



# Hidden Dreams

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**J**ULIE Chase frowned as she pushed back her chair from the sewing machine. She hated to make over dresses, especially this green wool one. It certainly would be far from one of "those classic, simple wool frocks so indispensable to the smartly dressed co-ed." She spread the waist out on the table. The tucks at the shoulder and the buttons down the front that in the picture had looked so stunning now looked decidedly ordinary.

Well, what if she didn't look like a page out of *Vogue* this year, or hadn't last year? She'd be starting her third year of college; that was the important thing. And Aunt Ella didn't have to like it if she didn't want to.

Julie stood up—a tall, dark girl with eager brown eyes. She wiped her moist hands dry on the towel and stepped over to put some cobs into the stove. Her brown hair hung low on her neck in curls that were now wilted by the heat.

"Mom, how long do these peas have to be on yet? It's so hot in here that it'll never be cooled off before dinner."

"They don't come off until 11:30, Julie," said her mother, from the dining room where she was ironing.

Julie grimaced and wiped the perspiration off her upper lip with the back of her hand. She glared at the pieces of the green wool dress on the table. The telephone jangled—three long rings.

"Hello . . . Oh, hello, Aunt Ella." Whatever had made her think it might be Bill? She rested her arm on the shelf below the mouthpiece and her shoulders relaxed wearily. "Yes, we've

been busy this morning. We canned fifteen pints of peas." She leaned against the workbench. Why didn't Aunt Ella hurry and get to the point?

**W**HAT? Oh, I'm trying to remake a dress. Mom is ironing. Why sure, Aunt Ella, I'm going back to school this year. Do you think I'd miss it for anything? I want to know more about this world than I'd find out here by myself. Oh, Aunt Ella! Teach your school? But I thought Uncle George had already hired Mildred." This was just some more of Aunt Ella's doings, so Mom and Dad wouldn't have to "waste" more money sending her to college.

"Well, I don't know what to tell you. When will you have to know? . . . I'll talk it over with Mom and Dad and try to call you tomorrow." Was this the end of college for her, now that she had a chance for a job? "Yes, I do appreciate your asking me, but I can't say yet if I will do it or not . . . Goodbye."

"What did she want, Julie?"

"Oh, Mom, now what shall I do?" Julie came into the dining room and sat down on the wooden arm of Dad's leather-covered rocker. "She said Uncle George will give me the job teaching their school next year. He's school director, so I can have the job if I want it."

"Do you want it, Julie?"

"No! I mean I want to go to college, but if you think I ought to teach, if it would make things any easier for you and Dad. . ." Her eyes followed the row of brown tacks marching along the chair's cracked leather binding.

"Julie, we wouldn't want you to quit going to college just on that account. We're glad to send you."

"Yes, Mother, I know you are, but now that I have the chance to help, is it fair if I don't?"

Julie watched the shiny iron move back and forth over Dad's blue striped shirt. Mom's hand on the iron was so thin. The skin was coarse and freckled, and one fingernail was broken where she had caught it on the cob basket. Mom had had an operation last winter, but she said she felt fine now. At least she never complained. But if Mom was working too hard and got sick this winter while she was at school . . . Julie got up and walked over to the window.

**I**T WOULD help an awful lot if I taught next year, wouldn't it?" Mom's operation *had* been expensive.

"Well, Julie, it's up to you." Julie turned. As Mom's eyes met hers, all her love from Mom gathered inside her chest until she thought it would burst. Mom's hair was gray and there were little wrinkles around the corners of her mouth, but her eyes sort of backed you up and made you go on and do things you didn't think you ever could do.

"Dad and I told you it'd be all right with us, Julie, that we could send you the two years yet. But that school pays \$75 a month. You could stay here at home, and save most of your money and go back to school in a couple years. That way you could have more of the clothes you want—a new black coat and a formal like that blue one in the store window in Cedar Rapids that you liked so well."

