LOVE GOES PAST

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URSULA PARROTT

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CONTENTS

EMMA 1

ENTR' ACTE 83

ANN 109

HILARY 177

ENTR' ACTE 213

EMMA 221

✶ ✶

I EMMA

THAT time when Mr. Martin walked out and closed the door behind him was not much different from so many other times. I did not pay much attention at first. I was in the next room packing Miss Janice's clothes for Atlantic City. Her new show was having its tryout there. Of course, I was sorry when I heard them begin to quarrel because I knew he would probably walk out, and slam the door, and not come back for two or three days. Then Miss Janice would go about all white and strained looking, drinking too much cognac probably, until he did come back. She would try not to telephone him. After a while, she would telephone him. He would be disagreeable—if she managed to reach him at all. Then she would feel worse than ever. It had happened so often—but, just the same, it was too bad it had to happen now, with her new show opening, when she ought not to be worried about Mr. Martin.

I went on counting pairs of stockings and lingerie to pack. Twelve pairs of stockings, because we would be gone six days. Her stage clothes were already packed and gone.

When I started to pack her handkerchiefs, I remembered I must tell her to order some new ones. She never could keep enough handkerchiefs or gloves, because she laid them down places, and forgot them. Mr. Martin had brought her some beautiful handkerchiefs from Spain, and they were mostly lost now.

In the next room, the quarrel was going on as usual. They had got from all the long general words like *possessiveness* and *frustration*, and *distortion of personality*, to where he was saying, "I'll never marry you. I won't be attached to the tail of your comet." And she was answering—so gently—in that little girl's voice her audiences are always crazy about, "My dear, my dear, I'm not begging you to marry me. I'm just asking you to come to Atlantic City with me."

So, I thought, that's what it started about. He ought to go—she is always much steadier when she knows he is out front. But he won't go now—they have begun to quarrel, that's sure.

He said, “I have an engagement.”

She said, and her voice was bitter now, “That little inconsequential blonde. What can she give you that I can’t.”

He said, “Never, never, never will you recognize a man’s need for variety.”

She said, “You don’t need variety. You just want it.”

He said, “Well, I’ll have it if I want it. You don’t own me, thank God. Thank God, I was not fool enough to marry you. You’re so possessive now, that you would be ruinous if you had the adventitious aid of status to help you enclose me.”

I thought, “From listening to those two, I know more long words than any girl in Harlem, probably.” And I thought, “I hope she doesn’t cry. It’s so hard for her to cry, she is sick for days afterward.”

She was saying, “This is so undignified. Martin, why do you make me behave so badly? Why do you behave so to me?”

He said, mocking her, “Why do you treat me like this? You talk like all the cliches in your worst plays put together . . . I’m tired. I’m through. Why don’t you let me go? I’ve been wanting to go for a long time. You know it. Yet you hang on—and hang on . . . Have you no spirit at all?”

She said, and her voice sounded tired, “I cannot let you go like this. I can’t live without you.” Then she laughed a little. “Martin, darling—you do make me talk like a character in a bad melodrama.”

He said, “Well, you’re going to have to live without me.”

I knew how their lines would go after that. They always went the same way.

“Martin, don’t you give a damn about me any more, really?”

“Janice, damn it, I love you. But I’ll detest you if we keep this up. I’ve got to be free. We are absolutely unsuited.”

Then she always said, “What shall I do?”

I listened for the next line, because it was not always the same. Sometimes he came across the room and stroked her hair and said, “Dearest, don’t look so broken. Lord, you’re lovely. Give me a small kiss and I’ll go and play squash and come back and take you to dinner.” Then, if he said that, they would both laugh, and everything would be all right until the next time.

But sometimes he said, “Get yourself a new lover who is docile. With your

looks and your fame, it would not be hard to find one." If he said that, she always lost her temper, and it went on until he slammed the door on his way out.

This time he said, "Get yourself a new lover," and I thought, "Oh dear, she'll give bad performances in Atlantic City. Why hasn't Mr. Martin any common-sense?"

But she said, as usual, "That's dreadful of you—dreadful. You know I never have had a lover but you."

He said, as usual, "If you had other lovers—you might know more about men. You might not put me through such hell about nothing. Suppose I do take a charming woman to dinner—suppose I take her to bed afterward. What of it? Men are like that." The next lines always were, "I don't believe all men are like you." And, "My dear Janice, why don't you experiment, and find out?" And, "Martin, I hate you."

Then, this time, he said something different. His voice was tired, too, but it got gentle, suddenly. He said, "Janice, I don't blame you sometimes, if you do hate me. We are destroying each other. But my mind's made up. We shall have to end it now."

(That last, he had said before, often, of course.)

It was interesting—except that I am so fond of Miss Janice, I get very mad with Mr. Martin for making her unhappy—to listen to the way her voice always softened when his did. She said, "Martin, I know I'm difficult . . . I know I often exasperate you. I'm sorry, I'll try not to, any more."

He said then, "That's all right, Janice. Only there is not going to be any more." He stopped talking for a minute, then went on. "I don't care whether I keep my dinner engagement with the lady you characterize as an inconsequential little blonde. She is inconsequential. You are right. She is only significant in that she illustrates the unimportance of most of the things we quarrel about recently. We quarrel about nearly everything . . . because of the way we have come . . . I suppose." He was talking as if he were talking to himself, and she sat very quiet, listening to him. I could not hear her move at all, and she had been walking up and down. He went on, "It isn't your fault, altogether, Janice . . . nor mine. We just ought to let each other alone."

She said, "Perhaps you are right. Don't come to Atlantic City then. Have a week's rest from me." You could hear her trying to make her voice gay. "And have a lovely time with all the inconsequential blondes, darling. I promise to be good. I shan't ask you a single embarrassing question about them, when I

come back to town. Really." She managed to laugh, but the way she laughed in the theatre, not the way she laughed when she was happy at home.

I was all finished with her packing, and I laid out the dress and coat she would wear on the train. I thought, "If they make peace now, she will be all right for the opening—and he will come down before she gets jumpy. He never has managed to stay away a week, except that time he went abroad." I stopped thinking about the time he went abroad. It had been awful, until he cabled, and started sending presents home, like the Spanish handkerchiefs.

Then, I heard him say again, "My mind's made up. Sorry, Janice. I shall sail with Leland Wednesday."

I never heard her voice quite like that before. She said, "With Leland? On that crazy expedition? They plan to be gone years. Oh, Martin, no, no, no. Don't punish me like that. I haven't behaved as badly as that. You know I haven't."

He said, "I'm not punishing you, Janice, try to understand. But you will never understand, I suppose."

Then he must have kissed her and gone away, suddenly. I would have gone to get him his coat and hat, only I did not think he was going just then. They both sounded so calm, and usually they were not calm at all at the moment he walked out. However, he went. I heard the door close, and I thought, "Now she will be just crazy until he telephones her Tuesday and says he is not sailing. It is a good thing they say this show is a hit in itself, because she could never put it across, the way she will be feeling, if it weren't any good."

I went through the studio without looking at her and into the kitchen to get her a double brandy. I knew she would want it. The first year she and he began to quarrel, she used to cry dreadfully when he walked out. Then I used to bring her a handkerchief, and go out and pretend to be busy in the kitchen, because she did not like to be seen crying. But the last year or two she almost never cried any more. She just asked for a highball. Lately, she had just asked for cognac.

She was sitting very quiet in the tall chair in front of the fireplace when I brought in the cognac. I didn't say anything, I just put it on the table beside her. She said, "Thank you, Emma." The studio was not cheerful. It was getting dark outside and it was one of those November afternoons when New York can look very sad. I turned on two lamps, and started to light the fire. She did not speak, or even move her head to look at me. When I stood up after lighting the fire, I said, "You just sit there and rest, Miss Janice. Maybe, when the fire gets nice and warm, you will get sleepy. You don't have to start dressing for

the train for an hour. You want to rest. They may make you rehearse tonight."

She just sat staring in front of her. I went on talking, because it did her no good to sit staring at something she remembered. I said, "Here is a cigarette." She took it from me and I lighted it for her. I said then, "You don't want to worry about anything, Miss Janice. Mr. Martin—he'll be down to see you the second night if not the first night. He always is."

She said, "This time I doubt it."

She was smoking her cigarette in little jerky puffs as if she were in a hurry to finish it.

I said, "It will be all right. It always is."

She said, smiling at me, "I couldn't get along without you, Emma."

"You won't ever have to," I said. I went to the kitchen because I knew she wanted to be by herself. But at the studio door, I turned back to look at her. She had forgotten me, she was staring in front of her again. She was wearing one of those new kind of dresses ladies wear at home—hostess gowns I think they call them. It was really pajamas but it looked like a dress. It was wine-colored velvet with long loose sleeves and a silver girdle. The color was lovely when the firelight shone on it. She had thrown away her cigarette, and was sitting with her hands clasped. She was completely still. Even her face was still. I stood looking at her. She was so beautiful, for all she was white and unhappy looking. She wore her hair down at home, because though she had let it grow, it was not very long yet. It hung dark and shining about her face.

Suddenly, as I watched her sitting there so quiet, I wanted to cry. I thought, for no reason, that it was a long time since I started working for Miss Janice—and that she did not look any more very much like the young girl she was when I first knew her. I told myself not to be silly, that she was still young. She was only twenty-five. I told myself I had nothing to cry about—that I had everything I hoped to get, when I came up from Georgia, that Miss Janice was beautiful and famous and rich, that there was nothing to cry about at all. But still I wanted to cry.

I went out into the kitchen and poured myself a drink of cognac. Miss Janice always told me to have a drink whenever I was tired, or the weather was cold, or whenever she remembered that I might want one.

I wanted one then. Because it seemed to me, looking at her, that New York was not a wonderful city, but terrible, and that sitting in her fine apartment, Miss Janice had nothing at all—not one of the things she had hoped to find, when New York was new to us both. Her name was Jane, then, when I met

her, when I came up from Georgia.

When I came up from Georgia, I was ambitious. I did not want to work in the fields. I wanted to see the world. So I saved my money, and came to Harlem, and got part-time jobs, cleaning, at fifty cents an hour, in Greenwich Village.

Miss Janice, only she was Miss Jane then, was one of the first ladies I worked for. She had a little apartment on Eleventh Street. She was just out of school, and on the stage. I liked her from the first day I met her. That happened to be the day she met Mr. Martin.

I was cleaning the third floor rear of 958 West Eleventh Street, when she knocked at the door and stood there, a slim tall dark-haired girl with blue eyes that were too big for her face. She wanted to know whether I had any time free—she was having guests to tea that afternoon, and she could not put the apartment in order herself, because she had to go to a rehearsal at the theatre. I said, I had time free.

She lived on the third floor front—one of those apartments with two wicker armchairs and a tea table and a couch with a pretty cover and a bath and a kitchen in the wall. She was poor. I knew that when she began telling me about arrangements for the tea party. She was worried, because she had only four teacups and she expected five people. She said she would not have any tea herself. But I told her not to worry. I had a good grey percale uniform on and a clean apron. I always dressed up, in case some day someone saw me looking nice and neat, and thought I would make a good lady's maid. I told her I would take care of everything. My cousin worked in good houses at home, and had told me how to serve at a tea party. I borrowed a tea set that had six cups from the third floor rear. The man that lived there never came home before eight at night, and I knew I could wash it and put it back. The fourth floor front had ordered groceries, so I took a few leaves of lettuce and a dab of mayonnaise. I got some cream cheese on the ground floor, where I also did cleaning. I made her some nice thin sandwiches (she had fancy cakes herself) and served tea properly.

The cousin for whom she was having the tea brought Mr. Martin, and the girl who was Miss Janice's room-mate at college brought a man, but the tea party was just Miss Janice and Mr. Martin, after they had talked to each other three minutes. The other people talked about the football season, and I passed sandwiches. Miss Janice was so pleased that everything went beautifully.

When I saw Mr. Martin come in, I said to myself, "There's a handsome man and a strange one." He was handsome. He was big and blonde and clean-

looking. He looked hard, when his face was still, but when he smiled, he did not look hard or soft, he just looked gay.

He and she began to talk about men and women and life. Except that they used longer words, I have heard the same conversations in Harlem. He talked (I have learned the long words since) of the incapacity of women to understand a man's necessity to live under an unenclosed system—that women, even the best of women—wanted a man to live in a tight closed system, to shuttle between an individual woman and his work. And so on.

I make it sound dull, but he did not. He made it sound as if it were a man's duty to leave one woman after another, so that he might, alone, or with such other women as time and his luck provided, explore strange places . . . I have heard it all in Harlem. The boys who want to go out dancing, and dance well, and spend plenty of money in the dance halls, but explain they can't marry or settle down and be steady, because they have to see the world. Mostly they end up as Pullman porters, and see all the railroad yards in the United States. Maybe different railroad yards are more exciting than the same woman. I wouldn't know . . . though Miss Janice and I have seen plenty of railroad yards in our time.

That day, after her tea party, she came out to pay me and said, "Emma, you served beautifully. It was a nice party, wasn't it?" Her cheeks were all bright pink, like a little girl's and she stood on the toes of her scuffed slippers, as if it were just a bother, and unnecessary, to stand on the ground at all.

I said, "That was a very handsome man your cousin brought to see you, Miss Jane."

She said, "Yes, wasn't he a pleasant person?" I knew she was going to dinner with him the next night. I heard him ask her. Then she said, "New York's so exciting. I've only been here two months. How long have you been here, Emma?" I said I was in New York only two months, myself.

She asked me to come and clean for her, an hour a day, and she said, "Some day when I'm married and rich, I'll dress you up in grey satin uniforms, and have you for a personal maid, Emma. We'll give tea parties to thirty-six people, and serve them from Royal Worcester—Wedgewood—no, there's a pattern of Lenox china I am crazy about. We'll have that."

It came out that way. I have worn grey satin uniforms for years now. Miss Janice bought dozens of tea cups, in the Lenox pattern she liked, after the first show in which they starred her. We gave a tea for thirty-six, and used the cups, I remember, just before she went to Hollywood on her first picture contract.

Sitting there in the kitchen sipping cognac slowly, because the flavor was so good it was a shame to drink it fast—I remembered all those things.

I looked at the kitchen clock. It would be more than half an hour before I had to dress Miss Janice for her train. I wished it were already time to dress her. I had nothing at all to do, and the longer I sat thinking about her, the sorrier I felt for her. And for Mr. Martin, too—though I seldom felt sorry for him. Still, he did love her, in his funny way. There was no doubt about that, from the first week they knew each other.

I know so much about him. I know more about him than his family does, or the other officers in the bank where he worked, or the men at his club, probably. A maid passes through the room, not thought of quite as a person—thought of more as a piece of furniture that happens to be able to walk about. It isn't necessary to stop a conversation, especially after a while, when one is used to having her pass through. Yet she hears and thinks and remembers. Over years I have heard and thought and remembered so many things about his life and hers.

He fell in love with her, that first Spring that they knew each other. Though he did not want to fall seriously in love with her or with any woman. Because of his ideas. He was an anthropologist (it was two years before I understood what that was) who happened to be an officer of a bank. He was trained as an anthropologist because that was what he wanted to be.

For some reason, searching out this history of the race seemed to be exciting. I think it was because he would have to go to many different places in the search for buried civilizations. I may be wrong. The buried civilizations may have meant something in themselves. He was an officer of a bank, because his father had been an officer of the same bank—also, because his father was dead, and his mother, with less money than she was used to having, needed help from Mr. Martin. So he postponed doing anything about the buried civilizations until his mother's financial affairs were in a better state. He was good to his mother. Maybe, because she made him be so good to her, he was so determined not to be further tied by having to be good to any other woman in his life.

He was the most restless man I ever saw. He always wanted to be in the place or with the people that he was to be in or with tomorrow. I heard him say to Miss Janice's cousin, once, "The ideal relationship between a man and a woman lasts no more than three months—the first month for attainment, the second for fulfillment, and the third, for a decent modulation to separation."

Nevertheless, he loved her for five years or forever, perhaps. She loved

him forever, certainly. The trouble was that they meant different things when they said, “Love.” He meant that he found her charming; that when he wanted to spend time with a woman he preferred her to any other woman. She meant that he was the center of her life. From the week she met him, the theatre was just a place where she filled in time she could not spend with him. She wanted to marry him. They both talked about marrying, at first. As she understood it, he wanted to be free of women except her. She worked in the theatre until he should have a little more money, until he had less responsibility about his mother, then she would marry him, and spend the rest of her life with him. That was the way it began and on that misunderstanding they had a perfect year. At least, it was nearly perfect. The thing that kept it from being completely so, was that he insisted upon keeping her a separate part of his life. He had many engagements with children of his mother’s friends. He never realized how hurt she was to know that he did not want her to meet these people. He explained quite simply that his mother was conservative—that she would completely disapprove of his friendship with an unknown young actress, and that (his favorite expression about so many things), “It was stupid, but things are like that.”

He gave her his spare moments and tried to have a great many of them.

For a long time, they never stayed together. I think that at the beginning he had scruples, because he was not a bad young man. He understood, too, that she was very innocent. But after some months, when it did become clear to both of them that their marriage must be very long delayed, if it occurred at all, they decided to have what they could. That was in the Springtime. The first Springtime they shared. They drove upstate one week-end and came back looking as if they had been to Heaven, and talking about apple blossoms. They talked about the house, too. That was the first time I heard about the house. They had found a little cottage near a river, and as nearly as I could make out, the cottage was all covered with apple blossoms. It did have a beautiful orchard. I saw it afterward.

Right after that week-end, Mr. Martin had to go to London for four weeks on banking business. His mother sailed with him. So, because his mother didn’t know about Miss Janice, Miss Janice couldn’t go to see him off. She minded that, terribly.

Her show closed the week after he sailed. She was offered a job in another one. She was so pretty and graceful, it was always easy for her to take jobs in choruses, but, at the same time, a manager who had listened to her voice, offered her a small part in a comedy.

At first, she didn’t even want to try out for it. She was used to chorus work,

it payed her enough money while she was waiting for Mr. Martin to marry her, and she did not see any reason now for trying anything different. But the manager persuaded her to try it. He came down to the house one day to talk about it. We served tea in the same old set with four cups.

I think what convinced her was his belief that she might go very far. To her, that meant that she might become an important enough actress for Mr. Martin's mother to become interested in meeting her. That's all it meant. So she accepted and went into rehearsal.

The manager, Mr. Hilary, took a great deal of trouble about her. I thought from the first, he was in love with her, but she never noticed that he was a man who thought she was beautiful. Sometimes, she complained a little that he stayed too long talking about the modern theatre when she wanted to write letters to Mr. Martin.

Mr. Martin came back the week her play opened. She got notices in the newspapers and two of them printed her picture. That amused him at first. He teased her about growing famous. He was pleased that she could act. He even took her to one or two parties with certain of his friends she had not met before.

He and Mr. Hilary met, of course. They were very polite. I don't think they liked each other at all. Mr. Hilary tried to explain to Mr. Martin that Miss Janice had extraordinary talent. (Mr. Hilary had already told her to change her name to Janice. He said Janice would look more romantic in lights. She laughed at that, I remember, and said it didn't seem very important any more to have her name in lights.) Mr. Martin just said that Jane was a lovely child, but as for having great talent, that was absurd. He said, "No one as pretty as she is, needs talent." And she said, "If you're content with me, I'm not much worried as to the degree of my talent."

That all sounded pretty, but I knew then that if she ever became better known in New York than he was, he would not like it at all.

She did not stay in that first play long. Mr. Hilary had arranged the contract so that she could leave. He got her a much more important part, but she had to go out of town for try-outs. It was Autumn and Mr. Martin had planned a lot of things they would do together. He was annoyed when she had to pack up and go. I packed for her. That was the first time I packed for her. She took me along. She could not afford to pay me very much, but I wanted to be a personal maid even at moderate wages. We went to Boston to open. She got beautiful notices. Mr. Hilary gave her a party after the first night. The next day I asked her if she would buy me a grey satin uniform and she did.

Mr. Martin came up to see the show the second night and he said he would come to Philadelphia when we went there, but he did not come to Philadelphia. She wanted to go up to New York for a half day to see him, but of course, they were fixing the second act and she was rehearsing whenever she was not playing. I had never been on the road with a show before, and they went on fixing the second act and usually the third and first, too, so they did not meet again until the New York opening.

That week, one of her friends in the theatre told her that Mr. Martin had been seen everywhere with another young actress whom they both knew. New York is funny like that. I always used to think people would be too busy to gossip the way they do in Georgia, but they just gossip more because more things happen in New York than in Georgia.

Miss Janice and Mr. Martin had their first quarrel about that young actress whose name I forget. She asked him, simply, if he had fallen in love with someone else while she was out of town. He made a long speech about possessiveness of woman, but they made peace for that time, and he did not see the other actress any more, as far as I knew.

She was busy all that year and she began to be very much in demand, but she gave up all the time she could get free, to him. I don't think he ever realized that she refused more invitations to parties than he ever had, in order to be with him whenever he wanted her. I make him sound very selfish, but I do not think he was altogether selfish. He just didn't know what he wanted because he wanted so many different kinds of things. He hated the banking business. When he hated the banking business most, he loved Miss Janice most, and said and meant, probably, that very soon now, when he had just a little more money, they would marry and live simply in the country and "get away from all this."

Then, at other times, he did not want to live in the country at all. He wanted to go to dig up buried civilizations. He talked then about the necessity of a man to spend the important part of his life with other men. And he talked of how a woman held a man back. Poor Mr. Martin. He liked women so much and he often wished he didn't like them at all. I say "women" because after the first year there were always other women than Miss Janice. He told her the truth about them—not their names and addresses, but the fact that they existed. He explained "the necessity of a man to escape the feeling of enclosure due to prolonged associations with any particular woman."

At first, Miss Janice supposed that he would not love anybody but her. Later, she comforted herself with the belief that, at least, he loved her best. He did love her best. She always came back to him, after a day or two or three.

Well, they went on like that. People got used to them. Sometimes, people thought they were even funny. I got used to them, myself. They would be terribly happy for a little while and then they would quarrel; then they would make peace; then it would begin all over again.

All the while, Miss Janice was getting more and more famous. After a very little while, she had money enough for all the tea-sets she would ever want. By the time we came back from Hollywood, she had money enough to buy the cottage with the apple blossoms, upstate.

Mr. Martin had banking business that took him to the Coast during the time we were out there, which was a good thing. If he had not been able to go, I'm sure she would never have been able to be a success in pictures. They quarreled a great deal on the Coast because out there, he wasn't very important at all and she was quite important. That was when I began to hear the expression about "the tail of her comet." But when they weren't quarreling, they had a beautiful time, swimming and dancing.

Soon after Miss Janice came back, Mr. Martin's mother died. Somewhere between Mr. Martin and Miss Janice the idea had grown up that when his mother, who had been ill a long time, died, they would be married. I don't know whether he ever said that exactly. I don't think so, because he was a man who kept what he called "explicit commitments." I suppose the idea had grown because they had decided that while his mother lived, they could not marry. It seems that his mother would not be reconciled to having her only son marry an actress, no matter how important the actress got to be.

But, at the time of his mother's death, Miss Janice was under contract for the run of a new play and could not take time off to get married. Besides, neither of them felt that they should get married instantly, at his mother's death. Besides, I don't know, there were a great many reasons. By now, she knew definitely that he did not really want to marry her at all, though she still hoped he might some day, when he was older. They had one discussion about it. That was their most bitter quarrel. Afterward, he went off to Spain where a friend of his was hunting about in some caves for some skulls. There were no skulls there, so he soon came back. Meanwhile, she was ill, and had to take two weeks' leave of absence from the show.

Mr. Hilary was wonderful when she was ill. Came down every day and told her gay stories until he made her laugh. He never mentioned Mr. Martin at all. He just insisted on talking to her about the theatre, and her work, and her future. He made her believe in herself by then. Once, I remember he said to her, "A career like yours may not be first prize for a woman, my dear. I doubt

that it is. But it's not a bad second prize—not a bad second prize, at all." She laughed at that.

