

THE PIT

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At eight o'clock in the inner vestibule of the Auditorium Theatre by the window of the box office, Laura Dearborn, her younger sister Page, and their aunt—Aunt Wess'—were still waiting for the rest of the theatre-party to appear. A great, slow-moving press of men and women in evening dress filled the vestibule from one wall to another. A confused murmur of talk and the shuffling of many feet arose on all sides, while from time to time, when the outside and inside doors of the entrance chanced to be open simultaneously, a sudden draught of air gushed in, damp, glacial, and edged with the penetrating keenness of a Chicago evening at the end of February.

The Italian Grand Opera Company gave one of the most popular pieces of its repertoire on that particular night, and the Cresslers had invited the two sisters and their aunt to share their box with them. It had been arranged that the party should assemble in the Auditorium vestibule at a quarter of eight; but by now the quarter was gone and the Cresslers still failed to arrive.

"I don't see," murmured Laura anxiously for the last time, "what can be keeping them. Are you sure Page that Mrs. Cressler meant here—inside?"