

WILL. Not yet.

TESS. You have no idea, do you?

WILL. I promised I'd look after you. Tess... *(Pause.)* When I said yes to your father, we thought you were coming here to learn. Quietly. But this! It would frighten him. It's politics. It's dangerous. No one's trying to stop you learning, but you insist on walking into a fight. It's only a certificate, you don't need one, it won't help you. Mrs Welsh doesn't have a degree and look at her. Why can't you just be content to –

TESS. Will! Just go.

WILL. What?

TESS. Just go. Please.

He stands for a moment, then leaves.

You can go now, Miss Bott.

MISS BOTT. Are you alright, miss?

TESS. No, I'm not actually.

TESS *cries*. MISS BOTT, *unsure what to do, gives TESS an incompetent pat on the shoulder.*

MISS BOTT. There we are then.

TESS. I'm fine. I'll be fine. Thank you.

MISS BOTT *gives her a smile and then leaves. TESS is left standing on her own. She then goes back to the note from RALPH on her desk, checks the time and makes a resolution.*

Damn this.

She puts her coat on. CAROLYN enters.

CAROLYN. Tess – oh! What are you doing?

TESS. What does it look like?

CAROLYN. What's that horrible smell? *(Realising.)* You're not going out, are you?!

TESS. Of course I'm not. Yes, I am.

CAROLYN. At this time of night? You can't, you'll be thrown out! Can I come?

TESS. He doesn't need to know.

WILL. It's all over the papers! All this business about 'the right to graduate'. You can't hide away –

TESS. I'm not embarrassed to be here, Will, far from it.

WILL. I know that and I'm proud of you, but what happens after this? When you go home. If you lose the chance of a decent match, what'll you do?

TESS. Earn a living.

WILL. Doing what?

TESS. I want to be a scientist!

WILL. But you're a woman!

TESS. Oh, well, thank you very much, I'd almost forgotten. So what should we do, just give up?

Pause. They're both upset. He goes to hug her. They embrace.

MISS BOTT. Visitors must maintain a minimum distance of thirty inches.

WILL. I know that, thank you, Miss Bott! *(Still holding her. To TESS.)* Tess, I don't want you to regret this. The way they talk about you, I hate to hear it.

TESS. Come on, Will, don't say anything.

He won't look at her.

Have you spoken to Father? What have you said? Will!

WILL. I wrote a letter.

TESS. What?

WILL. This place.

TESS. Have you sent it?

WILL. If your reputation is damaged –

TESS. Have you sent it?

Pause.

TESS. No. How do I look?

CAROLYN. Awful. You need some powder. And some proper cologne. Wait here. (*As she exits.*) Tess?

TESS. Yes?

CAROLYN. Are you alright? I saw Will on the stairs.

TESS. Were you getting that cologne?

Beat. CAROLYN *hovers in the doorway.*

CAROLYN. I had a letter from Father today. They're staying in Paris for Christmas.

TESS (*almost ignoring her*). Oh.

Pause.

CAROLYN. What's wrong?

TESS. Nothing. Will. He just doesn't understand this. Any of it.

CAROLYN. Of course he doesn't, he's a man. You know, the Masai say 'A big goat does not stop without reason.'

TESS. Well, that's tremendous, thank you very much. I'll just grow a cassava and spear myself an antelope, shall I?

CAROLYN. Come to Paris with me.

TESS (*taken aback*). No!

CAROLYN. Say yes.

TESS. It's Christmas. I can't be away.

MAEVE arrives in the doorway, unnoticed.

CAROLYN. Would your folks mind?

TESS. Yes!

MAEVE. What are you doing?

CAROLYN. Maeve, you're coming to Paris.

MAEVE. What for?

CAROLYN. Because it's Christmas. And it's Paris. We'd lend you some clothes so you didn't have to wear that ghastly old grey thing.

MAEVE. I'm not coming to Paris.

CAROLYN. Tess is coming.

TESS. I'm not!

CAROLYN. So you can both buy some cologne of your own.

CAROLYN *exits to get the cologne. As she goes:*

Celia! Tess is going out!

CELIA (*off*). Out!

TESS (*getting ready to go*). Yes, out.

