

CHAPTER 8

THE ENGAGEMENT

When Morris came to the house the next day, Catherine was surprised to learn that the important thing Morris wanted to say was that they should become engaged. Although during the past week, Morris had told her that he loved her, had even put his arm around her and kissed her, Catherine had not expected things to happen so quickly.

Catherine's happiness was disturbed only by her fear that her father would **disapprove** of Morris. She didn't know what she would do then, and she hated the thought of arguing with her father.



Catherine was surprised that Morris wanted to become engaged.

"We must tell my father that we want to marry," Catherine said. "I'll speak to him first, tonight, because I think that daughters know how to persuade their fathers. You must speak to him tomorrow."

"You must be prepared for your father's disapproval," Morris said seriously. "Do you know the first thing he'll say to you? He'll tell you that I want to marry you for your money."

"Then I'll tell him that he's wrong," Catherine answered, "and that other men may be that way, but not you."

Morris gave Catherine a little kiss, then turned away from her and looked out of the window. "I'm sorry you're rich," he said sadly. "It will cause problems with your father."

"If that's the only reason you're sorry, you don't have to worry. Everything will be fine," Catherine said more bravely than she really felt. "When we're married, we'll be very glad that we've got money." Catherine paused for a moment and then asked seriously, "Morris, are you very sure you love me?"

Morris immediately turned away from the window, went to Catherine and kissed her again. "My dearest, do you doubt it? Promise me that you'll still want to marry me even if your father tells you that he **opposes** it. Remember that you're an adult. You don't need your father's permission to get married."

Later that evening, Catherine heard her father come in the front door and go into his study. She sat quietly in the living room for about half an hour, her heart beating fast. Although she was nervous about talking to him, she finally knocked at the study door and went in. Her father was sitting in front of the fire, reading the newspaper and smoking a cigar.

"I've got something to tell you, Father," Catherine said as she sat down.

"I'll be very happy to hear it, my dear," said her father, closing his newspaper. He looked at Catherine, but she was staring silently at the fire. Although he was curious and impatient, he was certain that she wanted to discuss Morris Townsend and decided to let her take her time. Finally, she said, "I'm engaged to be married to Morris Townsend."

This was more than the doctor had expected, but he hid his surprise and smiled at her coldly. Catherine saw the angry expression in his grey eyes and stared at the fire again.

"When did you decide this?" the doctor asked.

"This afternoon when Morris was here," Catherine said.

"He should have spoken to me first," Doctor Sloper said. "That is how it is usually done."