

The moment Peggy has been dreading has arrived. She stands facing the open front door as her mother, Cordelia Gifford, storms past, dressed for battle in a fur stole and covered in an ankle-length dress, under which she is tightly corseted. Her large hat is pinned securely into the mass of hair on her head, the extravagant adornments a rooster in his prime has sacrificed his tail feathers for. She is ready to take on all comers, including her daughter.

Cordelia is a force, striding over to the table, yanking off her gloves and slapping them against the hall stand. She reaches into her handbag and pulls out a folded newspaper and a series of pamphlets.

“Margaret! What do you make of this?” Cordelia glares at Peggy.

“Hello, Mother, it’s lovely to see you, too. My day? Well, I have a lot of things on the go.”

“Don’t be impertinent, Margaret. Look at these headlines. *‘Flippant Flapper a Real Peril, Says Labor Secretary’*, and this one, *‘Is the Younger Generation in Jeopardy?’* She enunciates each word.

“I like this one,” says Peggy. “*‘Mother Not to Blame for Flapper’s Flapping’*”. That must be a comfort?”

“My dear, do not adopt that tone with me. This is real. We had a man in to speak to the Garden Club. He’s a physician. An expert. He talked about young women these days smoking and drinking in public.” Cordelia dabs her neck with her handkerchief and sits. “And it’s not just newspaper headlines. It’s right on our own doorsteps. Mrs. Tate, you remember Mrs. Tate? Her daughter was seen cavorting with a young man and no chaperone. Imagine.”

Peggy coughs quietly into her hand. “Excuse me a moment, Mother. I’ll just get the coffee.” She barely makes it through into the kitchen before doubling over in laughter. *That old relic. Stuck in the good old days. You can’t keep young girls at home and in the kitchen anymore. Well, she never could.* Peggy smirks, thinking of her own escape.

“Margaret? Can you hear what I’m saying? I said that this article says that women are working in offices and factories, earning the salary a family man would need.”

Peggy returns with the coffee tray. “It was all right when ladies worked in factories during the war. Why should they give up their jobs just because the men are home?”

“That’s just ridiculous. Men need those jobs. And each woman needs to find a man with a job to support them. So they can stay at home with their children. I mean really, Margaret. It’s always been that way. Something perhaps you could aspire to.”

*No, it hasn’t always been that way.* “Yes, Mother.”

“And the clothes young girls are wearing. Scandalous. You can see their knees. And short hair. I am so glad you’ve kept yours long, Margaret. A woman’s hair is her crowning glory.”

*Maybe I should cut my hair? Give it one of those sassy bobs? So much handier, a quick flip and you’re out the door instead of hours of braiding and piling and pinning.* “Yes, Mother,” Peggy replies.

“Since women got the vote, the whole country has fallen apart, let me tell you, Margaret.”

*Women have been fighting for the vote since Mother was a girl. Pushing for change it seems like forever, and now, almost overnight, change is pulling us along so fast we can hardly keep up.*

“Margaret. You aren’t paying attention. I was saying...”

*When is she going to realize that the soft, demure Gibson Girl is gone; replaced with a sharp-edged, sassy flapper? All those rules for women? Well, rules are made to be broken, and then some.*

“Women don’t even sound like they used to. I can’t understand a thing they say. Bee’s knees. What does that even mean? It’s ridiculous. All this independence. Young women are not shy to give their opinions anymore, Margaret. I fear for you, getting all caught up in this modern age.”

*That’s true. All this change happening around me, but where do I fit in?*