

arriving but had wisely offered no comment. It was the only feature of their college life they did not talk over together.

Never once did Joy think of her age or of Jimmy's. They were pals, friends—kindred spirits. All cynicism had vanished from her soul under the wholesome influence of the young girls about her. Her face held a new sweetness, the bitter twist had vanished from her lips. She was eager, young spirited, in love.

Only once did misgiving assail her; she was helping Winifred tidy the room after a "midnight feed" and she sat on the corner of her bed and lit another candle, lights having gone out at ten.

"Somehow, Win," she confided, "I feel as if I didn't deserve all this."

"Why do you feel like that?" demanded Winifred. "Are you sick or anything?"

In spite of herself Joy laughed, but her face quickly became sober again, and her lips twisted bitterly. "It's just a masquerade at youth, Win," she said, and it was then that she thought of Jimmy Belden's age.

"How old is Jimmy Belden?" she asked.

Winifred was hanging up her dress and did not answer for a moment, then, without turning:

"I heard Dorothy tell the girls he was twenty-two," she said.

"Twenty-two!" exclaimed Joy. "He must be older."

"He is twenty-two," Winifred repeated.

Joy's face went suddenly white, and, leaning forward, she blew out the candle. Winifred must not see.

"Wait a minute, Joy, I need the light," cried Winifred with forced gaiety. She did not need to see, and after

a moment she said, "Listen to me, Joy, you don't need to tell him how old you are, and he'll never guess."

"I could not lie to him, Win, and he would find out anyway." Joy's voice was hoarse with emotion and she shivered slightly.

"I shouldn't have told her," thought Winifred, "I shouldn't have told her."

The next week when Dorothy asked Joy to come home with her for the week end she put off with a trivial excuse, and this happened again and again till at last Dorothy demanded the reason.

"If you and Jimmy have quarreled," she said, "let me tell you he's more than ready to make it up, for he blames me every time I come home for not bringing you with me."

"No, we didn't quarrel," faltered Joy, "but, dear, there is a barrier between your brother and I that can never be surmounted, and I thought I had better not see him too often."

"The first time was too often," replied Dorothy, "and it's nonsense to talk about 'insurmountable obstacles.' You sound like a dime novel with a tragic ending."

"I feel like a tragic ending," laughed Joy, but after Dorothy had gone she cried a little. Winifred, coming suddenly into the room, found her surreptitiously wiping her eyes.

"Joy Thurman," she scolded, "I think you are the most foolish girl I know," and she went out and slammed the door, but she was worried about her friend nevertheless.

Three days later Joy was called down to the drawing room. "A visitor?" she puzzled, wearily, "Oh, well, I'll be down in a minute," and she shrugged her shoulders and twisted her lips in the way Winifred knew so well, and had come of late to dread.