

"Unto Whomsoever Much Is Given"

Julie Wendel

H. Ec. So.

HELEN CARR wondered why they had ever chosen her for the position in the first place. Certainly not because of any overwhelming desire on her part. Probably not many people wanted it; she could see why, now.

She eased her roadster into place parallel to the dingy curbing in front of the building. The squeak of a window two stories up brought her eyes to the spot. She looked and something inside her knees began a staccato quake. Four big-eyed faces peered down at her and the car. Even from that distance she was sure she could read resentment in them. She bit her lip, as if from habit at removing excess lipstick. Fool, she thought, you should never have parked right in front of the place. Naturally they'll hate you now—flaunting your good fortune on them.

Good fortune? Yes, of course. Not every girl just out of college had an opportunity like this. And look at them, they'd never even gone to college, most of them. Not even to high school.

She remembered the words of Dr. English, the head of the psychology department, two weeks ago, when she'd graduated. He'd called her into his office and said, "You, Miss Carr, have been chosen from the list of applicants to lead creative recreation at the State Home for Unfortunate Girls. You'll have an excellent opportunity to observe reactions of the mind to unusual circumstances." Unusual circumstances! Even with her knees doing that funny uncontrollable wobbling she had to laugh now. She remembered that at the time she'd marveled at the subtlety of those words, at the gentle way of saying a not gentle thing. She looked up again at the silent faces and wondered what they would say to Dr. English. Broken lives. And he could refer to them as "unusual circumstances."

God, she thought, what am I doing here? Me with my safe little world and a shiny fraternity pin over my heart; me with my polished spectator pumps—page 69 Mademoiselle—and that damn shiny roadster.

The windows above squeaked shut and the faces disappeared. Probably gone to spread the happy tidings, she thought. Well, she couldn't sit behind the steering wheel all day. Probably it wouldn't be bad at all. Probably they were anxious to meet her, to learn the things she could teach them. Better get at it. No sense in sitting and waiting.

She opened the door of the automobile and slid out. Her feet touched the cinders of the parking lot and she found that her knees were steady again. She wondered why.

A long flight of grey steps ascended toward oak doors. Half-way to the top she paused. The letter she'd received from the matron had said something about giving a talk to an assembly on the afternoon of her arrival. Her knees began again.

Talk on creative recreation, they'd said. Sure, talk about it, Helen. Show them how to weave a basket or knit a sweater; tell them how to write a poem, to pour their hearts out on a sheet of pulp. When you don't dare write down for prying eyes and lifted eyebrows the things which mean the most. Sure, Helen, go ahead and tell *them* to. And if one does, watch her be put in solitary or locked in her room. Sure, go ahead and watch "reactions of the mind."

"Creative recreation!" The very phrase is mocking. But don't think about that. Walk up the stairs and tell the matron that you've come. You've had four years of college; you know what culture means; you're tactful. What more do you need?

Helen's gloved hand held tightly to the stair railing, but her smooth little chin went up, a barricade against defeat.

She took a few more steps and halted. I should never have accepted, she thought. I'm too young. I've hurried all through school and now I'm too young. I'm not as old as they are and I'm supposed to teach them how to live! "Listen to their problems," Dr. English said. Well, isn't that a laugh. They know so much more about life they'll be sheltering me, if they don't hate me first.

Her hand relaxed on the railing and she proceeded toward the oak doors. Open them, fool, she muttered.

The doors swung back and she walked into the dark mouth of the institution. From a stairway above her six girls leaned, watching her move. They looked rather nice, not half as hard and

cynical as she'd expected. She waved at them and smiled. "Are you Miss Carr?" one soft voice asked tentatively.

"Yes. Yes, I'm Miss Carr." She smiled, and managed a quick wink before a starched matron descended on her.

"So you're going to be on our staff, Miss Carr," a brusque voice behind her said.

She turned. "Yes, I'm going to be with you now," she said.

Return

Robert E. Lee

Arch. E. Jr.

Billboard: Billy A. Rose presents
The one, the only, the original
Jesus Christ.
First appearance on this continent,
Only second appearance in the world.

Reporter: And what was your first impression of America,
Mr. Christ?
Do you think American women
Are prettier than . . . a . . .
Than the others?
Would you explain your statement,
'Forgive them, for they know not . . .'
It isn't clear.

Girl of Seven: Papa, where are his wings?

Clergyman: Why would he stoop so low?

In lights: Three Miracles Nightly,
Next Week, the Riddle of Life.
See Him in Person.

A Mr. Smith: Hell, he's a fake.

Mr. Rose: Yeah, buddy!
Well there's standing room only.
Pretty good take for a fake.

Box Office: Admission, thirty dollars a person.
By request of artist,
To be paid in silver.

Smith: Judas Priest!