

Melissa 'Missy' Larkin is an exceptional student. Three months ago she graduated first in her class from Port Jefferson High and won a Presidential scholarship to St. John's, where she is enrolled for the fall semester, which begins in a week. But there is a snag.

Over the summer Missy worked as a hostess at the Nissequogue Country Club, where her father is chairman of the House Committee. Early in the summer, she met Paulo, a dishwasher from Mexico. At first, Missy was wary of Paulo, but as they strolled the docks at Port Jefferson after work listening to the boats creaking in the water, she discovered that he is a gentle man with high principles who hopes to become a permanent resident and start his own business some day. By the end of June Missy and Paulo were deeply in love.

Paulo lives with his older brother and cousin. They make their living following the sun, coming north in the summer, going south in the winter. Paulo has a job lined up in September as a deckhand on a tourist boat out of Key West, and he wants Missy to come with him.

Missy, who is the Larkins' only child, did not tell her family about Paulo until ten days ago. At first, her parents were willing to give Paulo a chance; but when they found out that he wants Missy to go with him to Florida, they went ballistic. "You absolutely cannot give up a full-tuition scholarship at St. John's to live with a vagrant dishwasher on a fishing boat," her father told her. "If you go with him, you can expect no help from us—and don't expect to come back home, ever." Her mother is more understanding, but equally determined to do everything she can to break up the relationship. "If he loves you, he will wait for you," she told Missy. "but don't count on him coming back."

Missy is torn. She loves Paulo deeply and thinks she can help him realize his dreams. Intellectually she knows that she should go to St. John's and get her degree; but in her heart she longs for freedom and adventure. She feels she is ready to grow up.

Assuming that Missy and Paulo truly love one another, can anything be more important to them than being together? Is caring more important than rational calculation of consequences?

Do you think it is right for Paulo to ask Missy to go with him? Why or why not?

Do you think it would be fair for Mr. Larkin to disinherit his daughter if she goes with Paulo? What does she deserve from her parents? What do they deserve from her?

How can Missy choose between what her head tells her to do and what her heart tells her? In Missy's case is it better to go where love leads or to live the conventional life planned for her by her parents? Why do you think so?