

ARLENE
ELZBETH
OPAL

(ELZBETH, also wearing her housecoat, comes down the stairs slowly.)

ARLENE *(cont'd)*. What was that?

ELZBETH *(surprised)*. Oh, you heard that, TOO?

ARLENE. Of course, I thought it was you.

ELZBETH *(vacantly)*. I don't think so.

(At that moment, OPAL DUNN rushes down the stairs, shoving ELZBETH over. OPAL is fully dressed and is carrying a bundle of clothes.)

OPAL. Get out of my way!

(OPAL continues down the stairs only to meet ARLENE.)

ARLENE. Opal, was that you who screamed just now?

OPAL. Probably, I've lost count of how many times I've screamed since I've been IN that place!

ARLENE *(puts her cup on the dining table)*. What scared you this time?

OPAL. You wouldn't believe me, you never believe me now get outta' my way.

(OPAL pushes ARLENE to one side and makes for the front door.)

ARLENE. You're leaving us? Now?

OPAL *(stops and turns)*. Only because I can't go sooner.

ARLENE. Look, if it was Elzbeth again, she's sorry.

ELZBETH *(moves to ARLENE)*. Not yet.

ARLENE. What do you mean, "Not yet"?

ELZBETH. I have to know what I'm sorry for.

OPAL. It doesn't make any difference.

ELZBETH (*logically*). Yes, it does. Otherwise it wouldn't be sincere.

ARLENE. How about a nice cup of sassafras tea, Opal. That has all sorts of soothing properties that calm the nerves, relax the muscles and help you focus.

OPAL. Oh no, Arlene, none of your explanations. EVERY time I tell you something, something that's odd or weird or crazy about this place, you ALWAYS have some sort of explanation. And it always sounds reasonable.

ARLENE. But don't you want to know what's behind all the odd or weird or crazy things around here?

OPAL. That's just IT! That's what lulls people like me into staying.

(*A thunderclap sounds.*)

OPAL (*cont'd*). See? Even the weather is weird out here.

ELZBETH. I think that was thunder.

OPAL. I'll bet you anything it's only out here, way out here in the woods.

ARLENE. But that's because there is a high pressure system moving in and what with all that moisture from the Gulf—

OPAL. See?! See?! ALWAYS the explanations! But not THIS time. I should've known better than to take this job. I heard about you two, you know.

ARLENE. Now, now, if we all can just relax a minute. Take a deep breath.

OPAL. And do what? Don't let it out?

(*ELZBETH moves to OPAL.*)

ELZBETH (*other-worldly*). I bet I can find the problem. Let me feel the bumps on your head. (*Reaches for OPAL's head.*)

OPAL. Get AWAY from me! (*Shies away from ELZBETH.*)