MAEVE. What are you doing?

TESS. Research.

CELIA. For what?

TESS (*with a knowing look*). Chemistry.

MAEVE. Is it that boy from the library?

CELIA *arrives in the doorway, followed by CAROLYN.*

CELIA. What boy from the library?

CAROLYN. Tess met a boy in the library and they were passing notes.

TESS. He's not a boy, he's a gentleman.

CELIA. Hardly, encouraging you out without a chaperone.

A knock at the door. Enter MINNIE with a coal scuttle.

MINNIE. Evening, here's your - Lord have mercy! Where are you going?

CAROLYN. Quiet, Minnie. Tess is just leaving.

TESS. How do I get down?

MINNIE. Where?

TESS. Out of the window.

CELIA. You don't.

CAROLYN. We could tie the sheets together.

RALPH. I have no idea. I'm a scientist. *Maybe next time I'll show you an experiment.*

TESS. I should like that.

RALPH. Or I could write you a paper on Kepler.

TESS. How do you know I like Kepler?

RALPH. Your book, in the library.

TESS. So you knew I was an astronomer?

RALPH. I was impressed.

TESS. You don't think it's unfeminine?

RALPH. Anyone who can make head or tail of Kepler deserves a medal in my book. I'm using my copy as a doorstop. I think you being here — ladies studying — well, it's good.

TESS. We don't hear that very often.

He looks at her fondly, then takes a risk.

RALPH. Miss Moffat, may I kiss your hand?

TESS *extends her hand. He takes it and kisses it, pulling her holds on to it for just a second.*

You're getting cold. You mustn't stay out any longer.

TESS. Thank you for your unusual poem, May I say?

RALPH. They say it's the most beautiful love poem ever written.

TESS. I wonder what Shakespeare would say to that?

RALPH. He'd probably pinch it. Maybe you should keep under your hat.

TESS. I'll do just that.

She loosens her hat and takes it off. He pinches it from her head carefully, holding it there for a moment before she puts her hat back on. They look at each other for a moment.

RALPH. So, goodnight, Miss Moffat.

TESS. Goodnight.

She walks back towards the door. He begins to walk away.

Wait! How will I know...?

RALPH. I'll leave you a sign. Look out for it. Goodnight, sweet mistress!

TESS. Goodnight.

She watches him until he is out of sight. Then she has a little moment of elation before she exits.

Scene Ten

The Merits of Moral Science

The WOMEN are in their moral science class with MISS BLAKE, who is full of gusto.

MISS BLAKE. So, you were barred from another lecture, I hear.

CAROLYN. We were turned away at the door.

MISS BLAKE. Again? Well, this is becoming quite a page-turner. You know, it makes me wonder if there's any point teaching you at all. Especially moral science. You're dismissed. *(Packs to go.)*

CAROLYN. What?

MISS BLAKE. Free to go.

TESS. Miss Blake!

CELIA. You can't just leave us!

MISS BLAKE. Why not? The world hurtles forward. What's the point of the arts when technology evidently needs you. Go on. I'm wasting your time. Moral science? Pah! And classics, literature, music — worthless. Nothing compared to science and mathematics. We philosophers and poets have nothing to offer you.

CAROLYN. That's not true, ma'am.

MISS BLAKE. Why not?

CAROLYN. We learn science through the arts, don't we? We study reason and logic when we read Galileo and Copernicus.

MISS BLAKE. You're still arguing that science is the highest form of knowledge.

TESS. But what if it is, ma'am?

MISS BLAKE. Go on.

TESS. Well, science improves our lives in practical ways which the arts cannot.

MISS BLAKE. Well put. Now if that's really your opinion, get out.

TESS. Why?

MISS BLAKE. Unless you can argue my position.

TESS. But what if I don't agree with it?

MISS BLAKE. A fine theorist can argue either side of the debate. Why might the arts be superior to natural science? Give me a contemporary thinker.

CAROLYN. Arnold, ma'am.

MISS BLAKE. Good God, Miss Addison, you've discovered the library!

CAROLYN. Arnold said that science doesn't address the bigger questions. What it means to be human. What intellect is, what beauty is.