Then she was better. As soon as she knew that Mr. Martin was soon coming home she hurried the remodeling of the house upstate. It was finished and furnished by the week-end he arrived. They went up there on Sunday. The apple trees were in bloom. She was as pleased about that as if she had arranged it for him. I was there that day. I had not seen her so gay, so young looking in a year. I knew she hoped, when he saw the house, for they had talked of living there, he might again want to marry her. But he did not say anything about it. And after that day, she did not say anything about it, either.

He spent a great many week-ends there through that Spring and Summer. She always invited people she thought would amuse Mr. Martin. We all drove up Sunday morning, and came back Monday night in time for the show. He was quite busy. I thought of course that if he didn't marry her, he would go right away again, on a digging expedition. But he did not do either. He had things to settle about his estate. Besides, he found New York amusing, sometimes. I knew by now, and I'm sure Miss Janice knew, that he would find her, New York, even the banking business, expeditions, any people he knew, anything he did, any place he was, amusing only till it bored him, and then boring only until his mood changed, and it amused him again. But perhaps he was born like that and could not help it.

The only important quarrel they had that Summer came about because some one at a party introduced him as Miss Janice's husband and used her name, not his, in talking to him. She tried to pretend that she thought that was amusing, that it was ridiculous, of course, but happened all the time in New York. If a woman got to be a minor celebrity. It was too bad that she used that word. Because he was very bitter, for paragraphs and paragraphs, about her as a "celebrity." I remember he said she was getting thoroughly spoilt. She was not getting spoilt at all. She was getting too busy to have time to be patient. She was working on a picture in the East, besides her play. She needed the money. He was always very bored when she began to worry about money. He reminded her that she had more than she ever dreamed of having when he first met her. Still, she did need money. She had to support her cousin and all this cousin's family.

Sometimes I thought Miss Janice would be happier if she gave Mr. Martin up. But she was telling the truth when she said that "she could not give him up." She had built her life around him for too long.

It was time for Miss Janice to dress for her train. I finished my cognac, and went in to tell her so. She was still sitting in front of the fire, but its warmth and the cognac had had the effect I hoped, and she had fallen asleep. She looked like a tired child, and I thought that it was strange Miss Janice, who was a tall young woman, always looked like a little girl when she was asleep. Perhaps it was because she was so thin. She was slim, even when I first knew her—but the last year or two, what with work, and not much sleep, and cognac instead of proper meals, she had grown dreadfully thin. It made her look more graceful than ever on the stage and in pictures.

I hated to wake her, and stood looking at her for a minute or two, before I did. I thought that life was funny, and I thought I must have poured myself a bigger drink of cognac than I had intended, else I would not have been thinking about life. I was tired, of course. It seemed forever and ever since Mr. Martin and Miss Janice began to quarrel and make peace, and quarrel and make peace again. And I supposed they would go on and on and on, until they both began to grow old, and it no longer made any difference whether they married or separated. Then I remembered that a doctor at one of Miss Janice's parties had said that the ultimate effect of cognac was depressing, and decided that all the matter with me was I had the ultimate effect of cognac.

So I waked her, and she dressed in a hurry, and we went to Atlantic City. Everything there was about as I expected. They made her rehearse her last scene in the third act that night. She was very nervous and the scene went badly. She called me and told me to try to get Mr. Martin long distance. I did not try, the first time she told me to, because I knew by experience that he would not be at home. I tried later when she was back in the hotel. There was no answer. I suppose the inconsequential blonde must have been agreeable. Miss Janice grew more and more restless when she could not reach him. She walked up and down, and drank one cognac after another. So I called Mr. Hilary, who had told me to call him if she could not get to sleep, and he took her for a walk on the boardwalk. She came in so tired, she could scarcely stand, and I put her to bed. It was dawn then. She had to get up after four hours' sleep, to rehearse some more. They kept her so busy in the theatre that she had no time to telephone Mr. Martin. They were opening that night.

She came home to the hotel, and looked through her telegrams. There was no telegram from him—but she was so tired she slept anyway. She told me to wake her if he telephoned. I knew he would not. I tried to joke about it. I said, "Now Miss Janice, you ought to give that man time to turn 'round in. He always takes forty-eight hours to turn 'round. He will wire and come down tomorrow."

While she was asleep a special delivery letter came from him. I could not make up my mind whether to give it to her or not. If it turned out to be a nice letter, she would be splendid that evening. But if he had written her a long list of all the things that were wrong with them both, she would go to pieces. Before I made up my mind what to do about it, Mr. Hilary called to know whether she was awake yet. He said he wanted to talk to her for a few minutes before they went to the theatre. I called her—it was time to call her anyway, and I ordered a light dinner sent up for them both. Not that she would eat much of it.

When he came in, I thought he was looking very old and worried. Then I was cross with myself, because for a day I had been thinking that everyone looked old and tired and worried, and it was all nonsense, just nervousness because Miss Janice was having another first night.

I sent away the waiter when the food came, and served them both. He asked her how she was feeling, and she said, “Splendid.” I thought, “I wish that were the truth.” I had decided not to give her the letter until she had tried to eat her dinner.

Mr. Hilary said, “We’ve been associated a long time, now, haven’t we, Janice?”

She said, “Yes. More than four years. You have done amazing things for me, Hilary. I never remember to be polite and say how grateful I am, do I?”

He said, “You have done amazing things for yourself. If you didn’t have the ability, neither I nor anyone could have moved you ahead so fast . . . You will be, undoubtedly, the greatest emotional actress in America, within a couple of years.”

She said, “Perhaps, and what of it? Sorry, that sounded rude. I would rather be a ‘happy wife and mother,’ damn it . . . Oh well, I missed my life. I’m still worried about that second act curtain, aren’t you?”

He said, “No. Not now we’ve speeded it up. That scene goes or not, depending altogether on its tempo. Janice, I have a favor to ask of you.”

She said, “Of course. Anything you like . . . I don’t remember that you ever asked me a favor before.”

He said, “Perhaps not . . . This is rather serious.”

She said, “Tell me about it.”

He said, “Did you know that I was frightfully hard up, Janice?”

She said, “Darling, no . . . I never thought about it of course. Well, I can get to my bankers tomorrow. I have pretty gilt-edged stuff—thanks to your advice, mostly. How much do you need?”

He said, “My dear, that’s very touching . . . but don’t be absurd. I wouldn’t borrow money from you.”

She said, “But why not, darling?” She called him darling often, because she knew it pleased him. She was always sweet to him, because she had known for a long time now that he loved her, and she was sorry for him because she knew it was no use.

He began to tell her what he wanted, and they talked about conditions in the theatre. I knew conditions in the theatre were bad. Mr. Hilary had lost money on several shows recently, and was very pressed for capital. It was his hope that this new show of Miss Janice’s would save the situation. But, he told her, he thought it needed working, that it had possibilities of being a hit, but should be taken off after Atlantic City, and rewritten in part. He was so pressed for money he could not afford to do that. But he had got someone else, with money to invest, to come down and see the Atlantic City opening. If this man would carry on, there was every chance that they would come into New York with one of the two or three big successes of the year, instead of with a doubtful chance.

The only favor he wanted of her was to try to be at her best that evening, because the man with money to invest would be out front.

She said, “That’s a very small favor to ask, Hilary.”

He said, “Not a small favor at all. I know you always work hard. But I also know that when you are unhappy, as you are now, it’s difficult for you to give your best performance.”

Neither of them talked for a minute then. They were thinking about the reason for her unhappiness, but Mr. Martin was a subject they never discussed at any length.

She spoke first, very seriously. “Hilary, when I remember your belief in me through all this time—your patience, your kindness, it makes me ashamed.” He would have stopped her, but she went on. “To think that you feel it’s a great favor to ask of me, to put my trivial personal difficulties aside for one evening, and give you the best I’ve got, when it’s crucial for you to have it. . . . Hilary darling, I’ll give the best performance tonight you ever saw me give. You’ll be proud of me. I won’t let anything interfere at all. Whatnot will lend you all the money you need, and we’ll go in with *the* hit of the year.”

He laughed and kissed her then, as an old friend might kiss her. He said, “You are a thoroughly grand girl, Janice,” and he went off looking ten years younger.

We went to the theatre. She was splendid and steady. I still worried about the letter, but finally decided I ought to give it to her. I didn’t mind keeping it from her for a few minutes, but it was two hours now since I got it; and perhaps it was a nice letter anyway. She read it, when she was all dressed and waiting for her call. She began to tremble. She got up and said, “I can’t, I can’t.” She said to me, “Emma, get Mr. Hilary and tell him I can’t play tonight. Get me a car and chauffeur to drive to New York immediately. No, there’s an airplane company, someone told me, and it’s only forty-five minutes by plane.” She said, “I must think. If the understudy goes on—she can’t carry it. It’s the first thing Hilary ever asked of me, and I owe him every damn thing I’ve got.”

He knocked at her door then. I had not gone out to get him. He said, “All right, my dear?”

She looked at him—as he stood at the door smiling at her—a tall, tired man with hair that was getting grey. She did not say anything. He said, gayly, “Our whole future, mine anyway, may hang on this silly out-of-town opening, and the way it goes depends on you. . . Well, my future could not be in better hands, Janice.”

She straightened a little, standing there by her dressing table. She smiled, even. She said, “I’ll do the best I can with your future, Hilary.” He came in and kissed her hand, and went away. She was steady now, again.

She said, “How long before first call?” I said, “Ten minutes, at least.”

She said, “I have to depend on you. Get Mr. Martin now, at his apartment. He will be there. But the call may not get through before I am called. Tell him I shall meet him at the pier before twelve-thirty, and to wait for me at the gangplank.”

I said, “What pier?”

She said, “Never mind. I’ll explain it all to you on the way, Emma. Now, as soon as you’ve reached him—go to the hotel. Tell the Manager I want a plane ready at the airport to take me back to New York the instant the show’s finished tonight. Tell him it’s the usual matter of life or death. Tell him I’ll pay anything at all. Come back here and let me know about where I get the plane. Have a car waiting to take me to the airport.”

I said, “Who’s going to dress you between acts?”

She said, “Don’t be silly. I’ll dress myself.” Well, that was possible. There were no changes that had to be made fast. They called her then, and as soon as she had gone, I started telephoning Mr. Martin from the theatre. While I was waiting for the call to be put through, I read the letter he had written her. She had left it on her dressing table.

I know personal maids aren’t supposed to read letters—but I had read hers, for years. Just because I needed to, to know whether she should have cognac or cheering up, or anything. This letter was long, which was surprising. Mr. Martin almost never wrote long letters. I saved this letter, afterward, in case she should ask for it, and find it comforting to read. It said:

> JANICE DEAREST: I’m sorry that I was disagreeable this afternoon. I am always sorry when I am disagreeable to you. You don’t deserve it and I know it. Yet, I shall no doubt, be unpleasant, often again, if we continue to know each other. Which is one of the reasons I’m determined we can’t go on any more, on our present terms. I grant you the terms are of my making, not yours. Therefore, I am making you an offer of different ones. Perhaps they are no better. That, you will have to decide.
>
> In the beginning, I must lay myself open to your usual accusation that I defend my personal conduct from moment to moment by important-sounding but fairly empty generalizations about men and women. Be patient with the generalizations for one more time, Janice, my dear. They are not quite meaningless, at least to me. And since this letter, which is after all, my apologia for the way I have dealt with you, may be, very likely will be, the last communication between us, be patient while I state my case.
>
> I was twenty-seven when I met you, when you were twenty. My theories of life, of conduct, correct or incorrect as they may have been, were formed, tested for their soundness for me at least, long before the Autumn afternoon I saw you smiling across your tea table.
>
> I thought you were the loveliest woman I had ever seen. I still think that. Perhaps I always shall. But it may be irrelevant.
>
> I mean, that I was convinced before I met you that I did not want or need any one woman—that I needed freedom more. I have wanted, more consistently than I have wanted any woman, to be free to go on with my work. It happens to be anthropology—if it were bridge-building or horse-breaking, or interior decorating, the case would be the same. It is what I wanted to do—not on any given

evening, or for a week-end now and then, but year in, year out. I made the practical compromises that most men make, I abandoned what I wanted to do for years together, and took over the problem of my mother. That is not to my credit—rather the reverse. It proves, if anything, just that I was a conventional young man, conventionally brought up, and easily persuaded that my conventional duties were duties. I doubt if they were, actually. At any rate, I wasted years in which I might have become important in my field—I wasted them pleasantly, to be sure. But they are gone. Perhaps because I was such a "good son" in the conventional sense, I resented your theory, that since I happen to love you, I should forthwith embark on being a good husband. It was normal for you to expect that. But I just didn't want it. Of some of the pretexts under which I concealed my lack of desire to marry you, I am ashamed. It was not that I lied to you deliberately. It was rather that I evaded consideration of the situation with myself. Well, all that's the past. The present is complicated by your extraordinary success. That success, which I have resented because it made me feel a failure, relatively, I am grateful for now. It keeps me from believing that I have spoiled your life. God knows I did not mean to spoil your life. But God knows, I can't let you spoil mine, either. I mean that, if I had married you long ago, I would have been responsible for your support, our children's support, and so on, to the end. I would have been committed to the banking business, world without end, and been so discontented, that I would have made you miserable. And, if I had married you since your success, when there is no problem as to your economic self-sufficiency, still I would have been committed to the banking business, to keep up with my wife, at least.

I am thirty-two years old—too young, my dear, to retire into the obscurity of the husband of a great actress. I must live my own life, as the feminists put it. Specifically, I am going on this expedition into Central Africa with Leland. It won't bring me any great fame, as your world measures fame—no portraits in the rotogravure sections. It may bring me certain prestige among scientists—a strange set of people, Janice, who seldom know who played in what, what year, or how many weeks it ran. But whether the expedition is successful or fails, I have to go on it. Because I am thirty-two, and it is my last chance to escape a city where the exigencies of my lovely mistress drive me into stupid and wearying affairs with women not half as valuable. Because, in short, I am a weak young man making a

gesture of defiance to his weaknesses.

There remains the perhaps irrelevant but important fact that I have loved you and do love you beyond anyone I have ever known. Because of that fact, I am suggesting new terms for us. I can't live your life, or compromise with your life. The pattern diverges too widely from mine. But could you live my life? Could you let dress rehearsals and first nights and last nights and good reviews and bad reviews go straight to hell forever, and sail with me?

(Leland's sailing tomorrow night, instead of Wednesday, by the way. But you have a passport, haven't you?—I remember you got one when we planned to go to France, last summer.)

You would have to stay at some fairly civilized town, of course, while we went into the interior. All that can be settled later—the point is, will you come? Will you accept my belated offer to marry you? I know you would have followed my destiny once. You may be too definitely committed to your own, now. Starting with so much less (in the way of opportunity) than I had, you have accomplished infinitely more in your life than I have in mine. You will be unwise to throw it all away. But—if you want to be so unwise, here is your opportunity. I'm sorry to make it as melodramatic as certain second act curtains I have suffered through, but circumstances are responsible for that. So—I have reserved passage for two—we (or I alone, as you choose) sail from Pier 51, North River, at one in the morning—and I shall wait for you, by the gangplank until the last moment. Because, my dear, under my inconsistencies of conduct, under my exasperations and bad behavior consequent upon them—I have—as the phrase is—truly loved you—these five years.

MARTIN.

In the long time that has gone by, since he wrote that letter, I have thought it over so often, and have understood about Mr. Martin better because of the letter. But all through that evening, after I finished reading it, while I was rushing to the hotel, and talking to the manager and to an aviator who looked so much like Mr. Martin, I hated him; and hurrying back to the theatre with a dressing case and warm coat for her, I was just exasperated with Mr. Martin. He might have asked her to marry him any time the last five years, but of course, he had to choose the evening she was opening in an important play, and give her only three hours notice instead of time to get a trousseau ready. Besides, now that he had finally made up his mind, he had to have his buried

civilizations, also.

I asked that aviator if he could take two passengers and he said, “Yes.” Not that, when I came up from Georgia I was ambitious to go for any airplane trips, but I was not going to let her go away in the dark alone, and frightened probably. I was not going to let her go alone to Europe either. It was just like Mr. Martin who had looked at me nearly every day for five years, not to remember at all that Miss Janice was used to having a personal maid. But I had a passport of my own—she had planned to take me to France with her the year before—and I was just going to that boat.

The third act was almost over, when I came back with everything arranged. I went into the wings to look at her. Before I saw her even—I knew that she was splendid. Somehow you can tell, backstage on an opening night, how things are going. Even the stage hands’ flat voices get a little warmth in them on the night of a great success. I stood watching her play her last scene, where she says good-bye to the boy because she has lived too much and he has lived too little and the only thing she can do for him is to let him go and forget her.

She moved about, slender, white, shining-eyed, more graceful than I had ever seen her—and she was always graceful. She spoke in a low round golden voice. I knew somehow, no boy would ever forget a woman who moved or spoke like that. The audience kept that stillness that breaks afterward into mad applause.

I saw Mr. Hilary in the wings opposite watching her. He had, watching her, that intent look I have seen on her face so many times, when she looked at Mr. Martin. Then I felt dreadful—for Mr. Hilary was losing her—and for her, who would not again hold any audience in that hushed quietness—and for Mr. Martin, who never knew his own mind for long, and might want to stay unmarried, by the time we all got to Europe.

I tried to think of something to laugh about, so that I would look cheerful when she came off stage. I thought, “Well, Emma, you are going to see your ancestral home—you’re going to see Africa, and you never expected that, when you came up from Georgia.” But I did not care much about seeing it.

The curtain dropped. She had to take her bows, with the cast, with her leading man, and alone. Finally, she came off. I said, “The car is waiting and that aviator boy said there was plenty of time.”

She said, “I’m not going to change. Let’s hurry.” I don’t think she would have remembered to wear a coat, but I held it for her, and was thankful I had brought a fur one.

We met Mr. Hilary on the way to the stage door. She smiled at him, a friendly smile, but as if he were someone she had known a long time ago. He said, “My dearest, you were more wonderful than I ever believed you could be—and I have always known you were wonderful.”

She said, “You will forgive me—I must hurry—I will write.”

She went past him quickly, and I followed her. I called back over my shoulder, “Everything’s all right, Mr. Hilary. I will telephone you in a couple of hours.” I just said that because he looked so happy—and it was no use for him to begin being sorrowful right at that moment. The man with him, who I supposed, was the new backer of the show, said, “The temperament of the great artist—well, it should be permitted her,” and the stage door shut behind us, I thought, “That’s the last—that’s the last of all the stage doors we have hurried through,” and we hurried into the car.

She only spoke once on the way to the flying field. She said, “Are you sure we have time?” I said, “Plenty of time, Miss Janice,” and held her hand tight. There wasn’t time at the field for me to get frightened before the plane started. I made someone bring a blanket to wrap around her. The aviator came and said, “She’s all warmed up—we’ll make Newark Point in forty minutes.”

In the strange airport lights that glared down on him, he looked more like Mr. Martin than ever. I thought, “You are another one who’ll never know your own mind from minute to minute. I hope you pay enough attention to what you are doing to know whether you are flying North or South—but I doubt it.”

I got in, and sat beside Miss Janice. He got in and sat in front. The plane made particularly horrid noises and we started. After the first minute, going up, when I wished I had stayed picking cotton in Georgia, I got used to the feeling of flying. We could see little dots of light, but that was all. The scenery looked just like airplane views at night I had seen in motion pictures. The noise the engine made was terrible, but after a while it made me sleepy, because it was such a regular noise. I think I did fall asleep for a few minutes. Something woke me up. Miss Janice was awake. She said, “I think something has gone wrong, Emma. *How much time have we?*” I looked at the watch she had given me one Christmas. It was ten minutes of twelve. I noticed then that the noise of the engine was not regular any more, but had little gasps in it.

We began to sink, gently. She said, “Emma, I should not have let you come . . . He is trying for a landing. Oh, Martin, Martin . . .”

I thought of a boy I knew once at home. I might have married him. But he had no ambitions to see the world. I thought, “Probably he is married and has three or four children by now.” I started to ask her if she thought there really

was a heaven . . . but the ground bumped up and hit us. Not very hard. We rolled along, bumping a little. It was very uncomfortable but we stopped in a minute. That young man who was driving us jumped out of the front seat and opened the door beside Miss Janice. He said, “Not hurt, are you? The Jersey meadows aren’t an ideal landing place.” He began to explain what went wrong with the engine. She said, “Where is the road to New York?” He looked about and pointed to a row of lights.

“There is a road,” he said.

She said, “I must hurry.”

He said, “We’ll head for that road. I’ll need help to fix this boat.”

She began to run toward the far off lights of the road. I ran, and the aviator ran. We had come down in a sort of swamp. The ground was frozen and bumpy, and the night was too dark to see where we were going, but she ran fast through the darkness. The aviator shouted to her, “Go more slowly. You will fall and hurt yourself.” She called back, “Hurry, hurry,” and ran on towards the road lights. We ran after her.

She did not fall or hurt herself. She reached the road. We were just a little way behind her. When we caught up to her, she was looking up and down the road, desperately. She said to the aviator, “Which way is New York?” He said, “I’m not quite sure.”

A little starlight shone on the road. I could see her enough to see that her slippers were covered with half-frozen mud. She was breathing hard. She said to me, “What time is it?” It was ten minutes past twelve.

She sobbed just once. I said, “Don’t, Miss Janice . . . Listen, a car is coming.” You could hear it coming slowly over the rough road.

We stood out in front of its headlights. The driver stopped. She said, “Take me to New York. I have to be in New York in half an hour.”

The car was a truck. The driver got out and looked at us—but her voice was the voice that made audiences sit very quiet, and he said, “Get in, lady. I’ll take you to Newark. You can reach New York quickest from there.”

We all got in beside him. She said, “How far is Newark?” He said, “I’ll make it as fast as I can, lady.” When we got to the outskirts of Newark, we took a taxicab. The truck-driver said it would be faster. She had left her purse in the plane—but I had money in my pocket and I gave her some to give the truck-driver. He did not want to take any. I think we left the aviator with the truck-driver, but I don’t remember.

In the taxi, she said, “What time is it?” We were stopping in front of the tube station. I said, “It is twenty-five minutes past twelve.” In the tubes, people stared at us both. We were so mud-stained and breathless. But they stared more at her, of course. She looked so beautiful and so terrified. Her hair was fallen down about her face—and she brushed it back with her hand, as if it bothered her.

There was a station where we had to change trains. She asked again, “What time is it?” I lied a little then. I told her it was twenty-five minutes of one. But it was really a quarter of one. She said, “We shall be in time.” I said, “Yes, Miss Janice.” I knew we could not be in time, now, but I thought the boat might sail late. And God knows I never felt that Mr. Martin was very good to her or very good for her, but she had wanted him so badly and so long, I prayed she might have him now, for I did not see how she could bear life with him gone from it, now.

When we came up the stairs at Ninth Street, she saw the station clock. It said five minutes to one. She moaned a little and ran onto the street, past the people who stared. She never saw any of them, any more than she saw any of the people in the train.

We got into a taxi at Ninth Street and I said, “Pier 51, North River. Hurry, Hurry.” Because I saw she could not speak any more. I tried to smooth her hair a little—and I straightened the collar of her coat. I thought her face was almost as grey as the coat’s fur. She had lost her gloves somewhere, and her hands looked cold. I tried to warm them by rubbing them. She spoke, in a voice so low, I could scarcely hear her. She said, “Surely we shall be on time.”

I did not answer her. I said to the taxi-driver, “Go onto the pier if they will let you.” But they did not let us. We stopped at the pier entrance. A great many people were coming out as we reached it. I paid the driver. She ran on inside. I followed. She was running up the stairs. I do not think she noticed all the people walking down them. She ran down the length of the almost empty pier, and I ran, faster than I had ever run, after her. I caught up with her. I caught her arm as we reached the pier’s end. In front of us, beyond a widening stretch of water, a liner swung around as it turned downstream.