Julie watched a robin drinking out of a pan by the well. She remembered the robin's nest that had been on the fire escape below her window at the dorm last spring. Last year at school had been wonderful. She had felt things she hadn't even thought of before. She had discovered Robert Frost all over again—swung on birches, and felt a kindred thrill with the mower over beauty left unmarred.

**A**ND then there had been the night it had stormed. She had turned off the lights so she could see the lightning slashing the sky into pieces. She had propped her elbows on the sill and had felt herself growing bigger and bigger inside until she was filled with such a restlessness that she could hardly stand the thrill of it. Her soul went soaring out to find this Force that called to her.

"What's the matter, Julie? You had the queerest expression just now."

**N**OTHING'S the matter, Mom. I was just thinking about last year at school. I want to go back. There's too much I have to learn before I can begin to tackle seriously this business of living. I learned what an inspiration college can be. I'm afraid that if I stayed out now, Bill'd talk me into marrying him before I got to go back. And then, in spite of all I'd have, I'd be missing something else I have to have too."

"You could do worse than marry Bill."

“I don’t mean I won’t. I will, someday, but I won’t yet.”

Julie folded little pleats in the skirt of her red plaid dress. Just a few years more—enough to crystallize this Vision of her Destiny. Then she’d come back and marry Bill, but she had to work things out first—to understand this urge within her.

But \$75 a month was \$75 a month, and Dad had so many doctor bills to pay. Would going out on her own change the liability to an asset?

“You talk things over with Dad, Julie. See what he thinks.”

“**D**AD,” said Julie, at the dinner table, “Uncle George wants me to teach in his school next year. \$75 a month. What do you think about it?”

Her father speared the last piece of fried potato on his plate.

“Do you want to, Julie?”

Julie laid down her fork. “I don’t know. If I had that money, I could begin paying you back some of the money you loaned me when I started to college. Then you could pay the rest of Mom’s operation fees. After all, you have given me two years of college.”

“Bill’d be glad if you’d stay, wouldn’t he? But I want you to go to school, if you want to go.”

He stood up—tall like Julie—and lighted a cigarette. As he went into the living room, Julie heard him mutter, “Darn that Ella. She always was trying to run everybody else’s affairs, even when we were kids.”

**J**ULIE’S eyes touched his sturdy shoulders and she gently ruffled his gray hair. She shook her head. He wasn’t going to help her really decide any more than Mom would.

Julie put the dishpan away and washed her hands. She could baste the sleeves in her dress while Mom was using the sewing machine to patch Dad’s shirts. She picked up the waist of the dress. If she taught, she wouldn’t have to make over dresses like this one. She snapped the thread off the spool and threaded the needle. But then if she finished school, there’d be just that much more money to pay back to Mom and Dad. It’d be easier to stay home and teach and then marry Bill in a couple of years. But . . .

“Julie, who just drove in the yard?” came her mother’s voice from the next room.

"Oh, Mom! It's Aunt Ella! Whatever will I tell her?"

"I don't know. I've never been able to tell her anything."

**JULIE** thrust her needle into the spool of thread and stepped out onto the porch. "Hello, Aunt Ella. Come on in," she called to the short, stout woman bustling up the walk.

"Hello, Julie. How's your Mother? Oh, I can't come in but a minute. I'm on my way to a Farm Bureau meeting."

"Mom's fine. She's in the living room. You can stay a while anyway—it's early for a meeting."

"Well, Julie, you've decided to take the school, haven't you? I just wanted to make sure, so George could tell Mildred tonight that the job was taken. I told George you had too much sense to turn down a chance like that."

Julie glanced quickly at Aunt Ella. Bland blue eyes carefully confident. Had Aunt Ella always been like this?

"Aunt Ella, it was nice of Uncle George even to consider offering me the school, but . . ."

"He wouldn't have thought of it if I hadn't suggested it. He's been getting such poor teachers lately that I just told him to ask you once."

A little bubble bounced up and down inside Julie's head chanting, "Told you she did it, told you she did it!" Julie buried the bubble under a stack of warning "Be quiet."

"**HE SAID** you wouldn't even consider it," went on Aunt Ella, in the kitchen by this time, "but I told him that no girl would go to school if she could get a job that paid good money." She looked back at the pieces of the dress on the table, then at Julie.

