

ON WHITMAN AVENUE
by Maxine Wood

KATE That woman's insufferable. You'll have to put a fence across the entire lot to keep her out.

ED Or take it down. It was a silly idea in the first place.

KATE The hedge can go to wrack and ruin too! This letter came from Walt Land today. I opened it. I knew it was something about them.

ED Oh--thanks.

KATE Aren't you even going to read it?

ED I've seen it. You know that old bachelor who's always coming into the store to buy Lydia Pinkham pills for his lumbago? He's burned up about this.

KATE That old crank!

ED It's his opinion--

KATE I'm not interested in his opinion.

ED No? Maybe you'll be more impressed by Frank Wilson's. After all, he's on the school board.

KATE Ed, don't you realize that letter is a warning?

ED If you mean the real estate company got Lund to get a committee of upright citizens together to send it out, I agree with you.

KATE We've got to give them notice right away, Ed. We can't stall any longer. There's going to be a big meeting.

ED Where'd you hear that?

KATE Bernie Lund was here today and--

ED You should know better than to listen to that kid

KATE But he didn't make it up! He heard it at home.

ED I hear things, too, Kate. From the reactions I'm getting at the store, I think the company's afraid to have a meeting. They're not sure of their ground.

KATE You don't intend to sign that clause, then?

ED Why, Kate, you didn't think for a moment---

KATE Oh, I knew it would be against your principles.

ED Surely it's against yours, too?

KATE I don't care whether you sign it or not! Once they're out of here, we'll never be in a situation like this again!

ED Kate, you know mean that. That's a pretty corrupt statement. It doesn't sound like you.

KATE I'm not just thinking of us Ed. But of them too! It's just not safe for them to live here. How do you know that a bunch of hoodlums won't mob them, or even stone the house!

ED Stone! It's been struck by lightning!

KATE That boy's not well, Ed. The strain might---

ED If he's willing to take the chance---

KATE But, Ed---

ED I don't think anything's going to happen, Kate. Too many people know his story by now. When men

Like Frank Wilson come into the store to congratulate me--

KATE Because a few friends pat you on the back---

ED No, casual customers, too....I wish you would spend an afternoon at the store just listening in---

KATE At your cigarette counter! No, thank you. I've heard all I want to hear! People whispering and snickering behind our backs. Belle Hall snubs me in my own yard!

ED Tell that ladybug to fly away South.

KATE Don't toss her off like that. She's knifing us in the back. She's telling everyone that you're letting the Bennetts live here so you can get some free work out of the old man.

ED No one will believe that lie.

KATE You can never catch up with a lie. I told him, Ed, that I didn't want him working around the grounds.

ED Kate, that was like cutting off his right arm.

KATE I didn't do it to be mean. I was thinking of you. I just can't bear to have people saying things about you.

ED My reputation's sturdy enough to withstand a few pinpricks.

KATE But you're so easy-going, Ed! Your first responsibility should be to yourself. If you don't watch out for yourself, nobody else will!

ED This is for ourselves, Kate. For once let's somehow find the courage to stand up for what we know is right.

KATE Oh, Ed--why do you always feel that way!

ED You did the other night. You wouldn't throw that family out in the street. You voted to have them stay here.

KATE Only for a month. Until they found a place. But you haven't even given them notice, Ed. You could tell them in a nice way---

ED How? I don't know a nice way of saying you can fight for your country, but you can't live in it. I know you're scared, Kate. I am, too.

KATE You admit that!

ED Only to you. We've stood on the sidelines long enough shaking our heads. For once, let's do more than that. You'll try, Kate?

KATE I've been trying haven't I?...The past few days have been a century. When Johnnie comes, tell him I want to see him right away.