I held her arm tight. She strained against my hold. I thought, for a dreadful minute, that I could not hold her—that she would jump into the dark oily water to reach that shining ship. Then we saw him. She said, “Martin, Martin,” as if she were trying to shout to him. But the words came out in a whisper. She said, “I see him.” And it was he, clear among all the passengers crowding the decks,

plainly in sight for a second, as he stopped under one of the decklights. He was not looking at the pier—he was standing sideways lighting a cigarette. I am sure he did not see us at all. He stood there for just a minute, and walked back and was lost in the crowd.

She leaned then heavily against my shoulder, and I put my arm round her. I held her until a man came up, and found a box where we could sit and I rubbed her hands to bring some warmth back to them. She did not notice. She just lay quiet with her eyes closed, against my shoulder. The pier was almost empty. No one noticed us particularly, until a man in uniform came and asked who she was. When I told him, he said he thought he had recognized her—that he had a note left for her by a gentleman who had sailed.

I hated for the man in uniform to see her, so faint and bedraggled. I said I would take the note, and would he find us a taxicab. He helped us the long way back along the pier, and he found a cab. She came with me without protesting. She stumbled a little as she walked.

On the way home in the taxi she sat up straight once. She said, “Emma—one can get a motorboat or something—one can meet a steamer down the bay.” But she slumped on my shoulder again. She was too exhausted to do anything more.

When we got home I made her a hot drink and built a fire in the fireplace. In a little while she asked for the note the man on the pier had given me. I did not know she remembered about it. I gave it to her. After she read it she sat for a long time in front of the fire. The letter dropped out of her hand and lay on the rug. There were tears shining on her eyelashes. She did not say anything at all.

I left her sitting there and telephoned Atlantic City. I remembered I had told Mr. Hilary I would telephone him in a couple of hours—and it was not much more than that since we had left the theatre. They said at his hotel that he had started for New York. I was glad he was coming. Perhaps he would be able to think of something to do for her.

I went in to her again, after I had telephoned. She did not notice me. She looked too tired to notice anything. I had seen her look tired often, in the years when things had begun to go wrong between them, but never so tired as now, never looking as if there was nothing in the world that could rest her.

I said, “Miss Janice, you better go to bed now. Mr. Hilary’ll be here before morning, I expect—you want to get some sleep before he comes in and starts talking about the play.”

She said, “Yes. I am very tired.” So I put her to bed, and went back and picked up the note where she had left it lying on the rug. I have kept that note, too, with the long letter, in case she ever asked for either of them. But she never did ask for them. She never spoke of them afterward.

The note said:

> My Dear, I am very grateful. You had the wisdom to recognize my letter was no more than the expression of a mood—a mood of reluctance to break with a past that will be always fragrant with recollection. You—coming with me to some African town—what a fantastic notion. You would have stood between me and the whole purpose of my going. Thank you for recognizing that, in time.
>
> Always, when I remember the many considerate things you did for me in the years we’ve known each other, I shall remember this as the most important of them, that in the end you let me go.
>
> Martin.

There, I thought, I knew it. He changed his mind in two hours. He would have changed it twenty times between here and Europe if we had got the boat. It’s better as it is. She will get over him. People get over everything. I hope he never comes back any more. He will just drive her crazy if this keeps up.

She called to me. She was sitting up in bed, smoking. She wanted a glass of cognac. I brought the decanter and a glass on a tray, and set them on the table beside her.

She said, “You look tired, Emma. Go to bed. I shan’t need anything else tonight.”

I stood waiting a minute. I wished there were something to say.

She said, more as if she were speaking to herself than to me, “I am quite all right. He will come back this time, too. I believe that because . . . I have to believe it.”

I said, “Of course, he will. Remember that time he went to Spain . . . he will always come back from places.” But this time, I doubted it. When he went out and closed the door that afternoon, it was not much different, but it was a little different than all the other times.

I felt cold. My shoes and stockings were soaked through with Jersey mud and water. So I said, “Good night” to her, and went to my room. I did not go to bed, because I knew Mr. Hilary would telephone soon. But I took a hot bath,

and a drink of cognac myself.

I was just settling down to read when Mr. Hilary telephoned. His voice certainly did sound excited. He said, “Did she sail with that God damn fool . . . did she finally throw herself away.”

I said, “Of course not. We missed the boat. She is in bed. Anyway, Mr. Martin changed his mind, I guess.”

He said, “Never had one to change. I’m coming right over,” and hung up. I thought how sudden all men were, even Mr. Hilary who was a good one. At first I wondered how he had found out about the expedition, but I knew there would probably be something about it in the evening papers, so while I was waiting for Mr. Hilary I looked it up. There was a long story, with Mr. Martin’s picture and a headline, “Banker to Give Life to Science.” The headline made me angry, because Mr. Martin had never given his life to anything, yet—just his time, and he had not given much of that to the banking business, recently. I remembered the first time Miss Janice got her picture in the papers—how he was pleased and then annoyed, and I thought, “Well, he has got one of his own in at last. I hope he is satisfied.”

Then Mr. Hilary rang the doorbell. He said right away, before I had time to take his hat and coat: “Where is she? Is she all right?” I said, “She is asleep.”

He said, “What happened, Emma?” And I told him all about it, because Mr. Hilary and I always got on beautifully, and I knew he would be much better to Miss Janice than Mr. Martin was, if she would ever just open her eyes and notice him as a man.

She was not asleep. She heard our voices and came into the room, just as I had finished telling Mr. Hilary about the airplane ride.

She said, calmly, as if she were used to having him come in at three in the morning, “Hello, Hilary.” Then in a different voice, “He’s gone, you know.”

He looked at her as if there were all kinds of things he wanted to say, but when he finally spoke it was just to tell her there was one scene in the play he thought she should handle differently.

He said, “By the way, Janice, I’m more and more convinced, in the scene where the boy proposes, you should not seem amused at the beginning . . .”

She said, “Most scenes where people propose are amusing.”

He began to argue with her. Pretty soon he had her going over lines. She finally rehearsed the whole scene with him. Mr. Hilary took the part of the boy. He kept her working at it until after dawn. I made coffee for them both.

The next day we went back to Atlantic City, and the show played a week. Then they took it off for two weeks, and then they came into New York. It was a tremendous hit.

There were never any letters in the mail from Mr. Martin. When she woke up every day, she asked for her mail, the first thing, and I know she always looked for a letter from him. But none came. She never spoke about him, nor did any of her friends speak about him to her—though they mentioned him among themselves. I heard them, often, when they came to the house, and sat waiting for her to come home from a matinee.

She was looking very beautiful, and was very restless, and drank much too much. Not that she showed that particularly—only it made her eyes brighter and her voice faster. I knew from little things she said, that she hoped, that she really expected, Mr. Martin would soon get tired of the buried civilizations, and come back.

She had never joined a clipping bureau herself, but she subscribed to one, that winter, to get news of him. Thick envelopes of stories came about once a week. Some had pictures—of Mr. Martin and the other people on camels on the edge of the desert, or on foot with a lot of black men carrying their baggage, at the edge of the jungle.

I thought when I saw that one that though Mr. Martin was a handsome man and perhaps a brave one, he would always need someone to carry his baggage.

The last story came when the expedition broke contact with civilization, at some little town on the edge of the desert. That was about three months after Mr. Martin sailed. It was when that news came, I think, that she lost hope of a letter from him. But she still believed he would soon return. I could tell that, by the way she refused to settle to anything—talked vaguely of a trip abroad—refused to consider her next year's plans in the theatre.

She was changed from what she had been all the years I had known her. It was no change that anyone but me—and perhaps Mr. Hilary—would notice. She had always seemed so alive—the most alive person I had ever known. Now something in her slept, while she followed the life of a successful actress, and was popular and dressed carefully for many parties at which people would be flattering. Something slept, that woke to trouble her face only when she read stories of Mr. Martin's expedition.

The rest of the time, her life was just as it had been for years. She slept late, breakfasted, people telephoned her. In the afternoons she shopped for lovely clothes of which she soon tired, or went to other actresses' matinees, and grew more and more critical of their performances. I could see her change. She had

already been an important actress. That fact had been unimportant to her. Now she tried to feel it was very important. She hung on Mr. Hillary's words about her brilliant future. She tried to care about the brilliance of that future.

Her nights were different than they had been. She used to hurry home from the theatre to Mr. Martin. Now she hurried from the theatre to some night club or other. She seemed to dread coming home before it grew light outside—before she was so tired that she slept instantly. She said once, "If one is tired enough, one does not dream at all."

Mr. Hilary was always at her apartment. He telephoned in the morning to know whether she had slept well. (She usually had a large tea, and no dinner until after her performance.) He scolded her sometimes, gently, about the number of cocktails that she drank. He took her to all the amusing night-clubs, though I had heard him say before, that they were the refuge of the innately vicious or the fundamentally imbecile.

He brought her home, and sat about, being amusing and seeming to be amused, if she chose to sit about until sunrise, playing the Sonata Apassionata over and over on the phonograph. He never asked her why she played it. I knew. It was because Mr. Martin loved that record.

Then finally, he stayed for breakfast, as Mr. Martin used to stay. But I knew that long after I had learned to remember that Mr. Hilary liked his coffee black, in the morning, with two lumps of sugar, instead of with hot milk and cream and one lump of sugar, as Mr. Martin used to like his—she still had not learned to notice that Mr. Hilary was in the room. She slept with him because she was hunting for something—as she went to night-clubs, hunting for something—to fill the place in her heart that Mr. Martin left empty. She never found anything to fill that place.

Though, when her cousin Ann first came to visit us, I thought she might find something. Her cousin Ann was a pretty child, looking something like Miss Janice when I first knew her. Miss Ann was still in school, and just in New York for the Spring holidays. She came to consult her famous cousin about her choice of work, when she should finish school and come to New York. Miss Ann was very poor. Though Miss Janice took her shopping, on the first day of her visit, and bought her French hats and underwear and a suit trimmed with chinchilla, and a pigskin dressing case, I knew how poor the child was, because when she came she had cotton voile step-ins in her suitcase, and Philippine nightgowns—the kind I've bought for a dollar to send for Christmas presents to my cousins back in Georgia. Miss Ann's suitcase was not even leather.

Miss Janice seemed happier than she had been in months, the week Miss Ann stayed with us, and I thought it was a pity, seeing Miss Janice so delighted, laughing so gayly when the girl laughed, that she had not been given a child of her own to look out for, instead of just plays to star in.

Miss Ann did not really like Miss Janice much—after two or three days when she got used to Miss Janice's fame. Miss Ann thought she was dissipated, and disapproved of Mr. Hilary completely, thought he was old and dull, except about the theatre, and not handsome at all. I heard her making fun of him to young Mr. Parker—a boy from the Theatre Guild school whom Miss Janice asked to call, because he was the right age for Miss Ann. Miss Ann told Mr. Parker that all this New York theatre life might be all right, but it seemed a little artificial, even decadent to her—and she hoped her life would lie in a more substantial milieu. (I had heard Mr. Martin use the identical words, in disapproving of friends of Miss Janice's in the theatre—particularly friends who were not at all impressed by him.) I felt like saying to Miss Ann that Miss Janice would have liked life in a more substantial milieu too, but that it isn't possible for a woman to live always in the milieu she prefers, but often in the milieu where the man she loves happens to leave her. However, a good personal maid says nothing personal ever, to any relatives of her employer.

Miss Ann went away at the week's end. Miss Janice seemed to miss her, and wrote to her to come for another visit in June, while she was settling her plans, after college. Then things went on until June, as they had gone all Winter and all Spring. The play still ran. Mr. Hilary was still devoted. Miss Janice still spent her days like a woman in a dream. There was no letter from Mr. Martin, nor any word of him.

It was nearly eight months since the afternoon he went out and closed the door behind him finally.

Miss Ann was back visiting Miss Janice when word of him came. It was on a clear early summer afternoon, one of those few days in the year when New York air smells as sweet as the country. I was thinking, as I got sandwiches and glasses ready for the guests we expected, how pretty Miss Janice's house upstate must look, with the first grass of the year still green, but growing long—and the daisies out in the fields. We had not opened the house this year, at all.

Miss Janice was giving a party for Miss Ann. The ladies came in flower-colored frocks and the gentlemen came wearing flowers in their buttonholes, and they made pleasant sounds talking. It was a lovely party. There was no reason I should miss the sound of Mr. Martin's voice, among the others. Yet somehow, he—long gone, because people come and go so swiftly in New

York, forgotten altogether, probably by the guests who had met him at other of her parties—seemed more present in a room where Miss Janice entertained, than any man who stood and smiled and talked to her.

I passed sandwiches, and brought fresh glasses for highballs and cups for tea, and listened to the conversation. Most of the guests were going on to the opening of a revue. I heard Mr. Hilary say, as his eyes followed Miss Janice, "First of the summer shows—end of another season," and the man talking to him said, "Thanks to Janice, you should be damn pleased with the way this one went." And he went on, "That young cousin of hers looks extraordinarily like her—minus the fire. . . . Though Janice has not the fire she used to have. She makes up for it with technique."

Mr. Hilary said, "She is a superb artist."

The man answered, "You say that as if it were part of the Lord's prayer . . . why don't you marry her?"

"Because she won't marry me," Mr. Hilary said. "She is married to her recollections."

The man said, "There was something, wasn't there. . . . I don't remember precisely. I've been away from town so much the last couple of years. It would be sensible of Janice to marry you."

"Great emotional actresses are not notoriously sensible," Mr. Hilary said.

I heard so much of the conversation because they were standing by themselves in a corner of the room where a good many guests had put plates and cups. I was collecting the plates and cups.

Miss Janice crossed to them as they were talking, walking very lightly as she always walked, swaying just a little, as she often swayed, gracefully, so that not even I could tell whether she had drunk too much cognac or was just very tired.

Mr. Hilary said, "We were saying that Ann grows to look more and more like you."

The man said, "Does she want to go into the theatre?"

Ann came over and said, "Good Lord, no." Then she knew that sounded rude, and tried to explain. "It's fascinating of course—but it's a little fantastic."

Mr. Hilary said, "What do you want to do?"

She answered gayly, in her clear young voice that sounded so sure of itself,

“To have a well-ordered life . . . to be successful as a wife and mother probably. I suppose that seems awfully dull to you.”

He did not answer, but young Mr. Parker, who had followed her across the room, did. He said, “I think it sounds lovely.” They smiled at each other, and Miss Janice smiled rather sadly at them both. She said, “Would it surprise you, Ann, to hear that that was once my idea?”

Mr. Parker said, “You’re jesting with us, aren’t you? It was inevitable that you should be a great actress, and nothing else.”

She laughed and said, “Both you and Ann are too young to understand what is inevitable and what is not.”

Miss Ann and Mr. Parker smiled at each other as if they were just the right age to understand all about everything. I thought they were already in love, but I did not think much would come of it. He did not belong in the theatre—he was just one of those young men who think they will be Barrymores, because they find actresses wonderful. And he had no money. And, from what I had seen of Miss Ann, she would want to be a successful wife and mother with at least two servants to take care of her house.

Someone asked whether the show that night opened at eight-thirty or eight-forty-five. Miss Janice did not know—of course she had to go to her own theatre, and was not going to the revue with the rest of them. No one seemed to know, so Mr. Hilary asked me to bring in the afternoon paper, and look it up. I got the paper from the service hall where the boy left it every day, and as I picked it up, I saw Mr. Martin’s picture on the front page.

He was dead. All the expedition was dead. I read the story—how a British missionary heard of a party of white men attacked and slain in the jungle, and went with some friendly natives to investigate—how at the end of four days’ search, he found their camp. There was the hut they had built for themselves. It was charred and empty. There were odds and ends of their baggage that the attackers had not bothered to take away. There were their bones, or some of their bones. Wild animals had come down to the camp after the savages left.

I heard Miss Janice calling to me, as I finished reading. I hid the newspaper in a drawer of the kitchen and went in to her. She said, “Hasn’t the evening paper come, Emma?”

I said, “Yes, Miss Janice. I was just bringing it in.” I did not know what to do. If I did not bring the paper to her, she would see another one, somewhere within an hour. She could not be kept from knowing, long. Yet I was frightened to tell her. She stood among her friends, at least, among the people

she knew best. But I felt in that moment, when she must be told, and hope must go from her forever, that she had no friends, except Mr. Hilary, and he had been for so long so jealous of Mr. Martin that he would not be sorry for Miss Janice, because he could not help being glad that Mr. Martin would not ever come back now. The rest of the people in the room who remembered that she loved Mr. Martin, would be curious to watch her face, and Mr. Hilary's when the news was told.

I thought of calling Miss Ann aside, and telling her that there was a story in the newspaper that would shock Miss Janice, and to send the guests home, so she could be alone when she read it. But I was not sure at all that Miss Ann had even heard of Miss Janice's love affair with Mr. Martin. Miss Ann had not come to visit us until months after he had sailed.

Miss Janice said, "Why are you staring at me, Emma? Is anything the matter?" We were standing at the inner end of the room. There were no guests very near us.

I said, "Miss Janice, would you go into your bedroom a minute? There is something important I have to tell you."

She went into her room, and I went out into the kitchen and got the newspaper from the drawer. By the time I got back to the bedroom, Miss Ann was in there talking to her. Miss Ann was saying, "I'll be spoilt for the simple life after this visit, Jan. . . . You have been marvelous to me." She was a nice child, Miss Ann, though awfully set in her ways for a young girl. She could not help disapproving of Miss Janice and Miss Janice's cognac and middle-aged lover, and late hours and publicity. But she tried to remember to thank Miss Janice for being so good to her.

Miss Janice said, "Not at all. It's lovely to have you here, Ann."

Ann said, "It's bad for a penniless young woman like me to get too used to breakfasts in bed."

And Miss Janice said, slowly, "You don't seem to remember, Ann, that I was a penniless young woman like you, when I came to New York."

"I can't seem to realize it," said Miss Ann.

Miss Janice went on, "I should like to see that you have some of the things I missed."

"I don't see that there is much you have missed," Miss Ann said. They both laughed, and Miss Janice saw me standing in the doorway. She said, "What is it that you want, Emma?"

I had the paper folded close, so that the picture of Mr. Martin did not show. I had the paper in one hand and a big glass of brandy for her in the other. I thought afterwards that was sort of funny—that for the first time in my life probably, I forgot to carry a drink on a serving tray.

I must have looked frightened, because Miss Ann, who did not notice other people very much, unless they were people in whom she was interested, said, "What is the matter with you, Emma? You look as if you had found a full-sized ghost in the kitchen."

I said, "Miss Janice, there is something in the newspaper." I could not go on. She looked at me swiftly, and I think at that moment she knew what it was.

She said, very quietly, "Give me the newspaper, Emma." I handed it to her. I was awkward about it, because I was holding the glass of cognac in my other hand. The paper unfolded as I gave it to her, and she saw Mr. Martin's picture right away. Miss Ann looked over her shoulder, said, "What a completely tragic story—handsome man that one—who is the other?" Mr. Leland's picture was in the paper, too, as the only other New York member of the expedition.

Miss Janice's hand began to shake, and her mouth moved as if she wanted to say something. Then Mr. Hilary stood in the door, said, "Guests are beginning to leave, Janice." There were two ladies standing with him, who were ready to go. They wanted to say good-bye to her and tell her they had enjoyed the party. She stood up. I handed her the glass of cognac without saying anything, and she drank it, automatically. She said something about "so glad they could come." She did not move to go to the door with them. She was leaning one hand against her dressing-table. I think if she had let go of the table, she might have fallen. The two ladies went away, looking a little puzzled. I did not go to the door to let them out, because I was afraid to leave her.

Miss Janice looked from Miss Ann to Mr. Hilary and they stared at her. Miss Ann looked frightened now. She said, "Oh my dear, what is it? Did you know him?" Mr. Hilary said, "Know whom?"

Then he saw the newspaper spread out on the dressing-table.

Miss Ann looked at them both, as if at last, young as she was and sure as she was, she had found something beyond her comprehension.

Miss Janice stood there looking through them, behind them, as if she saw something very far away from that room, that was so quiet. The sound of laughter drifted in through the door. A summer afternoon breeze blew the

curtains at the windows, and their silk swished a little. Those were the only noises in the room, while we waited for what would happen, and watched her face change. Grief, despair, anger at something—not at him, I think, but at the stupidness of things—crossed her face and were gone, leaving it very still, very handsome, entirely composed. She looked all at once, like the sort of pictures of lovely women they have painted on curtains in old-fashioned theatres—beautiful, but with no light behind their faces.

She said, “Let’s not talk about this, shall we? I must go in to my guests.”

She went in and talked to them all. When the party was over, she went to the theatre. Afterward she brought Mr. Hilary and another man home with her, and they all sat talking, just exactly as on any other evening. Miss Ann came in from a night-club, and went to bed. The three in the living-room still discussed which of two plays would be better for Miss Janice next season.

I sat up in the kitchen, in case they should want some food, and after a while I found I was crying about Mr. Martin, whom I had never liked, but who couldn’t help being what he had been. I thought for the first time, maybe he could not even help breaking Miss Janice’s heart, and spoiling her life. Maybe he had to go looking for his buried civilizations, as I somehow, had to come up from Georgia to find what the world was like. I wondered if maybe there was a heaven where it was easier for a man like Mr. Martin who wanted to be kind and who had to be free, to get along without being always upset himself and upsetting people he met. I cried harder and harder, because I kept remembering what a gay pleasant young man he was, when he used to come in with flowers for her, and say, “Hurry, hurry, hurry, darling. I’m famished. Let’s dine elaborately and then go dancing.” I did not hear Mr. Hilary and the other man leave. I had supposed Mr. Hilary would stay. But she never let him stay again, after that day.

I did not hear their voices any more, and was washing my face, to try to get it to look all right, in case she called me, when she came out to the kitchen. But it was no use washing my face. I began to cry again as soon as I saw her.

I said, “Oh, Miss Janice, I’m so sorry. I’m so sorry.”

She said, “Don’t cry, Emma, dear.” I tried to stop crying.

She said, “I wanted to tell you I am going to ask Miss Ann to live with us.”

I said, “That’ll be nice, Miss Janice. She’ll be lots of company for you.”

She said, “Yes. I can do things for her . . . that was the Victorian idea of the way out—absorption in others . . . I may as well try it, I suppose.”

She was just talking aloud to herself, I knew, so I did not answer.

Then she said, “Emma, you won’t ever leave me, will you?” I said, “Of course you know I won’t, Miss Janice.” She went on, “Don’t ever leave me. You are the only person left now, who has known me since the beginning, since I was where Ann is.” I said, “I’ll never, never leave you.” She said, “Good night, Emma. I’m afraid we keep you up very late. You look tired.”

She managed to smile at me, and then she went away to her own room.

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ENTR’ ACTE

She sat up in bed and sipped cognac, and confronted her reflection in the mirror that faced the bed’s foot. That was the decorator’s idea, to set the old carved mirror there. She would have preferred it facing the long windows, reflecting nothing more personal than skyscraper-tops and an oblong of varicolored sky. But—she was always busy. In the more than two years she had lived in this room, she had never had time to remember to have the mirror changed. So it reflected herself.

It reflected her, in an enormous Spanish bed, in a nightgown from the Rue de la Paix and an embroidered bedcoat from a Chinese palace, via a revolution or two, a thief with a flair for the value of rare embroidery, various merchants in the importing business, and a skillful dry cleaner. There was a small stain on the side of the Chinese coat that had been impossible to remove. She loved the coat; the small stain annoyed her. On consulting her own cleaner once, as to the possibility of removing it, he had told her it could not be done—that the stain was too old—was perhaps a bloodstain, very many years dried. Blood of some Chinese princess, probably, one of the incidental casualties of a palace looting. For a time, after she was told it was a bloodstain, she disliked wearing the coat. But there was no sense in being ridiculous about things that could not be helped—and, even if the Chinese lady had lived to see her great-grandchildren, still she would have been patrician dust now, more than a hundred years. So she still wore the coat occasionally. The blaze of its colors was reassuring. And Martin had loved her in it.