"Oh, hello, Mary. How're you? I s'pose you've been working hard to get Julie ready to go away this fall?"

"We've not been too busy. Sit down, Ella."

"Mind if I move this rocker over by the door? I don't stand the heat very well since I had that heart attack five years ago. Well, Julie, what do you say?"

Julie sat down on the couch and crossed her legs. "Aunt Ella, it's like this. I'd like to teach your school, but I want to go back to Ames and finish before I take a job."

Julie raised an eyebrow at Mom. Why didn't she say some-

thing? She was awfully absorbed in getting that shirt button in exactly the right place.

“What good would it do you to finish school, Julie? Just spending a lot more money that you’ll have to pay back. Isn’t that so, Mary?”

Mom hesitated. “Well, yes, I guess so, Ella. But if Julie wants to go to school, we’ll send her. She’s our only girl, and we can do that much for her.” Quiet determination in Mom’s voice was lost on Aunt Ella.

“Better get her married. I didn’t go to college and I’ve gotten along all right.”

Julie set her teeth. The idea! The bubble went “Ha, ha, ha!” derisively, in complete agreement. As if she wanted to stay home and be like Aunt Ella! Not even for Bill! She’d have her two years at school to meet and talk to people who saw beyond their own front gate. Not that Mom and Dad were like that. But they couldn’t help her—somehow she and Mom didn’t talk much about why they did things.

“Aunt Ella, thank you and Uncle George lots, but I’m going back to school. I’ll get a part-time job to help pay some of my expenses. I have to go back.”

“Julie, you’re a fool!”

“Ella!” Mom *was* going to help her. She was sitting up straight now. “Julie’s to decide. If she’d rather work when she goes to school instead of working now and going later, I’ll help her all I can. I’ll even help her if she never gets a job after she graduates!”

“Well! I am surprised! But if that’s the way you two feel about it. . .”

“Yes, Aunt Ella. College means so much to me that I’ll go if I can.” Mom smiled at her and Julie knew that everything was all right.

**I** STILL think you’ll change your mind, Julie.” Aunt Ella’s sudden rise to her feet left the chair creaking. Julie chuckled to herself. “I have to leave now to go to that meeting. Tell you what I’ll do, Julie. We won’t tell the applicants anything definite yet; so if you do change your mind, it’ll still be all right.”

Julie and Mom followed her through the kitchen and out onto the porch.

"Think it over some more, won't you? 'Bye, Mary. 'Bye, Julie."

They stood just outside the kitchen door, watching Aunt Ella folding herself into the front seat of the car. She waved briefly and Julie answered.

Julie followed Mom into the house and hugged her. "Oh, Mom, I'm so happy. Thanks, much, for helping me turn Aunt Ella down. I couldn't have, alone."

"Of course, dear. I'm glad you chose to keep on with school."

"Mom, I like you," giving her a hearty kiss. "And I promise to work *extra* hard next year. You just see."

Julie took her needle out of the spool of basting thread. Mom was starting to cut a patch for one of Dad's overalls. "But don't work too hard. That's not what you really go to school for."

Julie's eyes quickened. "Why Mom, you *do* understand! I'm so glad! What...?"

"I wanted to go to college too, but young ladies then didn't do such things."

**T**HE sewing machine kept up its clatter. Julie basted in sleeves automatically.

"You know, Julie, any dream you ever have that is really yours comes from inside you—all anyone else can do is help it grow. You have to find help, and where you find it depends on you."

"Mother, I didn't know you felt that way too." After she had built her dreams strong enough, she'd come back home and get a job. What difference would it make if it were only Uncle George's school? Not even Aunt Ella could hurt her vision then.

Julie felt stirring within her a vast power that she knew would grow as she recognized its use. She saw herself as she could be: Home, married to Bill, believing in him, helping him. Working for her school, her church, her community. Keeping herself free, too big to be tied down by small things. A part of the present, the past, the future, through the Force that runs the world. She was content.

