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Dinner at Antoine's . . . By Frances P. Keyes

Synopsis: Why did Vance Perrault, doctor of the murdered Odile St. Amant; Sabine Duplessis, her ex-suitor; Caresse, her sister, and certain other characters in this story wish to visit Odile's tomb? The reader would like to know and so would Captain "Toe" Murphy who thinks he knows the name of the murderer. Meanwhile, Orson Foxworth, the shipping magnate; Amelie Lalonde, Odile's mother, and Tossie Price, her old nurse, are under suspicion. Joe Racina and his wife, Judith are in the clear. Now go on with the story.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

WITHOUT conscious effort, Judith Racina had managed to give a New England atmosphere to the Queen Anne house on Henry Clay Ave.; the bed-chambers, especially, were reminiscent of those of Farman Hill, where she had spent her youth. Exhausted as Caresse was, when she reached the Racinas' house, she was not oblivious to the quaint and restful charm of the spare room to which Judith unquestioningly led her.

"I'm going to bring you some hot milk," Judith told her.

"If I could just sleep."

"You will, Caresse. You'll be asleep before you know it." With a burst of energy, Judith opened a bureau drawer and took from it a clean nightgown which consisted of lawn under. "You'll find new toothbrushes and several standard makes of soap and other toilet articles in the bathroom." Judith said.

WHEN CARESE woke, the room was full of sunlight. She jumped up and, crossing the floor, flung open the door into the hallway. A little girl, wearing a blue gingham dress, was standing near the threshold, clasping a dilapidated doll close to her plump little bosom. She was not a beautiful child, but she had a peal and individuality.

"Hello!" she said softly, her pleasant little face brightening as she smiled. "I didn't wake you up, did I?"

"No, I waked up myself." "I'm glad," Jenness said with evident relief. "Because Mommy said I wasn't to make any noise and I tried not to. But she told me to stay outside your door and let her know when I heard something."

"It's very kind of you to have me have such a nice long sleep. But perhaps you'll tell your mother I'm awake now."

"Yes, I will." In a sudden burst of noise and speed, a little girl rushed down the stairs, shouting a shrill, "I'm in the Windsor rocker, with the stitching needles slipping back and forth between the fingers which, even when thus diligently engaged, gave no effect on haste or restlessness.

"I'm going to have even more time on my hands than I thought. Sabine Duplessis dropped in just as we were finishing dinner and had pandowdy and coffee with us. I'm relieved that Sabin's come to see Joe. They've both got pretty violent tempers and they had one of their periodic quarrels Wednesday night. Usually these quarrels don't amount to much. But I

was a little afraid this one would. Now I know they'll talk things through and be better friends than ever."

Her serene smile deepened. Obviously she had no qualms concerning the outcome of the discussion which was under way in the book-lined study and Caresse felt no curiosity about it.

Caresse looked gratefully around the peaceful room. She was profoundly moved. But her hostess, even more than her surroundings, was responsible for the healing balm which overspread her troubled spirit.

Judith folded up her knitting and rose. Then she smiled down at Caresse.

"You wouldn't believe I'd ever really been a nurse if I didn't tell you that it's now time for your nourishment," she said. "So I'm going to get you some." Judith bent over and kissed her guest.

"Don't eat any more than you want," Judith interposed.

"I certainly slept last night. What did you give me, knockout drops?"

"No," Judith said, laughing. "Hot milk, just as I told you. You were all in, Caresse. Do you really feel better now?"

"I'll say I do. I don't feel like the same person. I can't know you enough for letting me stay."

"Well, you'll never let me come in here again. I made you have a grand idea. I'm going to get you some."

"No," Judith said. "I'm afraid I'd hear the last part of that just once too often. So I hope you won't say it. Because Toe Murphy's said it and Joe's said it and I'm tired of hearing it. Especially as I have some ideas of my own on the subject, which evidently aren't the same as either Captain Murphy's or Joe's and probably wouldn't be the same as yours. I'd rather not discuss it any more. If you'd like to tell me, I'll listen."

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