Martin, Martin—oh, stop all that. But in this hour—the first hour alone since the news came today that he was dead, that must be faced. There is all the night ahead in which to face it. Not instantly though—there is no hurry. All the night, all the weeks, months, years, which he will never interrupt.

Reflection of a beautiful woman, sitting in bed, holding a glass of cognac in a steady hand. And the beauty was an accident, as much of an accident as Martin’s death. Inheritance of unremembered ancestors, composite blend that

happened to please the taste of its day. “You have your great-grandmother Althea’s eyes,” they had said to her when she was a little girl. “And the Commodore’s reckless smile.” “And Martha Emily’s lovely shoulders.” An accidental blend surely. If it had been Althea’s saccharine smile, and the Commodore’s long ugly Roman nose, and Martha Emily’s mouse-colored hair —would the product Janice have been a much-admired actress, sight of whom was consolation to many long-married men whose wives were a foot a piece too wide to look romantic? Scarcely. . . . Beauty was an accident, like the taste for cognac. The Commodore had had that taste, too, from all accounts. He never was a Commodore legitimately—privateersman who may well have gone piratical where there were none to define the difference. There was a portrait of him in the long room in her grandfather’s house in Portland, Maine. He looked more like Martin than like her, his great-great-grand-daughter. He had Martin’s laughing, wide-set eyes.

She had wide-set eyes herself, but they did not laugh much. Her own fault, or the fault of the more Calvanistic among her ancestors. She could regard that woman in the mirror with complete detachment, as a third person present in the room who afforded the observer a certain degree of amusement. That woman had a face that showed nothing—and a heart that in time might feel nothing. Nothing, nothing, an emptiness where there used to be warmth, an indifference where there used to be a sense of the passionate importance of getting what she wanted. She wanted only one thing. Martin had wanted so many, and got just death in a green jungle. More than that, the end of all wanting.

She clenched her hands over her breast. She found that she was praying that they had not hurt him much when they killed him. *That would not do.* Martin was so gay, so warmly alive, one of these people who are convinced that they will live forever. He was dead forever. She would have died, a thousand deaths as the cliché was, to keep anyone from hurting him—she loved him more than she would ever love anyone or anything again. Yet, thinking of him dead, knowing that she would never recover from the hurt of his dying, she could hate him too. He was dead. Nothing of him remained any more in the world except bad photographs on newspaper pages. He might have married her, lived normally, happily, through the best of a half-century with her—given her a child, *let her have a child*, so that if his destiny compelled him to leave her, to go free to the ends of the earth, to die futilely alone and far away, still something of him would have gone on. Nothing of him lived on now. He was as dead as the Commodore whom he somewhat resembled.

Her face in the mirror began to show things, began to look broken. One never let anything break one. One went on over things, through things, past

things, because one could not help it. Pour a drink of cognac. Steady one's hand. Sip it slowly. It has a lovely aroma, a casually fragrant perfume, akin to the indifferent lovely warmth it produces—given time, given time.

The summer wind stirs the curtain of a Spanish room where a woman suffers who will cease suffering, cease remembering, given time. The winds of life blow the gorgeous, the dreadful, the memorable, the inconsequential across one's threshold, and given time, blow everything far away, far down the wind, beyond the return of echoing.

The winds of life—phrase from some forgotten poem, that impressed her when she was a child. When she was a child, after she read that poem, she used to remember the phrase, when she climbed to that headland that raised itself abruptly above the sea's roaring. She who sat in a Spanish bed used to sit at the tip of that headland, clinging to a rock and scrub spruce to balance herself against the wind's blowing, and watch the few fishing smacks rush up the South passage between the cliffs, when the September gales blew. She used to think of the "winds of life" blowing ships into the harbor, ships laden with Spanish gold and French brocaded silks, and rum and slaves and muskets—ships laden with the fulfillment of dreams. The dreams of a thin shabby big-eyed child who climbed a steep hill to watch fishing smacks come in, and who knew even then that no boats brought any more cargoes of romance. Not since the days of the Commodore, of whom she used particularly to dream. Change the rigging on the fishing smacks, lengthen their keel, paint them black, set canvas full on lengthened masts—and she could pretend they were the Commodore's fleet racing home from the Main.

Curious, that scrap of conversation heard when she sat, unnoticed, between her garrulous old grandfather and her even older, enormously more dignified great-grand-uncle, could bring to life, complete, the portrait of a man. Conversation of two old people remembering some tale told vividly when they were young—and a few scraps of letters, and a portrait that had hung above the fireplace so long, the gilt lace on the Commodore's cuffs was smoke-begrimed and dim.

He was the handsomest man in Portland in his day, my dear . . . though he was seldom home. No, just another man who was seldom home, who pursued the adventure of living among sun-baked savage West Indian islands—who came sailing home once every year or two, with stories the men whispered to each other, enviously, in the public house, and a smile for which the women forgave him the carefully censored version of the stories that came home. Came home to walk at last among the fox-gloves, the carefully tended pale Northern roses, of a garden, beside a proud tall girl with golden hair. He

wooed her. He wanted to bring her to his tall house on the hill outside the town. And would have done so, perhaps, would have thereafter confined himself to decorous dickering for rum and slaves—the respectable commodities of his day on the sea.

She would have married him, had not some rival whispered to her a fairly definite version of the story of that Dark Pearl of the Antilles, that woman who shared a house—a well-armed fort, actually, with Commodore Richard in his winter quarters South.

An account of the interview between the Commodore and the lady was preserved in a letter (for his cousin Mathilde hid behind the window curtain to hear him given his dismissal so that she might know how, decorously, to dismiss a suitor, should the occasion ever arise, and wrote about the method to her best friend.)

Sitting in her wide bed, conscious only of the tension necessary to keep that face in the mirror composed, Janice forced herself to remember the elaborate way the letters were formed, in that long-faded note of Mathilde's:

> It was over so quickly I had not time to be alarmed lest Ruth look round and notice my presence. He came striding up the path between the hollyhocks, and although if half they tell of him be true, he is a character who should be altogether reprehensible in the eyes of the Godly, I could not help thinking that my cousin made a fine figure of a man, and that indeed they were a handsome couple for the moment that they stood there, Ruth so fair and he so dark, and she almost as tall, for Commodore Richard is not a very tall man, though wide of shoulder and slim-waisted, and very graceful in build.
>
> He said, "Good evening, madam. You sent for me?"
>
> Ruth said, "Good evening, yes." Her voice was indifferent as if she were speaking to her maid, and I know the tone made him wince though I think she loved him, notwithstanding, for she wept most bitterly after, when she thought none watched her.
>
> She spoke quickly then—"I wanted to see you before the banns are read for us. It appears there is a lady in Cuba, or is it perhaps in Jamaica, who has more right to share your house and name than I have. Go you then back to her."
>
> He said, "Madam: I do not know what you have heard. You are the woman I have chosen to share my house and name. . . . I will make you a fair husband . . . do not concern yourself with the affairs

of a man's world that are not likely to touch you."

> Ruth answered scornfully: "Do you think I will be successor to a yellow wench? If you had the courage men attribute to you—you would bring the woman you have lived with for years—to your house, and acknowledge your child. . . . Good-bye, sir. . . ." And so turned and left him, holding her head high until she was within the house. But his was as high, when after a little, he turned and strode down the path.

The Commodore did just that—brought home his almost-Spanish mistress the next year, and established her, with a retinue of West Indian servants, in the house on the hill that no white woman ever entered, nor any man—except to discuss the business of ships and cargoes with the Commodore, for ten years afterward.

The Commodore strode from that house, from the blazing scandal of his life, through the town, about his affairs, with a face that men said was never more composed than when he confronted the lady he had wooed, a lady now sometime sensibly wedded to a merchant who did not sail on long voyages. And such was his prestige among the townspeople that no one ever spoke to him directly of the scandal of the affair, nor did men hesitate to trust their projects in the West Indies to his hands.

Janice, sitting quiet, forcing herself now to remember all she could remember of the Commodore, since the story of his life was so comfortably distant from modernity, knew that that last bit of characterization came from another faded letter of Mathilde's, who seemed through all her life to have been much intrigued by this romantic cousin to whom her father, and later her husband—for she married at sixteen her first suitor and therefore never needed the lesson in how to dismiss a gentleman dexterously—never permitted her to bow. Mathilde indeed wrote of him twice more.

Janice got up then, and found in a desk drawer, the thin sheaf of Mathilde's letters that were among her souvenirs of the Maine house. Mathilde had written:

> The Commodore is gone South again, with the lady who has been the scandal of the town so long. They say she will not return. She took all her boxes, her servants, and the little golden child for whom they say—in all fairness—my poor cousin Richard is in no way responsible, the child being son of some Spanish gentleman who was her husband, or at least, was responsible for her, before

Richard met her. The Spanish gentleman was killed in some fight. I do not know where, for naturally, neither my husband nor my father discuss these matters within my hearing. But they talk of them over port, when I have said—Good even, gentlemen—and retired. By sitting just around the curve of the balustrade I can hear more interesting things about the world of men than I would ever in this world know directly. It is most entertaining on quiet evenings, because nothing much ever happens here, nor has in all my life except for the regrettable exploits of my cousin.

I nearly forgot to tell you, perhaps because I have seen so little of her—and because of late she who was so beautiful has grown so quiet and so old—that Ruth—you remember? whom Richard loved and wanted to wed—died last Wednesday, at the birth of her third child. Richard did not even appear at her funeral services, which I think was hard of him, since he once loved her. But my housemaid, whom a sailor on one of Richard's vessels is courting, told me a fantastic tale. It shows the ignorance of these poor people. I suppose some faint echo of that old love affair is common knowledge in the port. My housemaid's suitor said that the night of Ruth's funeral when he walked late, past the cemetery (I suppose at the end of a drinking bout), he saw the figure of a man standing with arms folded, beside Ruth's new grave—and that when the moonlight shone upon his face, he saw the man was the Commodore looking as composed, almost, as usual. This, the sailor said, seemed to him so strange a sight he sat in the lee of the wall to watch. But nothing happened. The man stood there, or paced up and down occasionally for a long time, so long a time that the sailor fell asleep and woke in the dawn, very cramped and cold. On stretching himself, and raising his head above the stone wall, he said the Commodore was still there, pacing up and down and—this is the silliest part of the tale—in the light, Richard being no more than a few feet from him, he saw that tears were streaming down his cheeks.

Now, is not that absurd? I think my cousin must have forgotten how to weep these score of years. I would not repeat the tale—but that so little happens here, and one is forced to find amusement in the most trivial things.

It was the day after Ruth's funeral that he gave orders for his ship to be made ready—and he and his establishment departed on the full tide of the day following.

The Commodore did not return until the scandal of his life had faded even in the Maine township where scandals lived a long time.

He returned, having fared well everywhere, accompanied by a wife, a Spanish beauty white as any of the roses that blossomed fur-tippeted, in the streets of his native town. Mathilde, growing middle-aged now, and buxom and comfortable (she complained of her weight, and the difficulty of climbing stairs now), but with handwriting as delicately uncertain as ever, had penned an account of his welcome home:

> My father, who is unfortunately very feeble now, and my husband, whose health is good except for gout, had a long discussion on the evening following cousin Richard's return, and for the first time in years I sat on the stairs to listen to them. It made me feel like a girl, which is ridiculous of course, since I have a daughter old enough to wed. But I could not resist. My cousin Richard has been the only figure in my life at all like the characters in imported novels my dear mother used to forbid me to read.
>
> They decided that since Richard was grown older and settled (indeed his hair is quite white, it gave me a twinge when, leaning out the window to watch him pass, I observed it) and was moreover a man of parts, having made the greatest fortune in the family—though they would damn his method of making it, I am certain, were the fortune less impressive, it would be absurd now to condemn him for the failings of his youth. More particularly did they agree on that, since it appears Madame Eulalia, his wife, comes from a most distinguished Spanish family, and has besides a fortune of her own. It was decided that the family would call.
>
> So the next day, my husband commanding me, I ordered the carriage at five, and between my husband and my father, descended at his gate, and approached the house. I had never entered it before. Strangely, I felt ill at ease, and I think my father did too. Because, although it was gracious to forgive him his mistakes and accept him finally—he might not be willing to admit the mistakes and he never had seemed to notice the nonacceptance.
>
> However, all went well. He was most polite—and his wife—who must be no older than my daughter, Betsey, seemed touchingly pleased to receive guests. I noticed that she will soon provide Richard with an heir, which is nice. Though I tried to make conversation with the little thing, as to the differences between

Maine and Cuba, it was difficult, since I had never been there and she arrived here only two days before. She said, in her broken English, that it was much colder here. Naturally, I told her, the cold was very healthy—and hardened children properly. She said—But I do not want my children to be hard like stone—Cousin Richard said something to her in Spanish that made her smile. I supposed he explained that it is just children's muscles that the cold hardens. Then she and I were silent for a little and I fell to watching him. His face has scarcely changed, though his hair is white. I remember when I used to watch him walking with poor Ruth, so long ago, I thought his was the most resolute face I have ever seen. There is no sign of weakness in it. The only time, I think, I ever saw him show feeling was on that day he and Ruth parted. Since then, his face shows nothing, neither anger nor excitement nor patience nor the lack of it. It is invariably composed.

Yet one feels, watching him, that underneath that quietude there is great fire. It seemed to me, for a minute, that Cousin Richard was rather a discouraging example to people like my dear husband, who live most Godly lives and never take up with nearly white girls from Cuba, or marry Spanish heiresses either. Here is Cousin Richard, who has, I am afraid, broken all the Commandments, at home from his voyagings, well-settled in life, and the richest man in the community. But perhaps simple rules, such as virtue being its own reward, are just meant for women to live by. . . . I suggested to him that he get Mr. Peacock, who has painted several of our friends this Winter here, to paint Eulalia and himself. The idea seemed to interest Richard. I suggested it because someone told me that Peacock's portraits always reveal the true character of the sitter, and I would like to see something that revealed my cousin's true character.

Janice, reading, laughed at that. The cognac was having its effect, and she could regard now, with infinite detachment, herself in the mirror, Mathilde's letter in her hand, her recollection of the Commodore's portrait—Martin. . . . No, she could not, even quite yet, summon detachment to consider Martin, though the cognac was blurring death and distance, beautifully. Then, since she could not consider Martin, quite yet—she continued to consider the Commodore.

Mr. Peacock's portrait had not revealed much about his character. Portrait of a firm-lipped man with eyes that looked amused. That was all left of an adventurer, that and decorous descendants, all very decorous with the

exception of herself.

She looked for the last letter of Mathilde's that mentioned him. It was a long tediously pious account of the funeral services held for him, an account in which there were only two or three lines to show that Mathilde remembered Commodore Richard had once been the romantic figure of her girlhood.

He was not present in body at his funeral services. Having provided Eulalia with two sons (who grew up to be lawyers and never went on any journeys to the Spanish Main), Richard left her for one more voyage South. There were whispers, duly noted by Mathilde, who said she disbelieved them—that he had gone for one last visit to the woman who shared most of his years in the Indies—the lady of less certain Spanish ancestry than Eulalia. He met his death in a hurricane off Santa Domingo.

When the news of his death came home, the whole town turned out to do honor to the memory of their most substantial citizen. His widow, a comfortable woman by now, in no way different from the comfortable matrons born and brought up in Maine, erected to his memory a monument—which Mathilde, troubled by some feeling of inappropriateness, said was "a chaste stone, carved with doves and rosebuds. Well, at least, since they never found his body, he escapes having to lie until Judgment Day under the monument."

Lighting a cigarette, conscious of its taste, as pleasant, regarding with increasing detachment every instant now, her reflected self, Janice thought that there, in Mathilde's letters, was the story of a successful life. And if at the end of it there was nothing but a portrait of a man with firm lips and eyes that laughed, perhaps—that was enough. If finished, as he might have been finished when the girl, Ruth, dismissed him for reasons that seemed good to her, nevertheless he managed thirty years serenely, thirty full years, never showing that he was broken, never admitting that his exploits with women or the sea were matters of no ultimate importance. He defeated life. He made money, the second prize that glitters sufficiently to distract the observer so that it is not obvious that the first prize is irretrievably lost.

The way to conquer destiny is to ignore its victories. That, she sensed, was one of those sentences that sounded, under the influence of sufficient cognac, profoundly wise.

She poured herself another glass, remembering hearing her grandfather say that he had heard the Commodore drank a bottle of brandy a day. The physical limitations of women had to be considered, of course—she would scarcely come to equal his capacity. But relatively, she might do as well.

The mirror reflected a woman whose eyes shone, whose cheeks were

flushed. Cognac—the surest, swiftest means to make life the colorful affair it was supposed to be—it was actually—briefly when one was young.

The Commodore, the lady he lost, the lady he married, the lady he lived with—who may have been really the lady he loved—herself in an embroidered Chinese coat, Martin himself now, were equally remote, figures reflected in mirrors beyond mirrors.

She could not remember whether she had ever told Martin about the Commodore. She should have done so. They had so much in common—well, something in common. Principally, the theory that women were pleasant figures decorating the rim of the cup of adventure. It was in her blood to understand men like that. She was descended from them. Yet, having by accident inherited her sex from her mother, born willy-nilly to live on the rim of the cup—she was compelled to consider the rim the center, for all practical purposes.

That was probably very drunken logic, comforting logic that would disappear in the dreary awaking of the next morning. The dreariness of the next morning, however, was also of no importance. When greyness grew unendurable, there remained this alcoholic escape. And one escape was no different from another. If she could have chosen, she would have chosen the escape into respectability—order, peace, security—the suns under which women blossom even unto their middle forties.

Martin, Martin—Martin was dead, Hilary was alive. Hilary—that mirror in her mind reflected faint disdain. Charity is a great virtue so they say, but it should stop on the threshold of the bedroom. For some reason she had been disposed to be gracious to Hilary “to make a good man very happy” as they used to say about something similar—at least, something related to sex—in Maine. The reason connected obscurely with resentment that Martin had not written, something, anything—before he left the towns whence mail is sent. She had been gracious to Hilary, because Martin was fundamentally an extraordinary selfish person.

Yet now, she must for some reason even more obscure, be faithful to him dead, who had never, with any consistency, been faithful to her living. Perhaps because she knew, had she been born a man like Martin, she would never have limited her life by being faithful to any one woman either. But, if she were faithful now, she would thereby cause some damage to Hilary’s self-esteem. . . . That was unfortunate, but impossible to avoid. She had no power left to consider casualties, since she was a casualty herself. Curious, that men like Hilary, who always considered women the center of the cup, were inevitably victimized by them, one way or another.

Then she could not keep thoughts succeeding each other in her mind any more. For a dreadful moment, detachment failed her—Martin was dead. She did not want, any longer, to live. To what purpose, what end, was the endless dressing and undressing, bathing, painting her mouth generously and her cheeks not at all, rehearsing, recreating the ghosts that strutted through playwrights' minds.

That had seemed important once—when she was young—young like Ann, whom she had forgotten for hours. Ann, that uncertain child, getting herself rapidly entangled with the absurd young Parker. There was a young man who would discourse to her beautifully on Freedom—and leave her free—to face anything that occurred, if he grew bored.

And it seemed to her, overcome with the sudden solemnity of the tired and the drunken, that something must be done to save Ann—that it might be her life's work—as they used to call it—to save Ann from the consequences of being young and stupid, and believing that life was anything more than a road one traveled with a composed face, comforted in its loneliness by the reassuring texture of money and adulation and a success that never touched the soul—but was enormously satisfying to the ego.

Instantly, or at least in the morning, she would solve the problem of Ann, of every difficulty Ann might ever encounter. She would make so much money that Ann, wrapped safely in the by-products of wealth, sables and jewels, and trips to Paris, might never have to confront the unpleasant actualities, the risks that lay along the road of self-sufficiency.

She was infinitely weary. The problem of Ann must wait until she woke. She was weary not of that problem, but of the self from whom she might never quite escape. Never quite, but almost—easily enough, by turning off a light, and plunging that mirrored reflection into blackness. Into black dark, in which at last, she slept.

✶ ✶

II ANN

It is just about a year since the morning Janice came into my room and said, "Ann, have you any idea, really, as to what you want to do with yourself, between now and the time you marry?" I said, "No." For that matter, I have no idea now, except that I grow surer and surer I want to marry Parker as soon as he gets himself some settled occupation.

She said, in a bored voice, "Stay with me, then I shall try to see that you have everything you want."

I said, "But I can't accept so much, Janice." She said, "Actually, I need you. You happen to be all the family I possess. And," as an afterthought, she added, "no doubt you'll earn your way. People around me usually do, if just by putting up with me." She was looking very white and tired, looking more or less as if she had spent the night drinking cognac, as probably she had. She often does.

So I became part of her circus troupe. She has been extraordinarily "good" to me, as the phrase is, and I have through her, a more entertaining life than I could have conceivably managed for myself. I am her personal secretary. My duties consist principally in saying that she is out when people telephone. For that she insists upon giving me an allowance of a hundred dollars a week, and the use of her charge accounts. Also infrequent lectures on the things that are wrong with Parker. Her principal contention is that he talks too much about a man's necessity for freedom. He does talk a good deal about that, but I don't mind. He talks so entertainingly. He is so healthy and so sane. Such a comfort among the fantastic, devoted figures that surround her. She does not object to him often; she is usually completely unaware of him and frequently unaware of me. She retreats into some solitude where she plays the rôle of the great actress, the great lady of fashion, the woman of the world, from the moment of her waking until she goes to bed. She emerges from this solitude occasionally to quarrel with Hilary—a man for whom I have no respect at all—as to the amount of money her current contract calls for, or to produce for me an

assortment of suitors ranging from one of America's three greatest actors, who must be at least sixty and wears a toupé, to the handsome scion (but he's very stupid) of one of America's formerly great families.

I have less idea now actually, than I had a year ago as to what I think of Janice. I used to regret that I had no special talent; that I wrote just a little, danced just a little, had just a little dramatic ability, but the more I see of my famous cousin, the more easily I am reconciled to my limitations. There are moments when I admire her terrifically, there are moments when I love her. I have to weigh those against the moments when I feel for her nothing but contempt. I alternate between deciding that she is insane, deciding that she is tragic and admitting that she is a genius, and should not be governed by any of the rules adequate for the commonplace.

She is nicest in the mornings. When her maid, Emma, has brought me my breakfast and I am dressed, Emma and I confer as to whether it is time to wake her. Ultimately Emma goes tip-toeing into her room and says, cheerfully, "Wake up and drink your orange juice, Miss Janice." She wakes up looking like a flushed, sleepy little girl, and drinks the orange juice obediently enough, but two-thirds of the time, she goes back to sleep instantly. Then Emma and I hold another conference to decide which of her noontime appointments must be kept and which can be broken.

I said to Emma once, "How do you ever put up with it, day after day? You never lose your patience with her and all this is pretty monotonous."

Emma said, "Miss Ann, do you know anything about the life of a field hand in Georgia?"

I said, "No."

Emma said, "Well, the life of a field hand in Georgia is what I call monotonous. Compared to that I never forget that this is Heaven."

Then we debated whether we dared to phone Hilary and tell him she would miss rehearsals, and ultimately we woke her and she went to rehearsals in a very bad temper and three-quarters of an hour late. She would not have any trouble about getting up in the morning if she would only go to bed at night. But I can't remember when she was in bed before dawn. However, on the mornings when she has no appointment, when she lies in bed and talks to me or Emma, or holds long telephone conversations with her admirers, she is very gay and altogether entertaining.

Sometimes I believe I stay with her for the sake of the moments when she chooses to be amusing, and sometimes, strangely, I think she needs me. I do

serve to stabilize her and Hilary is right in saying that, God knows, anything that serves to stabilize her is a good thing.

