

MAMA. (*Coming over now, taking over now.*) What are you doing?

JESSIE. The barrel has to be clean, Mama. Old powder, dust gets in it . . .

MAMA. What for?

JESSIE. I told you.

MAMA. (*Reaching for the gun.*) And I told you, we don't get criminals out here.

JESSIE. (*Quickly pulling it to her.*) And I told you . . .
(*Then trying to be calm.*) The gun is for me.

MAMA. Well you can have it if you want. When I die, you'll get it all anyway.

JESSIE. I'm going to kill myself, Mama.

MAMA. (*Returning to the sofa.*) Very funny. Very funny.

JESSIE. I am.

MAMA. (*Quickly, irritated.*) You are not! Don't even say such a thing, Jessie.

JESSIE. How would you know if I didn't say it? You want it to be a surprise? You're lying there in your bed or maybe you're just brushing your teeth and you hear this . . . noise down the hall?

MAMA. Kill yourself.

JESSIE. Shoot myself. In a couple of hours.

MAMA. It must be time for your medicine.

JESSIE. Took it already.

MAMA. Then what's the matter with you?

JESSIE. Not a thing. Feel fine.

MAMA. You feel fine. You're just going to kill yourself.

JESSIE. Waited until I felt good enough, in fact.

MAMA. Don't make jokes, Jessie. I'm too old for jokes.

JESSIE. It's not a joke, Mama. (*Mama watches for a moment in silence.*)

MAMA. That gun's no good, you know. He broke it right before he died. He dropped it in the mud one day.

JESSIE. Seems O.K. (*Jessie spins the chamber, cocks the pistol and pulls the trigger. The gun is not yet loaded, so all we hear is the click, but it will definitely work. It's also obvious that Jessie knows her way around a gun. Mama cannot speak.*) I had Cecil's all ready in there, just in case I couldn't find this one, but I'd rather use Daddy's.

MAMA. Those bullets are at least 15 years old.

JESSIE. (*Pulls out another box.*) These are from last week.

MAMA. Where did you get those?

JESSIE. Feed store. Dawson told me about.

MAMA. Dawson!

JESSIE. I told him I was worried about prowlers. He said he thought it was a good idea. He told me what kind to ask for.

MAMA. If he had any idea . . .

JESSIE. He took it as a compliment. He thought I might be

