

MRS. MOREHEAD: Hello, child. ~~'Afternoon, Jane.~~

JANE: ~~'Afternoon, Mrs. Moorhead. (Exits to bedroom.)~~

MARY: Mother, dear! (She walks slowly to dressing table.)

MRS. MOREHEAD: (Cheerfully.) Well, what's wrong? (Sits.)

MARY: (Turning.) How did you know something's wrong?

MRS. MOREHEAD: Your voice on the phone. Is it Stephen?

MARY: How did you know?

MRS. MOREHEAD: You sent for *Mother*. So it must be. (A pause.)

MARY: I don't know how to begin, Mother.

MRS. MOREHEAD: (Delighted to find that her instincts were correct.) It's a woman! Who is she?

MARY: Her name is Crystal Allen. She's – she's a salesgirl at Saks'.

(Mrs. Moorehead's cheerful and practical manner discourages tears, so she begins to cream and tonic her face instead.)

MRS. MOREHEAD: She's young and pretty, I suppose.

MARY: Well, yes. (Defensively.) But common.

MRS. MOREHEAD: (Soothingly.) Of course – Stephen told you?

MARY: No. I—I found out—this afternoon.

MRS. MOREHEAD: How far has it gone?

MARY: He's known her about three months.

MRS. MOREHEAD: Does Stephen know you know?

MARY: (Shaking her head.) I—I wanted to speak to you first. (The tears come anyway.) Oh, Mother dear, what am I going to say to him?

MRS. MOREHEAD: Nothing.

MARY: *Nothing?*

MRS. MOREHEAD: My dear, I felt the same way twenty years ago.

MARY: Not Father?

MRS. MOREHEAD: Mary, in many ways your father was an exceptional mad. (Philosophically.) That, unfortunately, was not one of them.

MARY: Did you say nothing?

MRS. MOREHEAD: Nothing. I had a wise mother, too. Listen, dear, this is not a new story. It comes to most wives.

MARY: But Stephen—

MRS. MOREHEAD: Stephen is a man. He's been married twelve years—

MARY: You mean, he's tired of me!

MRS. MOREHEAD: Stop crying. You'll make your nose red.

MARY: I'm not crying. (Patting tonic on her face.) This stuff stings.

MRS. MOREHEAD: (Going to her.) Stephen's tired of himself. Tired of feeling the same things in himself year after year. Time comes when every man's got to feel something new—when he's got to feel young again, just because he's growing old. Women are just the same. But when we get that way we change our hairdress. Or get a new cook. Or redecorate the house from stem to stern. But a man can't do over his office, or fire his secretary. Not even change the style of his hair. And the urge usually hits him hardest just when he's beginning to lose his hair. No, dear, a man has only one escape from his old self: to see a different self—in the mirror of some woman's eyes.

MARY: But, Mother—

MRS. MOREHEAD: This girl probably means no more to him than that new dress means to you.

MARY: But, Mother—

MRS. MOREHEAD: "But, Mother, but Mother!" He's not giving anything to her that belongs to you, or you would have felt that yourself long ago.

MARY: (Bewildered.) Oh, I always thought I would. I love him so much.

MRS. MOREHEAD: And he loves you, baby. (Drawing Mary beside her on the chaise-longue.) Now listen to me. Go away somewhere for a month or two. There's nothing like a good dose of another woman to make a man appreciate his wife. Mother knows!

MARY: But there's never been a lie between us before.

MRS. MOREHEAD: You mean, there's never been a *silence* between you before. Well, it's about time. Keeping still, when you ache to talk, is about the only sacrifice spoiled women like us ever have to make.

MARY: But I'd forgive him—

MRS. MOREHEAD: Forgive him? (Impatiently.) For what? For being a man? Accusw him, and you'll never get a chance to forgive him. He'd have to justify himself—

MARY: How can he!

MRS. MOREHEAD: (Sighing.) He can't and he can. Don't make him try. Either way, you'd lose him. And remember, dear, it's being together at the end that really matters. (Rising.) One more piece of motherly advice: Don't confide in your girl friends!

MARY: I think they all know.

MRS. MOREHEAD: They think you don't? (Mary nods.) Leave it that way. If you let them advise you, they'll see to it, in the name of friendship, that you lose you're husband and your home. I'm an old woman, dear, and I know my sex. (Moving to door.) I'm going right down this minute and get our tickets.

MARY: Our—tickets?

MRS. MOREHEAD: You're taking me to Bermuda, dear. My throat's been awfully bad. I haven't wanted to worry you, but my doctor says—

MARY: Oh, Mother darling! Thank you!

MRS. MOREHEAD: Don't thank me, dear. It's rather—nice to have you need Mother again. (Exits. Phone rings. Mary answers it.)

MARY: Yes?—Oh, Stephen—Yes, dear?—(Distressed.) Oh, Stephen! Oh, no—I'm not angry. It's—it's just that I wanted to see the play. Yes, I can get Mother to go with me... Stephen, will you be very—late? (It's a bit of a struggle, but she manages a cheerful voice.) Oh, it's—all right. Have a good time. Of course, I know it's just business—No, dear—I won't wait up—Stephen. I love—(A click. The other end has hung up. Jane enters. Mary turns her back. Her face would belie the calmness of her voice.) Jane—The children and I will be having dinner alone—