In the mornings, I can believe that she is real, that she is a person, that she was even a little girl and went to school like other little girls in the Maine city where we were both brought up. One day someone sent her a set of breakfast china from France, and she and Emma laughed for half an hour, the first morning that she used it, talking about some tea party Janice once gave when they had only four cups for six people. And then it seems true that she was a young, poor, obscure girl, who had a very thin time of it in her first years in New York.

But when she is dressed, attired rather, for the process is elaborate enough to be so described, unreality slips over her. Her first rôle in an average day is a Parisian couturière's version of the professional beauty. She plays that through luncheon, if she gets up early enough to go to luncheon, and through an afternoon shopping, if she has time to shop. She usually takes me shopping with her and insists upon buying me all sorts of picturesque velvet frocks (in which Parker admires me very much, which is pleasant), but sometimes I sigh for a few simple sports clothes from an ordinary department store. When she is finished shopping, she usually comes home for tea and entertains everybody whom her acquaintances—for she has no intimate friends—choose to bring around. She begins to drink at tea-time, unless she has demanded brandy after breakfast.

Underneath that lovely fragility of hers, there must be amazing vitality, for she drinks steadily, month in and month out, and it never seems to have the slightest effect on her. I have never seen her publicly show any evidences of being the worse for drinking. Late at night, by herself, she lets down.

She brightens as it grows dark. Emma switches on the lights inside, the guests on the verge of departure sparkle more entertainingly. Everyone near her is filled suddenly with excitement impending. All that impends, of course, is her departure for the theatre. Emma usually goes with her, though she has another maid to dress her there. Hilary calls for her about half the time. Sometimes, if she has had more than the ordinary number of cocktails, and has refused to eat anything at all, I go with her myself. Not that anything ever happens. I just have the feeling that some day, something will.

In her dressing-room, she grows very calm and quiet. When she is called, she walks out in a bored manner which disappears the instant she is on the stage. Then she is invariably magnificent. Watching her from the wings, as I have watched her so often, I thought always that beauty, grace, genius like hers, was beyond the judgment, the criticism of anyone. For two or three hours

an evening, she justifies her whole life. Then the curtain goes down and she fades. In her dressing-room again, hurrying to get make-up off, to dress for some party or some night-club, demanding brandy, laughing off Hilary's protests as to the amount of brandy she pours herself, she is no longer the great genius. She is just a beautiful, thoroughly spoilt woman.

I don't usually go with her and Hilary after the theatre. They distress me too much. They are both such restless, unhappy people. I know that he was once her lover, and that shortly after I came to live with her, she refused to have him for a lover any more, but she is dependent on him for companionship, apparently. She even seems to enjoy that companionship when she is in a mood for enjoying anything. And he worships her. That is obvious. Nevertheless, there is something that they never talk about, something strange between them that makes them intermittently acutely ill at ease with each other. They carry on long conversations about abstractions; love, loyalty, God knows what. And one has the feeling all the time that they are talking about something entirely different, so I leave them and go dancing with Parker at some place that isn't very expensive, for Parker has so little money.

He and I talk about all the things we will do when we are married, but sometimes I grow discouraged because that day remains so far off. He has given up the theatre. It was just silly for him to go on as an actor, but until he met me he was not ambitious, and the theatre served to occupy his time pleasantly. Now he has a job in the brokerage firm of his uncle, and I'm sure if he had a little capital to invest, he could be made a junior partner, and earn enough money for us to marry. But he has no capital at all to invest. Hilary made me furious by saying that I believed in economic determinism of romance. I don't believe in anything so elaborate. I just do not feel that two people should attempt to marry until they have sufficient money for a comfortable life. Love in a cottage just does not last. Even a cottage needs to be redecorated once in a while. A man grows bored with a woman, who is circumscribed by the limitations of poverty, who has not enough money to dress well, to run an apartment comfortably. I've seen too many cases. I want my marriage not to be handicapped. Parker agrees with me in principle, though he does grow impatient. But there is nothing for it except to wait, and in the meantime to spend pleasant evenings.

When he brings me home, I pray as I open the apartment door, that Janice will be in bed, that she will not be walking up and down talking to the portrait of the Commodore. When she paces up and down, drinking glass after glass of brandy, and talking to that portrait, I know that she is insane, and I feel that I shall grow insane, watching her, feeling obscurely, that there are things about

her that I shall never comprehend; feeling that all people's lives are mysterious and have strange depths that do not bear contemplating. I like life to be simple and clear and normal. I mean my life to be that. But watching her late at night, I grow terrified, lest my life, too, get diverted down some dark by-road.

One day, shortly after I first came to live with her, she wrote to our cousin Evelyn and asked to buy the portrait of the Commodore. He is a reprehensible ancestor of ours of whom I've heard stories. He was some sort of pirate. His portrait used to hang above the mantle in the old house outside Portland. Then Cousin Evelyn inherited it. Heaven knows why Janice remembered the picture, or suddenly decided that she wanted it. But she wrote Evelyn, who was glad enough to sell it, I suppose. She is always hard up. Janice was tremendously excited about its arrival, and took down a gorgeous old carved mirror at the foot of her bed to hang the portrait there. The mirror looked much better in her room, though the portrait is rather good. Whoever painted it, made the Commodore look very alive. He does not look like an adventurer, but like a quiet enough gentleman. Only his eyes are curiously amused.

The picture had not been hanging in her room a week when I discovered that she talked to it. One night I came in very late and heard her voice. The door to her room was not quite closed. I did not mean to intrude, but I heard this rather strange voice talking, and hearing no voice answering, I was afraid she might be ill, so I went to her door. She had a half-empty brandy bottle on her dressing-table. She was standing sipping brandy while she talked to him. She was telling him that she agreed; that it was the duty of the head of every family to make a fortune to protect the lives of the family's less self-sufficient members. I was terrified. I thought she had gone out of her mind. I thought of waking Emma or telephoning Hilary, but finally decided I should do something myself, so that no one else should know about this. I knocked and went into the room. I said, "Janice, are you ill?"

She said, "Never felt better. I've just been talking to the Commodore about family solidarity."

She was entirely nonchalant. I did not know what to say next, but she went right on talking, asking me if I had had a pleasant evening, where I had been, and whom I had seen. I almost believed that I had imagined seeing her stand facing him, talking animatedly to him, but her door had been opened a third of the way. I could not have been mistaken, and I knew that I had seen her, for later that night, I heard her talking to him again.

The thing worried me so much, that I finally spoke to Emma about it. Emma is only her maid, but she is completely loyal to Janice, and I sometimes think understands Janice better than anyone else, because she has been with

her so long.

Emma, it appears, knew all about it already, and did not seem to think it was anything to worry about.

She said, “Now, Miss Ann, don’t you go concerning yourself. Miss Janice has lots of worries. I suppose when she gets alone, she likes to think aloud, and the man in the picture—he’s like a relative. It’s nothing to worry about.”

That was not very satisfactory. Sometime later, I decided I had better consult Hilary, for, in spite of the fact that I do not like him, that I think he has no spirit and lets Janice trample him, he is a fairly intelligent person. I spoke to him one day after I heard Janice call the portrait “Martin.” Strangely, Hilary did not seem to think it was anything extraordinary. He said, “Haven’t you ever seen religious women praying almost out loud to statues of the Saints or Madonnas? . . . You ought to go to Italy, Ann. Very interesting manifestations of the religious spirit there.”

I said that was beside the point.

He said, “It’s just another version of the same thing. Better let her alone. I wish——”

Then he began to stare out into space the way Janice does and we had no further discussion of what he wished.

Janice herself brought the thing up indirectly one morning, when she had awakened unusually early for her, and we were having breakfast together. She began by saying, apropos of nothing at all:

“Ann, darling, I should miss you dreadfully, but I wish you would get married and have some nice children to carry on the family. We have an interesting family—some really extraordinary ancestors—people like the Commodore. The modern variations on the theme would be entertaining.”

I said, “Why don’t you marry yourself, Janice? You’re a much more beautiful woman than I’ll ever be, and your children might inherit your talent.”

She said, gayly, but somehow as if she meant it, “I’m not a woman at all. I’m a piece of commercially valuable property.”

I said, “What is there about the Commodore that so fascinates you?”

She said, “He had the right idea about life, my dear.”

I persisted. I said, “What was his idea about life?”

She said, “Never to admit it, when it lets you down.”

I said, “That’s awfully obscure, Janice.”

She laughed, and said, “I suppose so.” Then—I was looking over the morning newspaper—I saw an advertisement of a sale of sable scarves. I knew she had been meaning to buy one, so I showed the advertisement to her and we began to talk about clothes.

She is quite normal as to the interest she takes in clothes, at least.

I am increasingly aware that she has, for me, the fascination of the strange for the commonplace—aware that I shan’t leave her except to marry Parker, aware that even if she were poor and paid me ten dollars a week instead of a hundred, I should not be likely to leave her, because I should feel cheated of knowing what happened next. Even when she most exasperates me with her melodramatics about cognac—her loyal servants, Emma, the maid at the theatre, Hilary, her hair dresser, the woman who gives her massages, all adore her—she never bores me. She would not need massages if she would take time for outdoor exercises. I don’t think she needs them now—she is thin as a rail, but the doctor said they were good for her nerves. There would not be anything wrong with her nerves, if she would stop drinking. Oh, dear, I shall never make up my mind whether to think she is a fool or just wonderful.

The difficulty is that I always know what I like and what I want. They are commonplace things. I am a practical girl. But I do know what they are. I like nice clothes, rather less romantic-looking than those Janice chooses for me. I like the theatre—from the audience side of the footlights. I like swimming, and riding a horse. I adore tennis. I am fonder of caramels than cigarettes, but I do not let myself eat enough caramels to spoil my figure. I like driving a little too fast in a good car, particularly when there is a high wind blowing. I love dancing in general—and with Parker in particular.

I love Parker, and I want him. Although even about him, I am practical to a degree. I know that he is not distinguished by remarkable strength of character, that he would rather have a pleasant time than work hard. But he loves me enough so that he will work hard for me. And—he is so big and healthy and cheerful. We enjoy doing the same things. I think, as soon as we have enough money, we can manage a marriage that will last. If we were foolish enough to rush—if we were committed to uncomfortable poverty, we should get horribly on each other’s nerves in no time. . . . Now, that may not be the description of two people sharing a grand passion. I suppose it is not. Still, it’s so much saner than a grand passion, and has a so much better chance of survival.

Janice is supposed to have had a grand passion once, for that young man who died so tragically in Africa. So I hear. People have intimated it to me, and

since I do not wish to discuss Janice's personal affairs with her acquaintances, I pretend that I do not know what they are talking about. I don't believe in her grand passion, very much. In the first place, she would scarcely have been so entangled with Hilary, as she was when I first came here, if she had been very deeply in love with anyone else. The young man could not have left for Africa more than a few months previously, and I know if anything ever happened to Parker, I should not be able to look at another man ever—or at least for several years. So I don't believe that story.

Yet—I keep wondering, exactly what she lives for—what she wants or likes, except cognac. And I don't think she likes cognac. She just drinks it to avoid something else—but what else I have never found out. If she has any impelling motive, I should say it was not to show any emotion, except about trivial things. She can lose her temper quickly enough if a dress she counted on wearing is half an hour late in arriving. But nothing that is serious concerns her.

There was, for instance, the case of Maybelle. Maybelle was the loveliest young person I ever laid eyes on, even if she seldom remembered to wash the back of her neck. She came into our lives via a beauty contest in the Bronx. (It was held in other places as well. I believe a syndicate of newspapers sponsored it.) Maybelle won in the Bronx division and later, all New York City, and a state and sectional contest besides. Janice was one of the judges. Hilary's publicity man arranged that. Janice always said, "Oh yes" to whatever Hilary suggested for her personal publicity, and carried out his arrangements faithfully, unless we forgot to remind her about them. She never remembered, herself.

Janice and the other judges had to choose the sectional winner from the six contestants left after the eliminations. They decided on Maybelle. The prize was a chance to appear in a New York revue. Janice forgot all about it immediately after the contest. The revue opened, and there were some newspaper notices, rather unfriendly—except those that appeared in the paper that sponsored the contest—as to Maybelle's lack of acting ability.

Then, a few days later, Maybelle rang our doorbell. Emma kept her standing in the hall, and called me. I was curious to see her—I had only seen her photographs—and went out to her. She was the most woe-begone specimen of a beauty contest winner I had ever imagined. She was dressed very ornately, in an assortment of clothes that were among her incidental perquisites. She had combined hat, shoes and coat according to her own taste. The combination was pretty deadly.

She said in a rather pleasant, husky voice that she had to see Miss Janice. I

tried to find out what she wanted, but she was either unable or unwilling to explain. She had been crying so hard that the paths of tears made clear the various layers of make-up on her face. (The make-up, Janice told me, postdated her glorification. She was at the time of the contest, a Bronx rose blossoming without the nourishment of cosmetics. Well, since, she had made up quantitatively for anything she may have lacked in experience in using them.)

I was still trying to discover the reason for her call, when Janice overheard our voices, and came out of her room. Maybelle burst into loud sobs on sight of her, muttering something about, "Oh, Miss Janice—you've got to help me. It's all your fault for getting me into this. I know you voted for me and persuaded two of the other judges who would have picked that red-head from Buffalo."

Janice said, "But my dear—what is the matter?"

Through a confusion of noises we gathered that Maybelle "could not—did not wanna be a actress—at first it was lovely—but the other girls made fun of her because she could not learn the steps—and no one had told her she must bathe every day, just as she did through the contest. A publicity man had told her to bathe through that. She would catch cold with so many baths in cold weather—and it wasn't her fault if she could not remember a lot of steps that were silly anyway. Of course, it was lovely with her new rich boy-friend, but now he knew she was no good as an actress, he did not love her so much—and she wished she was back working in the ten-twenty-thirty stores, but she could not do that either, because all the girls there would laugh at her, too, for going for to be an actress and coming back so quick."

Janice said, "You had better come in and have a cup of tea." So Maybelle went on explaining, through tea. It appears that she was being fired from the play, at the end of the week. Further, that a man she had met the night the show opened had wanted to marry her. He was an actual oil millionaire from Oklahoma—for Maybelle's luck was outstanding while it lasted. He was sampling the flavors of Manhattan—and the most recent winner of a beauty contest was among them. He had talked honorable matrimony—and promised to establish her in a mansion just far enough from the oil fields so that grass and flowers would grow there. She said, "It sounded like the place the Fresh Air Fund used to send us to, summers, when I was a kid, or like Bronx Park, the first thing in the morning before it gets crowded with baby carriages and yelling kids, walking." But his attentions were waning, as he learned that her romantic day as a New York celebrity was just about done.

Janice said, "You should have come to me sooner. There is no comfortable

way back to the Bronx, is there? . . . Well, we'll see that you don't have to hunt one. Have a highball—you don't drink?—well have one as medicine for your sorrows—and let me think."

She thought to such purpose that Maybelle, carefully instructed, telephoned her boy-friend she was visiting her friend, Miss Janice, and would he like to come to call, after the theatre? He came, bearing orchids. Janice, home promptly, and sober, for once, welcomed him enthusiastically. He was so overcome by the honor of calling on the great star, that he was ridiculous.

Hilary, impressed for the occasion, began talking about oil wells. It seems that Hilary made the money to produce his first show, in oil stocks. He remarked himself, that they were safer investments than anything he ever put his money into on Broadway. Of course, the oil man did not know what he was talking about—and began to explain the danger of gambling in oil, unless one had spent one's life surrounded by gushers. It was all pretty entertaining, and my temper began to improve. I had been furious, because Janice inveigled me into spending the evening at home, supervising Maybelle's bathing and dressing. Janice lent her a lace frock, actually. Emma had to let it out for Maybelle. The few weeks excellent feeding since the contest had already begun to have their effect on Maybelle's figure. She was one of those beauties who seem doomed to expansion.

Janice, very dexterously, led the conversation around to Maybelle's great future on Broadway, said it was criminal that a girl with Maybelle's individuality should be exposed to the stupidities of the average musical comedy producer—that she, Janice, had insisted Maybelle resign from her show, instantly, and stay with her, Janice, until she and Hilary decided what would be the best rôle for a girl of Maybelle's Madonna-like beauty.

The oil man, who was fundamentally, among his native wells, a very decent person probably, but just had the illusion that the size of his fortune entitled him to first-grade, durable New York celebrities, if he were dealing in any of them, beamed.

We had him around every night for a week, except one evening, when he insisted on taking us all out. Janice, who never sat with strangers, and who hated to be made conspicuous in a night-club or any place where she went to be part of the audience, sat and smiled and was gracious while the oil man roared at the waiters to hurry with Miss Janice's order—to fill Miss Janice's glass—and so on. He was in Heaven. Parker and I, brought along, as nearly as I could make out, just to make the party larger and more noticeable, waited for Janice to get up and sweep out of the room. But she did not. She sat, talking to Maybelle, the oil man and Hilary, as if she had never had quite such a beautiful

time, before. Parker and I had a bet that if he made her drink night-club champagne she would throw up her hands and leave. She drank three glasses of it, and said it was delicious, but that she was unaccustomed to wine, and feared that any more might make her head ache.

The net result was that the oil man approached her next day, said that he hated to interfere with her plans for her protegée, but he loved Maybelle so madly—and perhaps after all home and motherhood was best for a delicate little innocent thing like Maybelle. They were married, and departed forthwith for Oklahoma. Janice was very firm about that. Maybelle should be settled at once in the environment where she would spend her days—and no longer be exposed to the temptations of a great city for a beautiful and talented girl.

Janice said, afterward, "And by the time he finds out how dumb Maybelle is—she'll be a Madonna, instead of looking like one, and he will be content—having an heir to the oil fields. Do you suppose she'll keep on bathing?"

I said she would—that I had convinced her finally it was a distinguished thing to do, and would be sure to impress her new neighbors. Later she wrote that she had sterling silver fixtures in all her bathrooms. So maybe she kept on bathing. We never knew.

Yet, contrast the Maybelle incident with the story of the night-club sketch—and you will see why I never can determine much about Janice's character.

It was not very long after I came to live with her. It was before I began to avoid going out on parties with her and Hilary. She, Hilary, Parker and I went one morning about three, to the Caviar Club, after some musical comedy star's birthday party that was excessively dull, because the star, stimulated by much champagne, sang without request hits from all her shows—and she had been in eighteen or twenty. The Caviar Club is one of those Manhattan night-clubs that are vulgar, raucous, noisy, and occasionally very entertaining, if one is in the mood for laughing at people for the things they laugh at.

There was a new sketch—no more vulgar—in no worse taste than several of the others. It was a travesty on that African expedition to which the newspapers *had* been devoting an inordinate amount of photographic space. The New York newspapers do seem to operate on the principle that if you die extraordinarily enough—whether on the ice floes, like Andrée, or in the jungle like Leland and Martin—you are very live news for some time thereafter. Pictures of you—playing football or at your mother's knee, or as a bridegroom, or riding a merry-go-round at Coney Island, are *per se*, worth printing, provided you have died far enough away—and violently enough—from Coney Island and your mother's knee.

I was getting tired of pictures of the now-dead members of the Leland expedition myself. Janice, no doubt, because she had admired Martin to some extent, felt differently.

The night-club sketch dealt with a dicker between the leader of a scientific expedition, and the leader of a tribe of savages for a slaughter to take place, just in time for pictures to be sent by Radio to the Sunday rotogravure section of the *Times*.

I laughed, with the rest of the audience—forgetting for a minute about Janice and Martin. Then I happened to look at her. She was so coldly furious that I was frightened. Hilary said to her, "My dear, it is inconsequential. Don't make a scene. Keep your head." She said in a cold voice, "Call the manager." He came—an offensive, fawning little man and very anxious to ingratiate himself with Janice.

She said, "Who are those men in that sketch?"

He said, "Just a couple of boys came in with the idea—they were out of jobs, and I give 'em a tryout . . . don't you think it's hot stuff?"

She said, "I want them discharged—now, this instant."

He protested. "Really, Miss Janice. I gotta business to run. I'd like to do a lady a favor—but be reasonable. Did either of these guys ever do anything to you? I'll call 'em over and make 'em apologize."

She said, "Don't bother . . . I know you have a business to run. I know you are just making the grade, too." That was common gossip. It was a bad season for the night-clubs, and The Caviar had heavy overhead.

He looked at her curiously.

Hilary said, in a weary voice, "Janice, it doesn't really matter. You know it does not really matter."

She said, "May I not be permitted my caprices?" and to the manager, "It might be interesting to own a piece of a night-club."

He looked at her—he was puzzled.

She smiled at him—a very friendly smile. "Just a small piece . . . a couple of thousand cash would be useful to you, I suppose. I could make an investment to that extent. Do you have a book of blank checks here somewhere? I have forgotten my checkbook." He brought her one. He discharged the poor shivering "Chief of Expedition" and "Chief of Savages" on his way out to get the checkbook. I saw him stop at their side-table. They

were still in costume, and were eating scrambled eggs and bacon as if they were quite hungry. I could tell by their faces that he told them, simply, to get out.

Hilary sat looking rather depressed, and I suggested we all go home. So we did. Later, I asked him if he ever heard what had become of the two boys who were discharged. I could not get their faces out of my mind, quite. They looked so young, and excited at having a job. And they were so very thin, and had such appetites. Hilary admitted that he had seen them, the next day, and got them a job on a vaudeville circuit, doing a different sketch. I said I thought Janice had behaved outrageously, but he just shook his head and said, "Don't criticize her, Ann. I won't have her criticized. You are a nice child, but you are years too young to understand." Which made me furious, of course, and I stopped speaking to Hilary for a week—after I had told him he had no sense of proportion about Janice, and she was my own cousin and I was free to criticize her, if I chose.

I never heard him criticize her, or be anything but gentle with her. She was kind to him—in an indifferent sort of fashion except when she fought with him to get more money. That is another thing I have never understood, her passion for money, and more money. She seems to feel she has to establish some sort of important fortune. She has no near relatives to leave it to—except me, and I honestly don't want it. If I had enough to lend Parker to buy a partnership, or if he earned enough, partnership or not, for me to dare risk marrying him, I should be content. Naturally, I think money is a pleasant thing to have. But somehow I should be reluctant to inherit Janice's. I should remember how bitter and how sordid were some of her fights to get it. For instance—when *The Road to Forgetting* opened, last Fall, she had a run of the play contract for a thousand dollars a week. Shortly after the opening, she got a contract to do a picture, here in the East. They offered her twenty-five hundred a week for the picture work—she said she would not consider a cent less than three thousand—and she got three thousand. Heaven knows why that did not content her, but it did not. The next week, one afternoon when Hilary was calling, she began without preamble. She said, "Mary Patricken gets ten per cent of the gross in *Jasmine Fragrance*, Hilary." He knew what was coming. So did I. I started to leave the room, but I thought, "She never lets him out of anything, once she has begun, but perhaps she will be a little gentler with him, if I stay." Though I have no respect for him, I am sometimes fond of the poor darling.

He lighted his pipe calmly, and said, "You don't do badly for yourself, Janice." He smiled at her, a little uncertainly—and for the first time since I had met him, I realized that Hilary was handsome—had enormous distinction at

least—was beautifully built, and had interesting twinkling eyes, and thick hair that grew nicely around his forehead. He must have been tremendously good-looking before his hair turned grey.

She did not bother to look at him, sat staring in front of her, said, "Why am I supposed to be contented with 'not doing badly,' as you put it?"

He said nothing. She went on, "You know that *The Road to Forgetting* is a second-rate show."

He said, "I have seen better plays, as plays. But it is a beautiful vehicle for you."

She said, "Are you implying that I am a second-rate actress?"

He said, "You know better than that, Janice."

I think she did, and that she was for an instant a little ashamed, but not enough ashamed—enough to make her stop. She said, "You know as well as I that, if anyone except myself were playing the lead, *The Road to Forgetting* simply could not last through the Winter."