TESS. We can't advance as a nation if we live out of history books.

CAROLYN. But literature elevates us beyond science. Science is elementary. What a body is, how it functions. It doesn't address why it exists. Arts asks us more. What does it mean to be? What is truth? What is love?

CELIA. Science is all about seeking truth, but in reality, not in fanciful ideas.

CAROLYN. Love isn't fanciful. It can be felt, experienced.

Voices begin to be raised a little.

CELIA. But it's not real. It's not tangible.

TESS. Lovers are tangible.

MISS BLAKE (*warning her jovially*). Miss Moffat.

TESS. Come on. If your lover had the pox, you'd rather a doctor treat him than an artist drown him with poetry.

CAROLYN. How do you know what my lover wants?

CELIA. Tess is right. Science can save lives.

TESS. And arts can't.

CAROLYN. But if your lover was dying, and there was nothing in the world but machinery – if there was nothing to elate him, if the world was barren of poetry and music, then there'd be little reason to revive him. It's the arts that make his life worth sustaining.

MISS BLAKE. Well said, Miss Addison.

CAROLYN. Well, I don't believe it entirely. I'm still going to be a doctor.

MAEVE (*in a sudden outburst*). We're all missing the point.

Pause.

MISS BLAKE (*surprised*). Miss Sullivan?

MAEVE. All the great scientists, Copernicus, Galileo, they made their discoveries because they had imagination. They saw more than what was in front of them; they thought like artists! They dreamed. And painters, great painters, treat their art like a science. Van Gogh did countless experiments with tone to work out the effects of darkness and light. They're renaissance men. Proper thinkers. That's what progress needs. The fellows out there, building the chapel – they measure the timber so the vaults can bear weight – but without the stories in the stained glass – well, then it would be no more than a barn.

BILLY. Excuse me.

They turn around to see BILLY in the doorway. He's rough-looking, poorly dressed.

I'm here to see my sister.

MINNIE. Sir, if you could just wait there. *(Running off.)* Mrs Welsh, there's a man in the building!

TESS enters.

TESS. A man in the building?

CAROLYN. Yes, a man in the building.

BILLY. I'm here to see my sister.

TESS. Who are you?

CELIA appears.

CELIA. What's going on? *(Seeing BILLY.)* Oh Lord. There's a man in the building!

MRS WELSH appears.

MRS WELSH. A man in the building? Ladies, make yourselves decent. May I help you?

BILLY. I need to speak to Maeve.

MRS WELSH. Ah, Mr Sullivan.

BILLY. Look, lady, just tell me where my sister is.

MRS WELSH. If you could be patient / for a moment.

BILLY. I need to see her now. Maeve!

MRS WELSH. Mr Sullivan, you are welcome at Girton but whilst you are here you must respect our rules so please don't threaten us.

MAEVE appears.

MAEVE. Billy? What are you doing here? *(Pause.)* Billy?

BILLY. Maeve. You look different.

MAEVE. Thanks. You too.

MISS BLAKE. And who said that?

MAEVE. Ma'am?

MISS BLAKE. Which philosopher?

MAEVE *(cautiously)*. No philosopher. It's just what I think.

MISS BLAKE. And that is why I shall not be cancelling my classes. The value of your lessons isn't knowledge. It is the fact that you are learning to think. You're making progress, ladies! I'll tell you what. Leave your books. I defy any of you to doubt in the merits of the arts when you've had a good look at the revolutionary work of Mr van Gogh.

There is a moment of communion between the WOMEN, then they follow MISS BLAKE out, elated.

Scene Eleven

An Arrival

In the foyer. MINNIE is dusting. CAROLYN is passing through.

CAROLYN. Minnie. I've left some purchases in the hall. Can you deal with them?

MINNIE. Yes, miss. What are they?

CAROLYN. Afghan hounds. Two of them. They're absolutely stunning, but they don't do what they're told.

MINNIE. Miss, it's supposed to be no pets.

CAROLYN. That's why you have to hide them.

MINNIE. Where? Under the bed!

CAROLYN. Oh no, they're enormous. Now what have you done with Achilles?

MINNIE. I sold him.

CAROLYN is lost for words, before she realises MINNIE is joking.