Julie Stoops To Conquer

Lydia S. Welch*

*Iowa State College

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TEN MINUTES later, Blaine had left, and John hurried to his meeting. As he passed the tall pines, a sudden wind sprang up and set them to whispering and singing, bending back and forth. Almost as if Fate were laughing and saying she'd won, because he was afraid to live. So he'd chosen the dreams, John thought. And he blamed it on the other dreams he had, the long lasting dreams that take work to make them live. But the spring breeze was a sea breeze, and the singing wind sounded the call. John wanted the courage.

"Some day I'll go!" he cried. The wind laughed, and he said it again, half-heartedly. "Someday I'll go."

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BEFORE the first peal of the bell died away, Julie had the phone in her hand and was cooing into its black interior with her best telephone voice, which, she was firmly convinced, sounded just like Hedy LeMarr. But the call was for Jess, who was not at home. She hung up the receiver and returned to flop disconsolately into her chair, bleakly contemplating what promised to be a treacherously dull evening.

From the outside came the little suburban sounds of a summer night. A screen door slammed, a car passed on the quiet street, next door, Mr. Warren was whistling for Toby . . . Toby barked, crickets called.

"Here I sit," thought Julie tragically, "and life's going right on without me. I should have gone to the movies with that dumb Jim Taylor . . . might have known nothing better would turn up with simply everybody out of town." Why did Dad have to be so stuffy about not opening the cottage until August?
How could any parent stand by and see his own child's life being wasted away and refuse to do anything about it?

"Men are absolutely callous," decided Julie, as she reached for a cigarette from the table by the chair. The sulphur from the match smarted in her nostrils as she lighted the cigarette. She breathed out a cloud of smoke as she'd seen Bette Davis do in the movies, but the effect wasn't quite the same. The unaccustomed smoke in her lungs made her cough . . . tears welled in her eyes.

UNWINDING herself from the chair, Julie walked to the fireplace and studied her reflection in the mirror above it. Resting her elbow on the mantel she posed for herself. Head thrown back . . . eyes partially closed . . . cigarette held gracefully drooping, she imitated gestures she'd seen in the movies.

The phone rang again, interrupting her pantomime.

"I won't hurry," Julie reasoned. "Then maybe it will be for me."

She snuffed out the cigarette deliberately, throwing the remainder with its tell-tale lipstick smear into the fireplace, before she walked to the phone. The call was for Dad and would Julie please have him call Mr. Parish when he came in. Discouraged, she hung up, trying to think of something to do.

Remembering a book she'd started to read last spring, Julie went to the book shelves, found her novel and opened it. The printed pages looked pretty dull . . . and anyway if she were going to college next fall, she'd have lots of studying to do and she'd better not strain her eyes with too much reading this summer. The book returned to its niche between "Jane Eyre" and "Gone With the Wind".

"A girl can always fix her nails or put up her hair," mused Julie. Her nails didn't need fixing though . . . and her hair . . . she glanced at the clock. It wasn't quite nine . . . not too late for something to happen and she'd hate to be caught in her curlers. As she debated she heard the squeal of brakes: a car stopped out in front.

JULIE ran to the door to see a youthful male figure leave a shiny roadster and saunter up the walk of the house across the street. It was Dick Lambert, Mrs. Woodrow's nephew, who was staying there this summer. Julie had met him at the Country
Club dance last week. It had been perfectly disgusting, to Julie's notion, the way the girls had been acting . . . as if he were the Duke of Windsor! Still . . . he was good-looking . . . and he did go to Dartmouth. . . .

Five minutes later a different Julie came down stairs. Instead of slacks and dirty saddle shoes, this one wore her favorite cotton frock and neat spectator pumps. She glanced in the hall mirror to check on hair and make-up . . . satisfied, she went to the basement door and whistled. Her answer was the quick scramble of four padded feet and a loving whine.

“Goldie is a nice, sweet puppy” cooed Julie, as she petted the gold and white spaniel. “And she has the nastiest habit of running away,” she added, standing at the back door watching the unleashed Goldie scamper off into the night.

Julie went to the telephone and dialed a number.

“Hello . . . is Mrs. Woodrow there?” (She'd seen the Woodrows leave before dinner) . . . “Oh . . . yes . . . how are you Dick? . . . this is Julie Mason . . . no, there's no message . . . it's just that Goldie's run away”. (Her voice was weak with helplessness.) “I thought maybe she'd run over that way . . . Oh, no, Dick, I wouldn't think of having you do that . . . Really I wouldn't . . . Yes . . . I suppose it would be easier in a car . . . if you're sure it's not too much trouble . . . That's just wonderful of you, Dick . . . I'll be right here . . . Bye.”

Smiling to herself, Julie hung up. She heard the car across the street start up and swing into the drive. Triumphantly, Julie walked out of the door, a warrior, with new fields to conquer.

March Thaw

Eunice Leckband

H. Ec. Sr.

The last snow is slipping,
And the furrows, black and crumbling,
Lie restless.
The mild breeze
Stirs the wet leaves,
And twigs with tiny buds move languidly
In the lazy sunlight.