He said, calmly enough, "That is why I chose you for the play. It is a good play—you lift it sufficiently to give it the air of greatness."

She said, "Well, it's grotesquely unfair. Here am I, busy with pictures too, and getting a picture reputation that helps my stage reputation, forced to carry the whole weight of a very ordinary vehicle on my shoulders—while Mary Patricken, with a superb play she just has to walk through, gets ten per cent of the gross besides her salary. I want ten per cent of the gross, Hilary, from now on—or . . ."

He said, and he was a little angry, "Or—what?"

She blushed. She did have sense enough to know that no producer in New York would work harder to get the right sort of plays for her, or to make her happy in acting in them, than Hilary would.

She said, "or—I shall have to do something or other about it, I suppose."

He said, "Janice, do as you please about anything. I have never tried to tie you up—to get you under a long-term contract—to do anything but make you as happy as it is possible for you to be. You can have your ten per cent of the gross—I should make you sign an agreement to limit your liquor to compensate—for while it does not affect your acting, the amount you are drinking is certainly ruining your disposition. You will get your ten per cent. Now try as a favor to me, not to mention money for a month. Emma, I want

my hat and coat." He went out, and he actually slammed the door. I was so pleased with him. I thought, "If he has sense enough not to telephone or come to see her for a week, she will begin to telephone him."

She sat looking distressed. She even said to me, apologetically, "Hilary does not understand. A man can always get on somehow, but a woman does have to look out for herself, every minute."

I was not a bit sympathetic. I said, "Janice, you look after yourself beautifully. Hilary, Emma, even I, in my small way, look after you too. You just don't want that cat Mary Patricken to be able to boast that she is being paid more than you are."

She said, then, "Ann, I have to take my position in the theatre seriously. What else have I?" And I got rather sorry for her for no reason—and suggested we go for a drive, because she needed fresh air. So we did.

Naturally, Hilary did not have sense enough to stay away. He sent roses the next morning. I could have sworn at him when I opened them. But she seemed pleased—and was very agreeable to him for at least a week afterward.

The Road to Forgetting closed at the end of May. Janice talked vaguely of going to France for six weeks, seemed to find the effort to plan details of the trip was just too much trouble, and ultimately opened her upstate house instead.

I had not seen the place before. When we drove up, the first afternoon, the apple-trees were in blossom. They were heartbreakingly beautiful. The house is perfect. It amazed me that Janice ever found time, or took pains, to remodel a house and furnish it with such attention to detail. It is just like her though, having finished it, to leave it locked for a year, without ever going to look at it.

The only thing that distressed me was that she had hauled the Commodore's portrait along in the car, and herself supervised having it hung in the largest bedroom. I had hoped that she would abandon him for the summer—and perhaps our town apartment would burn down, and the picture go to the hell where, no doubt, its original had spent a century already.

Still, she was not sleeping in the room where she had the portrait hung. Though it was the best room in the house, it was to be left unoccupied for some reason.

Before dinner, Parker and I walked through the apple orchard in the level afternoon sunset, to the river, and talked about having a country place like this

—only, of course, we could not afford one so large—some day when we married. We were awfully happy, until Parker made a small scene. I know how he must feel—how impatient he must grow, because our marriage seems no nearer, or very little nearer, than last year. He *has* had an increase in salary, but it is only seven and a half dollars a week.

I grow impatient myself, occasionally. But there is nothing that can be done about it. Parker is just not the type to be happy in a marriage where he has to struggle.

He said that he could not wait forever—that he truly loved me, that if I cared for him, I would be willing to risk it. I told him that because I cared so much, I was willing to be patient. Then he grew very bad-tempered, and said I was a fool—that if I thought a man his age could wait indefinitely, I was just crazy. That there was no sense in pretending to be naïve—that I was modern enough to understand the situation.

I was dreadfully distressed, because he is usually so amiable. He went on to say that I was the coldest person he ever knew—that if I did not want to marry, and did love him—at least I might consider having an affair—so that it would not all be so silly.

Then I did say silly things, I know. I sounded like a young girl at a Sunday school picnic trying to impress the handsome minister with her beautiful morality. I said that it was not “silly” to take matrimony seriously—that it was insulting for him to suggest an affair, when he had said he wanted me for his wife—that, if that was the sort of man he really was, he had better find some girl less frigid and so on. Then I burst into tears—and Parker, without looking very convinced, shrugged his shoulders, and kissed me, and said it was all his fault. So we made a sort of peace. I knew it was not all his fault—that it was practically all mine, but I did not want to reopen the subject. It would be so difficult to explain to Parker.

However, I felt thoroughly ashamed of myself. I know that I am not treating him well—that it is rather mercenary to insist on waiting for a ten thousand a year income before one is willing to marry—that it is perhaps even worse to expect a young man to be faithful—and good-tempered about it—through a long-drawn-out engagement. But—it is because of Janice. I mean that the more I see of her—so strange, so lost, so unhappy, for all the glamour of her great success, the more convinced I am that it is disastrous for a woman to take risks, the more strongly I believe that it is wiser for a woman to be thoroughly conventional. She has had lovers: Hilary, whom I don’t believe she ever loved for a bit; probably that man Martin whom she may have loved tremendously. She has lived what they call a free life. I had some idea I wanted

to live that sort of life, myself, when I came to New York. But—not now, with her as an example of the end of it. I am frightened to marry Parker, and starve politely in some Bohemian garret with pretty chintzes and a hole-in-the-wall kitchenette. I am even more afraid to risk an affair—and have him grow tired of me perhaps, in the furtive, unpleasant mechanics of it. I can't. I have to keep my life free—from messiness. If he will wait, I will make it up to him. I will love him, be faithful to him, try to keep my looks and my charm, so as never to bore him, through all our marriage. But—this trivial thing is significant. He loves best, about my looks, my hands and my hair.

My hands are really as nice as Janice's—not as intelligent looking, but even smaller and whiter. The skin happens to be so delicate it is a bother. If I walk about for half an hour on a cool day, carrying my gloves instead of wearing them—my hands get as red and ugly as if I scrubbed floors for my living. So—I spend endless time taking care of them. With my hair, it is the same story. It is as dark, and has as much luster as Janice's. But it is not really as long or thick or strong. So I brush it constantly, and have all the elaborate shampoos and finger waves available at the more expensive beauty shops. It may be cynical of me, but married and poor with my hands growing red and my hair growing stringy, I think Parker would spend most of his time with better groomed women.

Yet—I have moments when I wish he would insist—would just make me marry him and chance it. He will not, and for the best possible motives—because he does not want me to be uncomfortable.

Parker and I walked back to the house as the sun was setting. Janice and Hilary were sitting outside under one of the apple-trees. She was wearing a very simple white frock, and she looked unbelievably lovely. It was one of the rare hours when she looked altogether peaceful. But Hilary did not look peaceful. He looked as if he ached horribly, watching her. And something in my heart hurt a little, there in the lovely light, as I looked at them both.

Nevertheless, we were all quite gay at dinner. We teased Emma, who was serving. Emma is the world's worst cook, therefore we have a swift succession of Filipinos, who "live out," in our kitchen in town—brown boys hired by Emma after she makes them cook an elaborate meal as a "sample," and discharged by her, later, when she alleges they are taking provisions home. I always suspect she discharges them for making advances to her. Her theory about men—often volunteered to me—is that "No man means any woman good. I know. I have had experience."

At dinner, Janice maintained that she was going to plant an enormous vegetable garden—though even I know one begins a vegetable garden before

the end of May. But Janice never bothered with details like that. Then, she said, Emma could occupy herself happily for weeks canning vegetables, and making preserves and apple jelly.

Emma said, “You don’t want to be wasting good sugar and stuff getting me to cook you preserves. I’ll burn ’em all up. I never did have luck as a cook.”

It was that sort of silly, entertaining dinner. Outside, it was beautifully quiet—except when for a moment, a thrush trilled a note or two in the dusk. Emma lighted the candles, and I smiled at Parker, who smiled, cheerfully enough, at me.

I hoped that the serenity of the place would be good for Janice, that we might have some weeks of orderly living there before the excitement of starting rehearsals for her next play.

But, after dinner, her mood changed swiftly. Emma brought in brandy with the coffee. We had had a cocktail before dinner, and I think that was all Janice had had to drink that day.

We sat about the table and sipped brandy, and the candles blew a little in the breeze that had sprung up, and made strange shadows against the old wall panelling. I saw Janice’s face grow darker, and told myself that I was becoming imaginative and nervous and absurd, that it was not true she began to look like the Commodore—that the Commodore had a Roman nose, too arrogant, and too large for the proportions of his face, while Janice’s nose was perfect.

It was no use. . . . I knew she did begin to look like him, when her eyes laughed and her mouth smiled a bitter little smile.

She said suddenly, in that luscious low voice that was so stirring, “It is dreadfully quiet here. I can hear, in this quietness, all the voices of people I used to know.”

Hilary said, “Well—are the voices pleasant to remember?”

She drank swiftly before she answered him. Then she said, “Is anything finished forever, lost beyond the possibility of recovery—pleasant to remember?”

He said, impatiently for him who was usually so patient with her, “There are things you have lost, discarded rather, that you could recover by lifting your finger, and you know it.”

She looked at him through her eyelashes. She said, “Perhaps, in never lifting my finger—I am kinder, my friend, than you know.”

He said, more impatiently than ever, “Don’t be mysterious with me, Janice.”

She said, “You will excuse me. I want to go walking in the moonlight—by myself.”

Hilary and Parker stood up. She turned in the doorway—and said to Hilary. “Forgive me. It was unwise for me to come here, I think.” He bowed, and she went out to walk in the fragrance of the apple orchard.

Hilary and Parker and I sat on the stone porch, smoking, and talking of casual things. We could see her distant figure, walking up and down, walking up and down—a graceful white shadow swaying in the moonlight.

Hilary said suddenly, “Like a ghost—like a slim ghost carrying her head high, walking arrogantly through hell.”

Then he went inside the house, and Parker and I sat quiet for a little while, Parker said, “Let’s go for a drive somewhere. Those two make me feel so young and inconsequential.” So we went driving, until very late.

Parker and Hilary had rooms on the lower floor of the house. Janice and I were upstairs, where also was the large unoccupied bedroom in which she had hung the Commodore’s portrait.

When I went upstairs, I saw there was a slit of light under the closed door of that room. I knew that she was inside, walking up and down, talking to him. And somehow, after the beauty of the quiet night, her life—the waste, the drunkenness, the madness of it, seemed to me quite horrible.

I thought that I was her nearest relative—that I was her closest woman friend, if she had any close friends, and that I should try to do something for her, especially since, in her indifferent fashion, she tried to do so very much for me.

I opened the door. She did not notice me. She was standing by the mantel, holding herself steady with her hands against it, talking to that calm pictured face. She was drunk as I had never seen her. An almost empty brandy bottle stood on the mantel, and the smell of brandy cutting through the fragrant scent of apple blossoms, was dreadful in the Spring night. Her white frock was stained with dew from the long grass she had walked through. Her hair was all fallen down over her shoulders.

She was talking very fast, very eagerly . . . “tell me—how was it with you . . . how lonely was it for you? Did that blonde girl’s face stand between you and reality—when your ship drove on through the Main? Did she blur the face

of every woman you might have loved—of every woman who could have been kind, could have comforted you—if a ghost had set you free . . . you had mistresses after—you married and had sedate sons—were you ever set free to forget in all the years you made gestures to show you had forgotten . . .”

Then she began to weep, wildly, and I had never seen her weep at all. I thought I was going as mad as she was, for I thought the eyes of that portrait, that face now so dreadfully like her face—looked down at her compassionately—that the mouth smiled with comprehension. I steadied myself. There must be something that could be done for her.

She had buried her face in her crossed arms on the mantel. She was saying, “Martin, Martin . . . I should not have come here—not to this house where I meant to spend my life with you—not to this room where we stayed once in Spring. Oh Martin, set me free . . .” It seemed indecent to speak to her—to let her know anyone saw her so broken. But it seemed unbearably dreadful to leave her there, alone, in the night, suffering so.

I tried to make my voice casual and friendly and reassuring, though I knew all the time that I was being ridiculous to hope, in my inexperience, that I could find any comfort for her.

I said, “Janice, my dear . . . you are over-tired. Do come to your room now and let me put you to bed.”

She lifted her stained face, and looked at me, for an instant, as if she hated me. Then—I could see the effort it cost her—she made her face steady. Composure, hardness, slipped over her, even before she could quite manage to stop sobbing.

She said, “Hello, Ann. You are up late.”

I said, “Parker and I went for a drive.”

She said, “I drank a bit too much brandy . . . Haven’t the capacity of the Commodore. He drank a bottle a day, you know.”

I said, as if it were all quite normal, “What were you and he talking about?”

She said, flippantly, “Oh, he was telling me, that ‘even the dirtiest things we do must lie, forgotten at the last. Even Love goes past.’ ”

I said, just trying to make conversation—to keep her listening to me and noticing me, “That is a quotation from Rupert Brooke. The name of the poem is ‘The Chilterns.’ Some of the earlier lines are ‘I Loved you faithfully and well, three years or a bit less. It was not a success—so now I take the road

again, quit of my youth and you.' "

She said, "Yes. The verses go like that. You have a fine accurate mind, Ann."

I said, "Let's go to bed."

She said, "All right," nodded to the Commodore, and walked down the corridor. I went into her room with her, and talked about anything that came into my head—until I saw that she was sleepy.

The next morning I said to Hilary at breakfast, "This place won't do her any good. We had better go somewhere else quickly."

He said, "I know. I decided that last night . . . . The only thing that does her any good, Ann, is hard work—the illusion of importance—the salary—the applauding audiences, and more than all, the necessity to live for certain hours a day, some character far from herself. I have a new play for her."

I said, "It's too bad she can't rest."

He said, "But she won't. She'll just double her drinking. . . . I was going to hold this off—until later in the season. But, we'll start rehearsals first of July, take it on the road for a week, and bring it into town early. It's sure-fire. It will weather the dog days. If not, I'll get her another. I'm going to keep her working all the year 'round."

He went back to town that day. He wired her within a few hours that he had an offer for her to do a picture, beginning work immediately. The actress originally cast for the thing was not romantic-enough looking, and the company was eager to get Janice. So she closed the upstate house three days after she had opened it, worked on in Long Island through the heat of June, and then started rehearsals for the play.

All her troupe, Hilary, Emma, myself, a corps of assistant stage-managers, the woman who designed her costumes, her masseuse, and a female astrologist (in whom Janice had absolutely no faith, but who entertained her, since the woman was so obviously a fake with a superb imagination) groomed her like a racehorse for her new play. As usual, we let our separate private lives go, while we schemed to limit her drinking, to make her sleep regularly, to keep her free from bother about anything except her part. I was somewhat worried when I saw the script. The part called for a very young girl. In *The Road to Forgetting* and in the play that preceded it, Janice played a worldly woman of thirty. Yet Hilary's instinct was right, as it was almost invariably about her. I knew—even halfway through rehearsals—that she was better than she had ever been.

As usual, the excitement of the last week absorbed me. I can jeer at all the tinsel glitter of the theatre nine-tenths of the time—but in the week before one of Janice's openings, I think nothing in the world is important but that opening, and on the night itself, I am so excited that I cannot sit and listen to the careless conversation of the audience. I have to go to a side aisle seat in the balcony, beside Emma, who takes absolutely no interest in the play, or the performance of any of the other characters, except "Miss Janice"—and who has to be restrained from applauding at the end of every single one of Janice's speeches.

On the night of this opening, the audience wept and laughed and applauded as they are supposed to have applauded Duse. Hurrying downstairs, after the last curtain—with Emma trotting along at my heels saying, "Hurry, Miss Ann. Miss Janice'll want her make-up taken off fast—and that theatrical maid is a slowpoke," I saw Parker, just leaving the theatre. He was with a lovely looking red-haired girl. She wore one of those impressively simple white satin evening dresses that demand an utterly perfect figure.

I knew he was to be at the opening, of course, but somehow I had not expected him to bring a girl to it. There was no reason he should not. Still, the fact that he had brought some girl I did not know, bothered me. I had not seen Parker, except for fifteen minutes once or twice, in more than two weeks. I did not have time to see him, because I was so busy with Janice. But I suddenly remembered, as I saw him pass, apparently altogether absorbed in the red-haired girl, that there had been no telephone messages from him for two or three days. He did not see me then, nor did he come backstage to say "hello" to Janice.

She was acting like a delighted child, and Hilary was beaming all over the dressing-room. I was delighted myself—the play's success was certain, and she would be occupied at least for months and months to come. For the first week or two, she would be so pleased with the new notices, and the new play, that she would drink very little, and be, relatively, content with her life. After a fortnight, she would probably begin to grow bored again. I had seen all that happen before. So had Hilary, who hoped, nevertheless, each time that it would not happen again.

We all went on to the Casino, and Hilary produced champagne. I had a pleasant evening, except that I began to realize there *was* something strange about Parker's non-appearance. I decided I would telephone to him early the following morning.

When we got home, Emma cooked bacon (slightly burned) and scrambled eggs (somewhat watery), but both beautifully served, for Hilary and Janice and me. She went to bed and to sleep instantly afterward.

Hilary stayed talking to me for a little while after Janice had said "Good night."

He said, "Well, we brought it off again, did we not?"

I said, "Yes, largely thanks to you—and you won't get anything out of it."

"Ann," he said, "I get a great deal out of it . . . nights like tonight, for instance. They are, usually, enough."

I said, "I like you. I used not to. But now, I think it is a shame that she will not be sensible, and marry you."

He said, "Something like that has been said to me before . . . Ann, she is helpless against herself. Therefore, we must stand by. I am content to stand by . . . She is the loveliest woman I have ever known."

His voice sounded old, and I was distressed.

I said, "She has her magnificent moments. I love her too, nowadays. But—you have no sense of humor about her."

He said, "Have you any sense of humor about young Parker?"

I said, "No."

Hilary said, "There it is, you see," and kissed me on the forehead, so that I felt no more than twelve years old. Then he said, "Good night."

Parker telephoned in the morning before I was awake, and left a curious, formal message with Emma, to the effect that he wanted to see me on a matter of some importance, and would call at four. I telephoned his office to say that I would be at home. He was out at luncheon, and I had to leave the message with his secretary.

He was late. Sitting, waiting for him in the hot stillness of the August afternoon, and remembering, happily, all the other times, for more than a year now, that I had dressed carefully and waited to hear his ring, at the door upstairs (for he was impatient about small things, and when he had an appointment with me, always hurried through the lobby downstairs without taking the time to have himself announced), I was for no reason that I knew, frightened suddenly. My hands shook a little.

He rang, and I made myself sit quietly until Emma opened the door. I said, "Hello, Parker," very calmly, before I looked up at him. When I looked at him, I knew what he had come to tell me.

He had come to tell me that he did not love me any more—that he had

found someone else who did not ask him to wait, to be patient, to be sensible. . . .

I knew that, before he said a word but "Hello." And I knew, in a minute, I should begin to feel things—too many things at once, and that I did not want to begin feeling anything. And yet, completely inconsistently, I wanted to hurry through with it. He stood with his hand in his pocket, a tall, broad-shouldered, slim-waisted, healthy looking young man, with a charming smile that was, at the moment, very uncertain.

He did not know at all how to begin. Well, I could help him there.

I said, "Who was the lovely looking red-haired girl I saw with you at Janice's opening?"

He said, "Oh, sorry. I didn't see you. The girl's name is Marianne. I met her ten days or so ago . . . She is from San Francisco, spending a summer in the East, has relatives at Southampton."

I said, "You think you have fallen in love with her, don't you? That's why you have seldom telephoned, in the last ten days or so."

He said, "Well—I knew you were awfully tied up with Janice . . . You never have time for me when she has a show in the last weeks of rehearsal." Then he decided to get it over with, himself. . . .

He said, "Yes. I think I am in love with Marianne. How did you know?"

I could not answer that. Absolutely the only thought that occurred to me was that Janice always kept her face composed in public.

He said, "Don't do that. You look like Janice, when she is being especially hard-boiled."

I said, "She is my cousin. A good many people think we look alike. Anyway, what was I doing, that you don't want me to do?"

He said, "You were smiling at me scornfully . . . And damn it, you have no right to smile at me scornfully. You have kept me waiting, waiting, pretended you loved me, but never loving me enough to be willing to risk having to economize on taxi rides."

All that was stupid, and had to be stopped, else, in a minute we should begin to quarrel, ridiculously, about anything irrelevant that came into our heads, and I should forget the only important question. I said, "Darling." I did not feel like saying "darling" unless I followed it with "damn you," because he should not have been patient and patient and patient, and then, with no

warning, stopped being patient altogether. He should have told me he was coming to the end of it. But perhaps he did not know.

I said, “Darling,” just to make him stop talking about everything I had done wrong, until I could think whether there was anything to be done right, now. Yet, I could not think whether there was. I could only think that perhaps I had not loved him very wildly, perhaps I was not the sort of person who loved anyone very wildly—but I knew I loved him more than I could love anyone else, ever.

There was nothing right to be done now—except not to cry until he left. There was one thing that it was important for me to know. I had forgotten that, for a minute. I asked him, then. I said, “Are you sure you love this Marianne person?”

He said, “She is the most extraordinary thing that ever happened to me. There is a girl who knows what she wants—and does not see any reason for waiting for anything.”

I said, “Oh.” That speech of his was clear enough. It steadied me though, to know the worst. I heard myself saying in a voice as icy as Janice’s when she is being disagreeable, “You are a trifle—unkind, in being so direct.” And I thought to myself, “My whole life, all my plans for the next forty years are going to pieces right in this room, and I can manage to say things that sound flippant. In five minutes, I will begin to cry, probably, and not be able to stop. Isn’t that funny?”

He stood staring at me, and he did not look at all happy. I had not stood up, when he came into the room. I had sat quiet. Now I stood up. I said, “Good-bye, then.” And I thought, “How can I say good-bye to him, coolly, as if he were someone it is not important for me to see again? Why don’t I scream at him that he cannot do this to me—that he has just gone crazy, because an acquiescent girl came along in a fortnight when I was terribly busy—and that I can be as nice or nicer to him than any other girl?” But I could not scream at him. I had never screamed at anyone, or pleaded with anyone. I had tried to be self-restrained and well-behaved all my life. Now it was stupid to be self-restrained, but I did not know how to be anything else.

He kept on staring at me. He said, “I don’t want to say good-bye to you like this. I thought—you might understand. I thought we might be friendly?”

I said, “What do you mean—friendly?” and knew that sounded like a line in a vaudeville sketch.

He said . . . “Well, I thought you might want to meet her . . . We are going

to the Casino tonight after the theatre—she and I and some other people. It is always cool at the Casino."

I said, "I am familiar with the places where it is relatively cool in New York in August." And knew that sounded ridiculous, but was glad it also sounded outrageously flippant.

He went right on. "Wouldn't you like to join us, Ann? You really ought to know each other—you are the two nicest girls I have ever met . . ."

I said, "Thank you. But I have another engagement." And I thought, "If he does not get out of this room in one minute, I *am* going to scream at him. How can he be so stupid . . ." and I held out my hand to him.

I said, "Will you excuse me? We are dining early, and I must dress."

He did not take my hand. He said, "God, you are hard. You never loved me."

I think I managed to smile, quite politely. I said, "Undoubtedly, you know best about that." I meant to walk to the door with him, as he turned to go, but suddenly I could not manage my feet at all. I could just manage to stand straight, without swaying. Though he would not have noticed, whether I stood straight or not, because he went out quite quickly, without turning to look at me again. Still, he might have turned, and I would not have liked him to see me looking shaky.

I was still standing in the middle of the floor, looking at the door he had walked through, when Emma came into the room. I don't know whether it was a minute later—or ten minutes.

She said, "What is the matter, Miss Ann? You look as if you had had awful bad news."

