

wasn't asked. Now, let's see. It's your party, of course, but what about Miss Tiddle and Mrs. Christianson? I think they'd be awfully pleased and proud to be invited. I've noticed that they've been a little slighted just lately in some of the get-togethers. Or am I just imagining that?"

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A deep and portentous silence followed Emma Davis' question. It seemed to her to last for countless minutes, but she neither broke it nor turned from the window. Mrs. Rust rose from her chair then and very stealthily moved across her room to the door. The door was securely closed, but Mrs. Rust drew a key from the pocket of her black sateen apron, fitted it cautiously in the lock, and as cautiously turned it. Then she quietly tried the door, once, twice, three times. Once she was convinced it was locked, she returned to Emma Davis, who had not moved from the window or seemingly paid the slightest attention to Mrs. Rust. She put her arm around Miss Davis' waist before she began whispering in her ear.

"I have something very serious to tell you," old Mrs. Rust whispered to Emma Davis. "I don't want to tell you because you are young, and you shouldn't hear such things. If I didn't think I ought to tell you, I never, never would."