

(GEORGE, also carrying books, catches up with her.)

GEORGE. Can I carry your books home for you, Emily?

EMILY. *(coolly)* Why...uh...Thank you. It isn't far.

(She gives them to him. GEORGE takes her books under his arm, turns to speak offstage. EMILY is shy and embarrassed.)

GEORGE. Excuse me a minute, Emily. *(hurriedly)* Say, Bob, if I'm a little late, start practice anyway. And give Herb some long high ones.

EMILY. *(suddenly alert)* Good-by, Lizzy.

GEORGE. *(also to "Lizzy", not enthusiastic)* Good-by, Lizzy.

– I'm awfully glad you were elected, too, Emily.

EMILY. *(coolly)* Thank you.

(They have been standing on Main Street, almost against the back wall. They take the first steps toward the audience when GEORGE stops and says:)

GEORGE. *(hurt)* Emily, why are you mad at me?

EMILY. *(defensive)* I'm not mad at you.

GEORGE. You've been treating me so funny lately.

EMILY. *(dreading to face the issue)* Well, since you ask me, I might as well say it right out, George, –

(She catches sight of a teacher passing.)

Good-by, Miss Corcoran.

GEORGE. Good-by, Miss Corcoran. – Wha – what is it?

EMILY. *(not scoldingly; finding it difficult to say)* I don't like the whole change that's come over you in the last year.

(GEORGE turns away, a bit hurt. She glances at him.)

I'm sorry if that hurts your feelings, but I've got to – tell the truth and shame the devil.

GEORGE. A *change?* – Wha – what do you mean?

EMILY. Well, up to a year ago I used to like you a lot. And I used to watch you as you did everything... because we'd been friends so long...and then you began spending all your time at *baseball* ...and you never stopped to speak to anybody any more. Not even to your own family you didn't...and, George, it's a fact, you've got awful conceited and stuck-up, and all the girls say so. They may not say so to your face, but that's what they say about you behind your back, and it hurts me to hear them say it, but I've got to agree with them a little. I'm sorry if it hurts your feelings...but I can't be sorry I said it.

GEORGE. (*helpless and hurt*) I...I'm glad you said it, Emily. I never thought that such a thing was happening to me. I guess it's hard for a fella not to have faults creep into his character.

(*They take a step or two in silence, then stand still in misery.*)

EMILY. I always expect a man to be perfect and I think he should be.

GEORGE. Oh...I don't think it's possible to be perfect, Emily.

EMILY. (*all innocence, yet firm*) Well, my *father* is, and as far as I can see *your father* is. There's no reason on earth why you shouldn't be, too.

GEORGE. Well, I feel it's the other way round. That men aren't naturally good; but girls are.

EMILY. Well, you might as well know right now that I'm not perfect. It's not as easy for a girl to be perfect as a man, because we girls are more – more – nervous. – Now I'm sorry I said all that about you. I don't know what made me say it. (*cries*)

GEORGE. (*choked voice*) Emily, –

EMILY. Now I can see it's not the truth at all. And I suddenly feel that it isn't important, anyway.

GEORGE. Emily...would you like an ice-cream soda, or something, before you go home?

EMILY. (*controlling herself*) Well, thank you...I would.

(**GEORGE** starts to take her arm, but is too shy. They advance toward the audience and make an abrupt right turn, opening the door of Morgan's drugstore. Under strong emotion, **EMILY** keeps her face down. **GEORGE** speaks to some passers-by.)

GEORGE. Hello, Stew, – how are you? – Good afternoon, Mrs. Slocum.

(**GEORGE** starts into store, then steps back to let **EMILY** go first. They cross to stools and **GEORGE** puts books down on board.)

(*The **STAGE MANAGER**, wearing spectacles and assuming the role of Mr. Morgan, enters abruptly from the right and stands between the audience and the counter of his soda fountain.*)

STAGE MANAGER. Hello, George. Hello, Emily. – What'll you have? – Why, Emily Webb, – what you been crying about?

GEORGE. (*He gropes for an explanation.*) She...she just got an awful scare, Mr. Morgan. She almost got run over by that hardware-store wagon. Everybody says that Tom Huckins drives like a crazy man.

STAGE MANAGER. (*drawing a drink of water*) Well, now! You take a drink of water, Emily.

(**EMILY** and **GEORGE** sit on stools.)

You look all shook up. I tell you, you've got to look both ways before you cross Main Street these days.

(*Sets glass before her. She sips.*)

Gets worse every year. – What'll you have?

EMILY. I'll have a strawberry phosphate, thank you, Mr. Morgan.

GEORGE. No, no, Emily. Have an ice-cream soda with me. Two strawberry ice-cream sodas, Mr. Morgan.