I began to laugh at that, and then I began to cry, and could not stop. I suppose I had hysterics, though I did not realize it at the time, for I had never had them before.

Emma put me to bed as calmly as if she were used to having me begin to sob, daily at four-thirty—and putting me to bed were part of her usual routine.

I lay there and thought, that I had been unbelievably stupid—that my New England practicality, my passion for having things sensible and orderly, had now probably ruined my life—and must have made Parker's life miserable. He should have told me . . . but he probably could not, since I knew he was as inarticulate, usually, about sex and things like that as I was myself. I began to cry harder, remembering the lovely times we had talking about dance-tunes we

liked, and plays, and clothes . . . all the pleasant things. We might, if he had made money sooner, or if I had dared risk marrying him without any, have had nice lives—always talking about surface things . . . and swimming and sailing boats and playing tennis.

I heard Hilary's voice in the little library next my bedroom, and soon afterward, I heard Janice's. She had been asleep all afternoon. I supposed they were talking, on and on, about her play. I never wanted to see one of her plays again or to hear anything about the theatre. If I had not let myself be so absorbed in all that, for the last fortnight, I might have kept Parker.

Emma must have told Janice about me, because, in a few minutes, she knocked at my door. I did not want her to come in, but I could not think of any polite excuse, so I said, "Come in." She was wearing a long trailing rose and silver tea-gown. She was all freshly bathed and powdered, and looking so beautiful that I hated to be swollen-faced and red-eyed.

She said, "Darling. I don't want to intrude, but Emma says that young Parker man came to call, and you have been weeping ever since he left. Is there something I can do?"

I said, "Not unless you can get him back for me."

She did not seem to understand. She said, "Has he gone somewhere? And why do you want him back? He is not a very exciting young man."

Hilary knocked on the door just then, and said, "Is Ann all right?"

She said, "No. Come in," and when I began to protest, said, "Oh darling, you don't mind Hilary. Why, no one minds Hilary."

He came in and heard that. He said, "Lord, Janice, that is an exasperating thing for a man to hear about himself."

She said, "I'm sorry, my dear . . . But I mean, you are such a rest."

He said to me, "Isn't she impossible, Ann? That just makes it worse."

I did not care. There were times when I was fond of them both, but at the moment, I could not bear either of them—so adult, and so indifferent, and so complicated, somehow.

Janice said, "That young man has gone away somewhere, and Ann seems to mind."

Hilary said, "Have you lived in the house with Ann as long as you have and not found out that she is madly in love with that young man?"

Janice looked completely surprised. She said, "No, not really? I never

noticed him much . . . of course, he has been around a good deal, but then, he is nearer Ann's age than most men we know."

Hilary said, impatiently, "You are the most utterly *distrait* woman . . . but I don't suppose you can help it. Ann, what has young Parker done?"

I could not stand any more of either of them. I decided to tell them the facts as quickly as possible, as the best means of getting rid of them. They would sit around trying to be sympathetic in an absent-minded sort of way, until they found out, anyway.

I said, "Parker's fallen in love with a red-haired girl—while I was busy, the last two weeks. He admires her because she does not make him wait for anything—and I have tried to make him wait for me, until we married, and for marriage until we could afford it."

Janice said, "Afford it? Why, I have ever so much money, haven't I, Hilary? Ann, it is all for you."

Hilary said, "Wait a minute, Janice . . . Ann, did Parker come today to announce his engagement to this young woman?"

I said, "No." I had not thought of that before, but he had not said a word about wanting to marry her. I had just taken that for granted. I said, "He came, I think, principally to ask me to a party at the Casino tonight, to meet her."

Janice said, "You are going of course? . . . You can get him back, no doubt, though I do not see why you want him. He seems to be just a weak young man."

Then I was furious with her. I said, "Maybe he is weak. I don't care if he is. I don't believe he is, really. And I know he is kind and pleasant and entertaining, and dances beautifully, and I love him. He is so sane and normal and healthy. He does not spend his life looking wistful" (Hilary smiled at that) "or talking to pictures of his ancestors." Janice's face stiffened a little. Then I was ashamed of myself. They were both trying to be kind, and I was being dreadfully rude. I should not criticize them because their lives were all mixed up and strange—my own had got rather mixed up itself, in the last couple of hours.

I said, "I am sorry for that speech . . . Thank you both for coming in to see me. But there is nothing to be done."

Janice said, "Don't be silly, child. There may be a great deal to be done."

I looked at her, so beautiful, somehow so tragic,—with that strange calm on her face, a calm that was like a mask slipped down over many sorrows . . .

and suddenly, I felt absurdly young and inconsequential. I tried to explain. I said, “Janice, it is silly to bother you with all this. You may be right. Parker, is perhaps, from your viewpoint, just a very ordinary young man. But you see . . . he happens to be all I ever wanted—all I ever shall want, I think.” And I began to cry again because I could not help it.

Her face changed completely. All the dreaminess went out of it. She said, “I have been unbelievably obtuse. Well, it is not too late . . . All you ever wanted, or may ever want . . . I felt like that once, Hilary, did I not? Long ago. That is irrelevant . . . So he is going to a party at the Casino.”

She was talking aloud to herself. I could not see much sense to anything she was saying, but her voice was, nevertheless, reassuring.

She said, “We shall get her young man back for her, shan’t we, Hilary?”

I said, “How can you, Janice?”

Hilary laughed. His voice was gay, now, too. He said, “She can do anything she tries to do, Ann, if she keeps her mind on it.”

Janice said, “I’ll keep my mind on this, Hilary. Don’t worry.” She called, “Emma.” And when Emma came, said, “Emma, telephone my masseuse to come down instantly. I want Miss Ann to have a massage—and then some hot milk to drink, and a couple of hours sleep.”

I said, “What do I want a massage for? I never have them . . .” She said, “You never had nerves before, either. They’re good for the nerves . . . Now, we shall have Parker back, before morning, with a date for your wedding set, if you just do what I tell you to do . . .”

She was so confident that I felt, insane as it sounded, that she would manage it. There was just one thing that bothered me. I said, “But should I want him back—after he has become infatuated with someone else?”

Janice said, “Bother all that . . . Of course you should. He will appreciate you more, by contrast, afterward. Try to rest now.”

She began to massage my head, with graceful and altogether ineffectual gestures. Hilary stood looking down at her. He said, half-gravely:

“Janice, you would have spoiled your children.”

She smiled up at him, “In a different destiny, no doubt, I should have . . . So would you have spoiled yours . . .”

Then the masseuse came, and pounded me until I was sleepy. Janice went to dress for the theatre, but came in to see me before she left the house.

She made me drink hot milk, which I hate, as a rule, but it did taste rather pleasant, then.

She said, “Emma will wake you in time to dress. I wish you would wear that white lace Chanel of mine. It is really an enormously distinguished frock.”

I said, “Dress for where?”

She said, “Oh, I did forget to tell you. Hilary is giving a party at the Casino after the theatre.”

I laughed. I began to see what she was planning. She kissed me, and went out. I began to wonder whether she was wonderful, or terrible, or tragic, or melodramatic—or what. I was too sleepy to decide. She was very good to me, always.

✶ ✶

III HILARY

I HAVE not been as entertained in months as tonight at the Casino. When Janice is as tonight, at her outrageous best, I realize that, had her luck been a little different, she would have been a damnably amusing woman.

While she was at the theatre—I assembled the party, and considering the limitations of New York in August, I think I did well. I told everyone that it was a day-late celebration of Janice's enormously successful opening. On that reasonable pretext I collected the most romantic-looking of the male motion-picture stars—a not too portly broker with a tremendous urge to spend his inherited Wall Street money on Broadway productions, Janice's leading man, an English portrait painter who wanted Janice to sit for him, a United States senator with an ambition to meet artists, and the very personable boy whose first novel was the current Book of the Month. No women, except Janice and Ann.

Janice appeared in a sheath of gold chiffon that would have been completely indecent on any woman who was at all sex-conscious, but on her was just pleasantly exciting. It encased her to a point in the general vicinity of her knees, and then swung out in a foam of little ruffles that looked, by some inconsistency, extremely demure.

Emma had dressed Ann up in a white lace thing that I recognized having seen Janice wear once. Ann looked much more nearly beautiful than I had ever seen her. She has the young American girl's fine figure and excellent complexion. But usually, she is a little too blatantly healthy looking to be particularly feminine. Tonight, her sorrow about the wavering heart of young Parker overcast her normal rosy cheerfulness, and the result was actually glamorous.

I remembered to send Ann and Janice flowers, and to arrange, by a judicious telephone conversation with the Casino, a table just out of earshot, but in full view of the table where Parker was entertaining his wild oat.

We met at the theatre, and had champagne cocktails in Janice's dressing-

room. The trouble with her beauty in recent years, is that, almost always, offstage, she lacks animation. When she acts, when she flings herself into the rôle of a woman altogether remote from herself she is a vivid personality—but in her personal life, she fades. However, tonight she was extraordinarily alive. It was a half hour before I recognized the reason—she was flinging herself into a new rôle—rôle of the sophisticated woman who uses her experience to rescue the happiness of the innocent girl.

My poor Janice. Through the years that I have loved her, disliked her, been sad for her, enraged by her, admired her fidelity, and cursed the stupidity of that fidelity, I have come at last to a certain calmness about her. She is as she is, and I can't change her. Sometimes she is a trifle wearing—at others, she is entertaining as a spoiled child may manage at odd moments to be entertaining. And she remains the one woman forever different from all other women I have known. My friendship, my brief and unlucky affair—my business relations, even, with her, have a color, an intensity, I have never found elsewhere in my life. I admit that, after long years. It is true no matter how frequently I have to placate my ego for the humiliation she administers so unwittingly, by pursuing some other female for a week-end or a month or two. I used to have some ridiculous hope that Janice would grow jealous of some one or other of the gayer and easier-to-handle ladies of my acquaintance. Unfortunately, though I have flung them at her from time to time, I don't believe she even remembers what any of them look like.

Well—we swept into the Casino tonight. Janice makes an entrance so superbly—when she takes trouble about it. She was determined that we should be "the cynosure of all eyes" as the Victorians phrased it . . . But Janice would not be able to spell cynosure, even if she has run across the phrase. She can't spell anything.

I see that I am digressing again.

Ann spoiled the effect of the entrance slightly—gave rather the impression of something carried along on a wave of dinner-coated males talking animatedly to Janice . . . but when we were seated she was all right. It is only when they walk, since the long-skirt revival, that athletic young American girls look self-consciously aware of well-muscled calves beneath their frail ruffles.

Parker's group were two tables away. They were what I had hoped. It had occurred to me, and I had told Janice, that in reaction from Ann's simple sweet common-sense, he would be very likely to succumb to something cheaply exotic. And he had. Not but what the Marianne girl was effective. At Parker's age I should have pursued her avidly—and might have had to wait weeks instead of a day or two, to attain her—since I was Parker's age before the

tempo of modern life speeded up so entertainingly.

She was a lovely red-haired creamy-skinned wench, who looked, in spite of immaculate grooming, much more disreputable than any well-behaved cocotte of my young manhood. She sprawled, in a manner I found ungraceful, but which I suppose she believed was provocative.

I looked for her weakest point, saw it—and watched Janice for results. Janice was dividing her attention between the Senator and the male picture-star. The boy novelist-wonder was devoting himself with some enthusiasm to Ann. He was too recently from the Kansas acres he had, for the Month-of-His Book, immortalized, to feel at ease with Janice, celebrity who had survived the chilly critical blasts of at least four New York winters, and still looked blooming. Ann's new wistfulness, the hint of uncertainty about her manner on this night, went straight to the heart of a boy who had not yet decided what to think of the drinks served at Manhattan's literary teas.

That was all right. I waited for Janice to move . . . and I thought, had she been a little more average, she would have made an excellent wife for a young business man with his way to make. Her smile managed to be so ravishing, without being promising at all. The Senator had just succumbed to it altogether. I sighed a little. I should have to explain to him for weeks to come, why Janice was never home when he telephoned—and his mother was a cousin of my mother's . . . She smiled at me across the table—and I forgave her, for the hundredth time, all her perversities. Had she been more average, she might not have been the actress who rewarded me for a lifetime's homage to the magic of footlights.

She glanced at young Parker's table. Her voice was as enthusiastic as when she welcomed her young lover after the departure of her aged husband, in the only light French comedy in which I ever tried her out. (She could carry a comedy characterization, but it was such a waste, to confine her to that . . . Her voice was, fundamentally, too stirring.)

She said, "Oh Hilary. There is Parker. I haven't seen him in endless weeks. Do bring him over, please." The Senator and the picture-star looked sad, simultaneously. She explained to them both, "Such a nice child, Parker . . . Terribly young of course—but I'm devoted to him—feel toward him as I might to a much-younger brother, had I been fortunate enough to have one." They both looked reassured instantly. I went to fetch Parker, who was staring, rather rudely, at Ann in her lace dress. He was looking as if he felt he had mislaid something, somewhere.

I crossed to his table. I said, "Parker, Janice wants to talk to you for a

moment. She says she has missed you." He made introductions. I don't remember the names of anyone at his table. It was an average assortment of the young and conscientiously gay. The red-haired girl Marianne laid a possessive soft hand on his arm, and looked at him as I have seen ladies look up at a man —oh, that was a long time ago, before they cleaned up the streets of New York.

She said, "Darling, I am mad to meet her." I thought she would be. I spoke to her as if she had suggested walking in, unbidden, on Einstein in his bath. I said, "I shall ask Miss Janice's permission. Come along Parker."

He came along.

Janice greeted him as if he were Martin come back from the jungle—except she was more reproachful than she would have been to Martin. She said, "Darling . . . have you been so rushed with business that you have had no time for us . . . Ann has been dreadfully forlorn . . . and I was so hurt that you did not even come backstage to say 'Hello' last night when I opened."

(She had not remembered whether he was there or not. We wondered whether he had been in our discussion, earlier this evening, as to the technique of the Casino party. That was while Ann was being beaten by the masseuse into a state of acquiescence about everything. I had maintained Parker had not come backstage. He was such a big young man one generally noticed him, because of the amount of space he occupied. So she chanced that approach.)

She went right on without giving him a chance to interrupt. "Sit down by me now, my dear, and tell me *everything* you have been doing."

He sat down, rather dazed. She had not paid him as much special attention, I am sure, in the years he had been acquainted with her. I grinned a little. I appreciated the difficulties of his position. While such pointed attention from the great actress would undoubtedly enhance his prestige with the red-haired girl whose eyes were fixed on his shoulder blades (Janice had seated him, of course with his back to her) still, hell and fury would break loose if he remained for more than a minute or two away from Marianne.

Janice was addressing the company-at-large. "Parker's the most comforting person to have around . . . I'm afraid I'm so busy I take him for granted sometimes . . . or seem to . . . But when he has been away for a few days, I certainly do begin to appreciate him . . . He's so healthy and sound—like ultra-violet rays in the house."

I thought, "Complete to the touch of plaintive Southern accent. She is ringing if off. But she is doing it with an egregious lack of subtlety. If her

looks begin to lessen someday, she will have to begin to improve her lines."

Her lines were adequate for the moment, though. Anyway, no one paid particular attention to what Janice said, provided she used her best voice to say it . . . I have noticed that in the theatre.

Parker smiled, embarrassedly, and hunted for something to say. I saw him glance perplexedly at Ann, who was sitting, decorative enough, but completely wooden-faced. I hoped he took the lack of expression for indifference. I knew it was panic.

Janice and I had disagreed as to whether Ann should be instructed in her part, or not. I maintained that she should be let alone—just dressed up by Emma and brought along, because if she were told to act this or that way, she would immediately be self-conscious—or might even have a burst of candor in which she would announce to Parker what we were doing. Even if she postponed the candor for this evening, if we were successful and she married him, she would never postpone telling him forever. It was better that she never know exactly what had happened to her.

Janice thought, of course, that Ann should be told when to smile, frown, be gracious and all the rest of it. Janice was, in fact, furious for a half hour when, being pressed for time, I told her that as an actress, her cousin was a born ham, and it was no use to waste stage directions on her. She, Janice, implied that any relative of hers must have dramatic ability latent somewhere. Fortunately, because she had to hurry to the theatre, I won my point.

I could see over Parker's shoulder that the red-haired girl was now beginning to look impatient.

Janice went on talking for several paragraphs about Parker's neglect of her and Ann. She behaved a little as if he were her favorite nephew. Before he could extricate himself, she had involved him in engagements for tea the next afternoon, for luncheon on the day following, and was murmuring something about after the theatre on the day after that—when she dropped her voice suddenly, and I knew her serious business of the evening had begun.

Her voice was very soft . . . and her smile was completely innocent. She said, "Parker dear—don't turn round, but tell me who is the amusing looking girl with hennaed hair and the coarse mouth at your table? She fascinates me." She included the table at large for a moment and went on. "Hilary is considering a play for me next season in which I'll have to do a sort of Cockney gutter-snipe—and if I could get my mouth made up to look like that girl's, it would be perfect . . ."

Naturally, everyone at our table glanced across at the red-haired girl, for whom, for one instant, I felt sorry. Yet, she would meet many men who would forgive her her ugly mouth for the sake of her delectable complexion. Only young Parker would never look at her again without seeing just the ugliness of the mouth—that cut, a preposterous hard gash across the softness of her face. I had noticed it instantly because I am accustomed to analyzing actresses' worst and best features when I am casting. I was not altogether sure that Janice would reach out unerringly . . . She was not usually very observant or specially critical of other women.

Janice's leading man said *sotto voce,* "You could not make up your mouth to look as hard as that, if you used seven layers of grease paint." I was not sure. Her beautifully-cut mouth sometimes looks as hard as that ancestor of hers whose portrait is her confidant. It looked hard, for a second's space now, as she watched Parker narrowly. She softened it deliberately . . . I had never been as aware that she was acting, in the theatre, as I was that she was acting now.

Parker was flushed to the tips of his ears, and had no words at all. Yes, he was one of the people who are unimportant. A weak young man, there was no doubt that Janice's instinct was correct about him. He might, once harnessed to Ann's placid reasonableness, turn out an excellent husband and father—amiable, well-intentioned, a good provider, even. He might, ruined by that red-haired girl, granted she was sufficiently interested to keep him long enough to ruin him, turn out a complete bounder. He needed to be safely enclosed within the walls of conventions, never to have to make up his mind as to what should be done in a situation outside the commonplace. There was no rule to guide him now. I think he should have stood up, kissed Janice's hand, and said, "Go to hell" retreating to his table then and his more recent commitment . . . But he could not do anything of the sort. He let the situation be settled for him—and so he let his life be settled for him. Perhaps, at infrequent intervals, when Ann's serenity palls, he will remember clearly, a red-haired girl with fire in her eyes, her carriage, the curve of her nostrils—and a mouth conspicuously ugly—once it had been brought to the observer's attention.

He let the situation be settled for him by Ann, at whom it occurred to me to look. I wish I had looked sooner. This situation that was to Janice and me to be played as high comedy, and was to the other guests, no situation at all, was as close as that little girl Ann would ever touch to stark tragedy.

She was dead white, under the make-up Emma had applied so dexterously. But when Parker looked at her helplessly, she did, with the instinct of the nice well-brought-up child, exactly the right thing. She said to him, "I don't think

her mouth is very ugly at all, Parker dearest."

He said, "Ann, you are altogether a darling . . . I think I must have been crazy, the last fortnight." Both he and she had forgotten that there was anyone else present at all.

Then she noticed me—and the rest of the party, who knew by now some situation existed. She said, hurriedly, in a little choked voice, "Parker, dance with me, please."

He went round the table to her, instantly, and they began to dance. They danced well.

At our table no one spoke for a moment. Janice's face slipped a little. She began to look tired. I knew what she would say next. She said it, "I'm bored with drinking wine. Does anyone happen to have cognac in his flask?"

I had cognac in mine. I handed her the flask, and went over to the girl Marianne, leaving Janice to pick up the pieces of our party, if she chose.

I asked Marianne to dance. She danced superbly, with a casual passion that was disturbing. I said, "You dance beautifully." She said, "I know it. What happened to my boy-friend at the next table? He looked hit 'twixt wind and water, if I ever saw anyone that was . . ." I was leading her away from the side of the room where Parker was dancing with Ann. I said, "You have lost your boy-friend. I hope he was not important to you. There is a door somewhere on this side that leads out to the terrace."

I saw the door, and guided her toward it. She said, "Not important probably, although it was beginning to be. It might have been, soon. How are you so sure I have lost him?"

I said, "Let's walk out on the terrace and have a cigarette. It is hot in here."

She said, "Yes, surely."

The terrace was cool and moonlit and empty. She leaned against the balustrade, and I lighted a cigarette for her. She was trembling a little. She was as fragrantly feminine, in her fashion, as Janice was. I said, "I don't suppose you want details . . . That girl with whom Parker is dancing is Janice's cousin, and was Parker's fiancee until this afternoon. Janice retrieved him for her just now."

She hesitated. Then she decided to know. She said, "Did she happen to say anything about my mouth to him . . . I saw everyone at your table glance at me for an instant, and when they do, I always suspect that . . ."

I said, “My dear child, you are lovely looking.”

She steadied her hand against the balustrade, and stopped trembling. She said first, “Damn him . . . He has liked it well enough to kiss it for a week. Sorry. I am being vulgar, I expect. . . . I was trampled by a colt when I was six or seven—my mouth healed this way. Since father’s made his money we’ve tried to do things about it . . . but . . . Sorry to bore you with all this.”

I said, “Marianne, I do not like that young man Parker.”

She said, “Neither do I, any more. That’s all right.” She was fumbling in the diamentee evening purse she carried. I offered her my handkerchief, but that was not what she wanted. Finally, she handed me the coatroom check for her wraps. She said, “I always carry it myself. One never knows, on New York parties, whether one’s escort will be competent at the evening’s end . . . or perhaps he will be unduly optimistic, when one is just bored and sleepy . . .” She stretched out thin young white arms to the moon. She said, “Everything goes cold so quickly. That Janice is a beautiful bitch. Hilary, will you get my wrap and take me home? I don’t want to go back inside. I’ll wait for you here. Give me another cigarette to amuse me while I wait.”

So I took her home and she put her thin arms round my neck and kissed me warmly, when I left her . . .

The occasional unexpectedly fragrant moment for which a man of forty learns to be grateful . . . .

I telephoned Janice, who was very drunk and gay. She said, “You did exactly the right thing, darling . . . getting rid of that girl . . . might have been a scene . . . Ann went off with Parker . . . isn’t he a fool, but she wants him . . . I want her to have what she wants . . . never had much I wanted for long, except you sweet . . . and I never wanted you as much as I ought—tell you how I got rid of the Senator, the actor, the novelist and the Wall Street playboy tomorrow . . . too tight and too sleepy now—we’ll have to give Ann a nice wedding . . . I’m going to give her the house in the country—good night . . . my ol’ friend . . . .”

And I have sat thinking about Janice until morning, trying to decide, as I have tried so many times to decide, whether what happened to her could have been averted—whether I could have averted it, had I acted in time. I was handicapped by the fact that Martin was a younger and more “attractive” man than myself. If I warned her about him, she might believe, with reason, that I was taking advantage of my age and greater experience, to eliminate a rival by unfair criticism. It was difficult to know what to do. It was my hope that he would remain in life long enough for her to be completely bored with him. I

think that would have happened. I think, fundamentally she was a much more intelligent, much sounder person than Martin. Perhaps at his hundredth reiteration of the "duty of freedom" to excuse his hundredth peccadillo, into which he wandered impulsively—she would have seen through him. He was, in my opinion, such a shallow spoiled fellow, completely lacking in any sense of responsibility. Yet he had charm—and luck—luck enough to die romantically in the midst of his most picturesque exploit, and so possess her forever—as the dead sometimes possess the living, through their helplessness against them.

