off the names—heads of families first—and the men come up and take a paper out of the box. Keep the paper folded in your hand without lookin' at it until everyone has had his turn. Everything clear? [*VILLAGERS are silent, but nervous, winking their lips, not looking around or moving.*]

JOE reads from list Adams. [*A man disengage himself from crowd, comes forward, reaches into black box and takes out a folded paper.*]

JOE says to him. Hi, Steve. [*Holding paper firmly, the man goes back to his place and stands, not looking down at his hand.*]

JOE calls next name. Allen. [*Another man comes to box, repeating same busi-*