Oh well, I am permanently incapacitated to judge Martin with detachment. My principal resentment against him is that when I first saw Janice, dancing no better technically, than most chorus girls, but with more spirit, she was a child who beamed. She was a little fresh-faced smiling girl. I remember thinking that she was a trifle *gauche*. But even then, she had something that distinguished her from the other twenty-three young women displaying the suppleness of their muscles in a dance routine. She had something—some fire, some innate quality of glamour—something that, never possessing myself, I have learned to recognize in twenty years of the theatre.

My regret is that I did not, at the very beginning of our acquaintance, tempt her with the promise of a golden future, try to make her believe in her own success as the only important thing in her life. . . . She pretends to believe in it now, God knows, but all she actually believes in, I am sure, is that Martin was the one perfect creation of heaven . . . That faith would never have withstood his behavior through years after she matured. . . . But he is dead, and will never misbehave again, to set her free.

I am not sure though, that I could have made her consider herself more important than he. She was born to love whole-heartedly, once. It is unfashionable of her. She moves in a milieu where people who cannot get what they want, permanently, take what they can have, in the meantime, and find what they can have not half bad. . . . But she refuses the compromise.

She came closest to compromise in the few months of our affair. Though I knew I was successful with her, simply on the rebound—that on Martin's return, she would probably dismiss me forever, it seemed my only chance. I suppose I am an opportunist. I considered that the chance was particularly good, because, fundamentally, under her half-dozen favorite poses, Janice is a completely honest woman. She would be bound to tell Martin, on his return, that she had been "unfaithful" to him, as the phrase is. I thought when she told him, the damage to the young man's ego would undoubtedly be severe. Actually, I suppose I hoped that he would then fling her out into the traditional

paper snow, and, thereafter, I would look after her all the years of her life . . . I am trying to say that I meant well by her.

I never supposed that he would beatify himself by dying violently.

On the night the news came of his death, she flung me out into the paper snow, in a ridiculous splendid burst of loyalty to his haloed memory. Perhaps I deserved what I got—the difficulty is, that she did not.

It is easy to say that the trouble with her is she lacks altogether a sense of proportion. But I never knew a good actress with a sense of proportion, yet. Take the case of Miss Carnavan, who breakfasts, lunches and dines (with time out for rehearsals) with an amiable, baldheaded husband, and has breakfasted, lunched and dined with the same one for the last ten years. She sees that her two stolid little daughters have adequate milk, spinach and sunshine. In great indignation, she removed the stolid daughters from an excellent modern school, because she found that one of the children in the school "fortunately, my dears, not in my daughters' group, but even so, it was dreadful enough" was illegitimate. Miss Carnavan, last season, created her greatest rôle of her distinguished career—as a warm-hearted streetwalker of Moscow.

The absence of a sense of proportion in actresses has always seemed to me amusing. That is because I was never in love with any of them except Janice. . . . As to her, if I did not pretend to laugh at her, I should spend most of my life weeping for her—and a man making his living in the modern American theatre has no time to weep for anyone except himself.

We married off Ann today. She had a "simple lovely country wedding." If I heard that phrase once, I heard it fifteen times today from various of Ann's and Parker's middle-aged female relatives imported for the ceremony. Where do the distant desiccated female connections of families, who turn up in sedate frocks and elaborately trimmed hats for weddings and funerals, spend their lives between times? And why do they weep more at the weddings than the funerals? Because they have never been the center of attention at the one, and will certainly ultimately be the center of attention at the other.

For weeks, Janice has been altogether absorbed in such details as the most desirable length for Ann's wedding veil, the sizes and colors of the glassware for Ann's new apartment, the flavors of ices and quantities of salads for Ann's reception.

I have never seen Janice gayer nor better-behaved, than in those weeks when she finally managed for Ann, the life she wanted for herself. It was a little overwhelming for Ann. Sometimes I think she was uncertain as to whether she was marrying Parker because she loved him—or fulfilling Janice's

concept of the proper destiny for a female descendant of the Commodore. And, in the first days of her official engagement, Ann was undoubtedly troubled by the thought of the means whereby she had reached this altogether desirable end. That recollection faded, in the rush of trousseau shopping, and Janice's arrangements about honeymoon, apartment, wedding, and the rest of it. Besides, we managed it as we had planned. Ann never knew precisely what had happened, and hopes, no doubt, that just the sight of her in a white lace dress was sufficient to show Parker where his affections really lay.

I decided, not for the first time, that if Janice could have managed to keep her mind on any one thing for a sufficient length of time, she could have been a splendid executive. She has the gift for impressing her friends into service, and conveying the idea that they are enjoying it. Her friends—I was about to say her subordinates, but since the list would necessarily include myself, for I was the person that really talked to caterers, decorators, even to dressmakers, when Janice had decided what she wanted from them, I do not say subordinates. . . . A man has his vanity. Actually, I found the proceedings heartwarming. As Lord knows I should find anything heartwarming that brought my dear love to resemble so closely the enthusiastic happy child named Jane who danced in a chorus years and years ago.

Except that I dreaded the end—the moment when Ann should leave with Parker, finally embarked on the average destiny in which they will both, no doubt, do well—the moment when Janice realized that this bride's mother, confidante, best friend, and manager, was just another rôle she was let play for a little while, and that the show was closing, as all shows closed for her.

She gave Ann the country house—and fifty thousand dollars in trust. To do Ann justice, she did not want to take either. But Janice convinced her that she had bought the country house on an impulse, would never be happy living outside a city, and that it was a very inexpensive house, anyway. (I handle Janice's finances—since balancing a check book is the extent of her ability in that direction, and I knew that the sums she had spent remodeling and furnishing that house, in the years she hoped that she would live married to Martin there, were preposterous, even for an actress with a good-sized income.) The fifty thousand dollars was about all Janice possessed in the world, except the house. Even I was moved to protest the fantastic extravagance of that gift—though Janice managed to persuade Ann that it was less than a fourth of her savings—and that since Ann was her nearest relative and her heir, she might as well take it now while she was young, and could use it advantageously.

When I spoke to Janice about money, she said, quite reasonably, that she

could always earn more, and that the success of Ann's marriage was to a great degree dependent on absence of financial strain. There was a good deal in that. Sound judgment was behind Ann's hesitancy in embarking on love and poverty with Parker. He would find it easy to be an excellent husband to a woman with an adequate dress allowance, but would grow very swiftly bored with a wife who wore house-dresses.

So I said no more to Janice about her gift. It was her money—I could see that she made more.

This morning, when Ann was dressed for the ceremony, the guests were assembled, the orchestra was tuning up, and Parker was in the conventional bridegroom's state of panic, downstairs, Janice realized for the first time, I think, that the end of the show was imminent. She was admiring Ann's appearance with a genuine enthusiasm I found very touching. She had brought me in to admire, too, as she sometimes telephones me to come to the theatre when she is rehearsing a scene that pleases her particularly. . . . Yes, though she takes me for granted, she wants me around and needs me, actually. I have no complaint. I have from her as much affection as she has to give anyone, and for the rest, there are always the red-haired Mariannes who come and go.

Emma was laying out Ann's travelling clothes on the bed. Janice looked at them, and looked surprised actually. She said, in a little girl's voice, "You are really going away—in a couple of hours now. You aren't ever going to live with me any more." Her mouth quivered a little.

I know how difficult it is for Ann to act impulsively, but she managed it then. She flung her arms around Janice's neck, regardless of possible damage to her bridal gown, and said, "Dearest, dearest. You could not have been better to me if you were my mother or my sister. You are the loveliest person I have ever known. . . . I'll come to see you every day, when we are living in New York, and when you are not busy, you must spend weeks and months with us here."

It was a scene that in a play I should have characterized as much too naïve for a New York audience's taste. I should undoubtedly have made the author re-write Ann's lines. But they satisfied Janice completely.

Janice was marvelous throughout the reception. She was gracious for what seemed to me—less disciplined than women to the sort of social dialogue that bores me—endless hours, listening to the inanities of female relatives. She was not a bit absent-minded. She noticed which guests had salad and which were looking hungrily about for more salad.

I heard some of Parker's relatives say that she was really a very nice

woman, even if she was an actress. Then I got involved with some aged males who were discussing golf courses in New York, in Florida, in Scotland. I hate golf. When I extricated myself, Janice had disappeared. She had not returned by the time Ann went upstairs to dress. I was not concerned particularly—I thought she might be waiting for Ann in her room—until Emma called me aside.

She said, “Will you see if there is something you can do for her, Mr. Hilary. She will feel dreadfully afterward, if Miss Ann goes away without seeing her—and Miss Ann will feel dreadfully, if she sees her as she is now.”

I went upstairs with Emma to the large bedroom empty of guests and gifts and wedding decorations—the bedroom Martin used to occupy. Emma said, “She’s locked the door, but you can get in through the dressing-room.”

She was lying face down on the bed, sobbing wildly. I thought, suddenly, that I did not remember ever having seen her cry in all the years I had known her. She was saying, “Martin, Martin. I shall never get over you . . . I shall never live long enough to get over you . . . Martin, Martin.”

Emma whispered, “She’s just been saying that, over and over. I don’t like to go in to her. I don’t know what to say.” I did not know what to say to her, either.

Down the corridor, through the half-opened door of the dressing-room, I heard two of the bridesmaids come upstairs, laughing. Emma closed the dressing-room door.

I said, “Janice, Ann will be leaving in a few minutes now.” She sat up, tear-stained, crumpled. She looked at me helplessly. I know she did not know what I was talking about.

I said again, “Ann will be leaving very shortly. I am afraid she will feel her wedding is spoiled, if you don’t go in to say good-bye to her.”

She said, “Oh yes,” vaguely, and managed to stand up.

Emma said, “I’ll bring your make-up right in here, Miss Janice.”

She said, “Yes, do that, will you?”

I did not know whether to leave her or to stay. It seemed better not to leave her. She walked up and down the room once. She said, “Do you happen to have a cigarette, Hilary?” I gave her one.

Emma came in with her make-up box—and a bottle of cognac. Janice looked at the bottle and laughed. She said, “The usual prescription, Emma. I

have been neglecting it lately. That is all that is wrong with me." She drank a quarter-tumblerful of cognac, and began to make up her face swiftly.

I said, "I'll go downstairs."

She said, "No, wait for me, darling. I shan't be a second. Just a girl briefly overcome by thoughts of the life she's missed. That's all I am. Wouldn't I have made a handsome bride, Hilary—if I had stayed sober. You know I would have . . . This dress is done for, Emma—bring me something else to wear."

Emma brought another dress, by the time Janice had finished with her make-up. She said to me, "Will you please go to Ann's room, and tell her I am coming?"

Ann was dressed, ready to leave. She kissed me more warmly than I anticipated—for I always felt Ann considered me something of a fool—and said, "Take care of Janice, won't you, darling?"

Janice stood in the door, looking very nonchalant. "I always take care of myself, child," she said. "It's Hilary that needs taking care of . . . Well, have a nice time."

We went downstairs, met the usual barrage of rice and confetti, and saw the last of Ann and Parker. The wedding guests stayed a long while afterward. I remember that Janice was patient for fifteen minutes with a deaf old lady who kept saying, "I don't see how you remember all your lines in a play, dear. *I* never could. Tell me how you do it. I didn't hear you quite. Tell me over again, louder."

Ultimately, Emma and Janice and I drove back to New York. Leaving the house, Janice made us stop the car for a moment where the driveway curved. We looked back at the house "surrounded by the most gorgeous Autumn foliage" as too many of the wedding guests had mentioned to me.

I said, "What do you want to stop for? It is three hours' drive to town. You will be late for the theatre."

She was a little drunk, and very good-tempered. She had comforted herself for the strain of the deaf guest by a good deal more cognac, I judged.

She laughed. She said, "Can't a girl have five minutes to be sentimental in? I want to look my last on what might have been the home of my descendants, if I had had descendants. You don't think I'll come up here to visit Ann and Parker, do you?"

I did not suppose she would.

She said, “If Parker has any sense, he’ll convince Ann that I’m no one to have around—or else some day I’ll tell Ann what a fool I think she married.”

She stared at the house a moment. Her face looked young and soft and unbelievably wistful. She said, “Do you believe in ghosts, Hilary? . . . But they don’t bother people like Ann and Parker, do they?”

No, it was scarcely likely that the ghosts of a young Martin and a young Janice, who had found this house one Spring day, and talked for a little of spending their lives in it, would ever trouble Ann or Parker.

She brushed her hand across her eyes, and smiled the smile I most dislike—the one that makes her look like the Commodore. She said, “That’s that. Take me back to Broadway, slave-driver.”

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ENTR’ ACTE

She woke in the chill of an October dawn. The light was still remote; there were black shadows in the corners of the room. She switched on the lamp beside her bed. The pattern of the lace on the coverlet, the colors in the Chinese jacket spread across the bed’s foot, the gilt lace on the cuffs of the portrait of the Commodore, became evident. She lay among the pleasant decorations of her quiet room.

She had slept restlessly, tossing the covers away from her, so that she was cold. She got up and put on the Chinese coat, lighted a cigarette, searched among the books on the table, found nothing that she wanted to read, and sat in a chair by the window, watching the dawn grow. Her head ached a little, and the coolness of the air blowing across her forehead was refreshing.

She had recently developed this habit of waking at dawn. It was, she thought, inconvenient, but unimportant. She would grow drowsy again, in an hour or two—and sleep then until noon. Still, there remained the hour or two to be faced. They were the worst of her day. The room was too quiet. The city was too quiet. It made her feel that she was trapped forever in a room, a city, a life, in which no day had ever been or would ever be different from another. Or else it made her feel that everything warm and gay and young in her life was ended, infinitely long ago. Ann was married a long time, was changing into a placid young wife who took more than an impersonal interest in *layettes*, and was dull company.

For an amused moment Janice reflected that Ann was rather worse when she talked about Parker’s imminent book than when she talked about Parker’s imminent baby. Indeed, if she had anticipated that by her lavishness to Ann, she would enable Parker to retire from his uncle’s firm, and embark on a novel dealing with the adventures of a fine young man in Wall Street, she might have been more economical.

Still, Ann was completely happy. She had everything she wanted, and would soon, if she were not careful, grow fat. Should her husband turn out to

be a successful novelist, which might conceivably happen, since it was as hard to prophesy what might happen to anyone in American letters, as it was to predict futures on Broadway, Ann would become simply impossible, with her air of everything happens for the best if one just behaves sensibly.

Janice lighted another cigarette, and thought that she wanted, very badly, a drink. There was brandy in a decanter on the table, but she knew by experience that a drink would make her more wakeful. The only time when she disciplined herself at all about drinking was in this hour—for sheerly practical reasons. If she drank herself wide awake, she would be desperately tired before evening, and give a bad performance. She wondered why she cared whether she gave a bad performance or not, why she was, fundamentally, a quite hard-working actress. It had something to do with the fact that if she pretended she thought her career tremendously important, it seemed much more important, actually, than if she did not bother to pretend she thought it was . . . That was a little complicated, but not worth analyzing more closely. Her career was not worth thought at dawn, certainly. It required so much thought during the day and evening.

She began to walk up and down restlessly. That was no use. That would just make her more wakeful. If this insomnia kept up, she would have to see a physician, who would say, “Smoke less” and, “Stop drinking.” It would be boring to do either. The conscientiously healthy probably did live longer, but who wanted to live longer? The trouble with life was that it lasted too long anyway. It should end when first love ended. That would solve all the world’s problems—overproduction and unemployment and all the rest of them.

First love—Martin—all that was remote as the sky that was growing so absurdly rosy. Martin was more than two years dead. It no longer seemed very strange that he was dead. It was a long time since, seeing light glint on some blonde man’s hair in the audience, she had hoped against hope that the man was Martin, come back by some miracle, sitting out front, coming ’round to her dressing-room after the third act. It was a long time since she had suffered, with any acuteness, about Martin’s death. Only, something in her that died when the news of death came, *had* died forever, absurd as that sort of thing was supposed to be. She had loved him passionately, devotedly, had taken him and herself with desperate seriousness, and, since he was dead, had no passion and no devotion to give anyone, and had lost, permanently, apparently, the capacity to take anything seriously at all.

She had left, beauty, that would last in spite of cognac, while she had leisure and money to take care of it; talent, that some people believed was great talent;—and the taste for cognac. Well, those things were more than

many had who seemed to find life bearable. She found it bearable—except for this ghastly hour at dawn, when she knew that she as a person had ceased to exist, was lost forever in some dark jungle where Martin was dead. She had posed and posed, as well as she could. Posed as successful. Posed as dissipated, reckless, hard. She would go on posing forever. But she was lost somewhere among her own poses. She had no life of her own within them. There was a girl named Janice who was happy—no, not always happy—but always very alive—in loving a man named Martin. There was no man named Martin now, and there was no girl named Janice. There was a famous actress whom many admired and whom Hilary loved, but who could not love Hilary, or make Hilary ever seem as real, as near as the ghost of a less admirable man named Martin.

She smiled at the Commodore. She was growing a little sleepy now, and that was cheering. She said to the Commodore, “I bet the Spanish Main was often as boring as Broadway.” He made no comment—it was only when she was particularly drunk that she could pretend he answered her, and she went back to sitting in the chair by the window, where eventually, she slept.

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IV EMMA

We have played eight weeks in Chicago. I do not like Chicago much. There is either too much wind and it is very cold, or it is very hot and there is no wind at all. The Lake Shore front is certainly pretty, but so is the Hudson River in New York.

Long ago, when she was in love with Mr. Martin and lately when Miss Ann lived with us, Miss Janice used to get out of going on the road with shows, somehow or other. But the last couple of years, she has not seemed to care. And Mr. Hilary thinks it is good for her nation-wide reputation to go to Chicago and San Francisco and Boston and places like that once in a while, at the close of her show in New York. Miss Janice always does whatever he wants, in the theatre, because she never does anything that he wants outside. She sort of takes orders from him as a successful actress, because being a successful actress is all of her life now.

She means to be kind to Mr. Hilary, but she cannot be kind to him as a woman. I think she is scared to come alive again as a woman since Mr. Martin died. I can't blame her. But her looks and her sweetness and her affectionateness are all wasted on an audience that comes to get upset and excited for two or three hours and go back to their own lives afterward, forgetting about Miss Janice until the next time she comes to their city.

Miss Ann has a boy, and Mr. Parker has a book that is making money, so that ladies call him up and discuss literature at tea with him. I heard Miss Ann telling Miss Janice about it. Miss Ann was upset, but Miss Janice gave her a course at an expensive gymnasium, because Miss Ann certainly did get plump after the baby was born, and now Mr. Parker is dictating his second book to Miss Ann, who takes just enough time off from the book to go to gymnasium every day, or to play tennis if she is in the country. Miss Janice gave her a tennis court for a birthday present. It cost fifteen hundred dollars to build and Mr. Hilary scolded Miss Janice when the bill came.

After we close in Chicago this week, we are going straight into rehearsal

for Miss Janice's next season's play, which is to be tried out in Atlantic City. We have not had a play tried out in Atlantic City since the one she wanted Mr. Martin to come down and see open. I hate going to Atlantic City again, but it does not matter much. Long ago, when I was a silly young girl in Georgia, I used to think that it was only there where the days and the weeks and the years went by just like each other, except sometimes colder and sometimes warmer, and sometimes rainy. But I believe now, that everywhere they go by one like the other, more or less. So we would be bound to have a play open in Atlantic City again, sooner or later.

I shall sort her clothes, and pack her trunks, and dress her and put her on the train, and attend to her baggage when we get there, and wake her in time for breakfast and morning rehearsal. Perhaps I shall meet a pleasant colored boy who wheels one of the chairs on the Boardwalk. In Chicago, or Boston, I might meet a nice colored boy who runs one of the hotel elevators. There is not much difference anywhere, really.

Things go on and on. You keep thinking that they can't go on much longer, yet they do. I keep thinking that Miss Janice will drink too much brandy, without meaning to, and forget her lines, or walk unsteadily across the stage, or be very late for the opening curtain. But none of those things happen. She drinks too much brandy every day now, yet she never lets it show, in her public life.

When Miss Janice is playing in New York, I go to the theatre with her, all the time now. I told her there was no sense in her having a theatrical maid as well as me, since I enjoyed going to the theatre anyway, and was used to dressing her. We have a housemaid in New York, because I am out so much at the theatre, besides that lazy Filipino cook. Really I did not want any theatrical maid to be with Miss Janice, when she came in having had too much brandy.

In New York I read the evening papers during the matinees and the morning papers, especially the tabloid gossip columns, all about who Miss Janice's friends are living with (put in a nice way, so that they could not make libel suits out of it), in the evenings. In Chicago I read about all the beer runners and who may have shot whom, though the police are still investigating. In Boston I read letters ladies sent in to the Sewing Circle column, about how shall they keep their daughters from staying out late. In Los Angeles I read about picture stars living simple lives and doing their own gardening, and in Atlantic City I read about who is registered at which hotel . . . In Georgia, sometimes there was boll weevil in the cotton and sometimes there was not. That made variety in the news there.

I do believe in God, I have always believed in God, though I have forgotten Him for days at a time when I was specially busy with Miss Janice. But I have believed in Him, and have prayed to Him through the thirty-five minutes of Miss Janice's third act, this afternoon. She is never off stage through the whole third act. . . .

When I finished dressing her for it, the man at the stage door, to whom I always give an unemployed apple—because he is a German with a big family, and too economical to buy unemployed apples for himself, though he is fond of them—brought me the afternoon papers to read.

There were headlines all across the front pages. There were pictures of Mr. Martin (sent by telephoto from New York, the paper said) on all the front pages. A man stumbled into a settlement in Dutch East Africa, a man half-starved, and with a tangled blond beard that reached down to his waist, a man who spoke English, slowly, as if he had not used the language for a long, long time. It was Mr. Martin. When they fed him and let him rest, he told an amazing story. He alone escaped, when the savages attacked Mr. Leland's camp, years ago. They dragged him captive with them. They made him their slave, but did not harm him, because there was some legend in their race about a man with golden hair who would bring the tribe luck. They took him hundreds of miles South with them through the jungle. They camped beside a lost city, the city of which Mr. Leland had heard rumors, and planned his expedition to find. He escaped from them after a year, only to be recaptured by some other barbarians who live South and East of the jungle tribe, along the edge of the desert. For some reason these people were even more interesting, scientifically, than the others. It appears they knew about the lost oasis. Once there were seven oases, places with water in the desert, along which trains of camels used to travel the way railroads travel between cities now, I suppose. In the Bible, and ancient history about Africa (which I have read, whenever I had spare time, for years now, because I never did understand exactly what Mr. Martin and Mr. Leland had hoped to find, if they had not got killed), they mention the seven oases. Modern explorers found six of them, but no one knew where the seventh was. It appeared that this tribe, which was more civilized than the other jungle tribe which had slaughtered Mr. Leland, lived near the seventh oasis, and had shown it to Mr. Martin.

He lived with these people a long time, and finally escaped from them, and so after years, came to Dutch East Africa, and now was famous, more famous than Miss Janice—and was coming home to America to organize another stronger expedition than Mr. Leland's to go back and revisit all the places he had found by accident.

I knew I should be glad that he was not dead. Mr. Martin was a nice young man, in his way. But I never really cared for him, only for her. And now that she was quiet again, and was reconciled to having him dead, now that she had gone on with her life, and everyone thought she was happy as well as successful, whether she was or not, I did not think she could stand the shock of having him come to life again. All I could think of was how much he used to upset her. I prayed and prayed, that she would not be too upset by having him come alive again. What if she did keep herself calm and indifferent by drinking cognac all the time? She was a lovely person, who never did a bit of harm to anyone but herself, and it was not right that she should have to suffer any more about a man as careless as Mr. Martin, no matter what buried civilizations he had dug up by accident.

I heard the applause as the third act curtain came down—and I knew she would be back in her dressing-room in a minute. I remembered that party she gave one June, in her apartment in New York, when the newspaper came with the story of his death, and I had not known whether to tell her or not, and so gave her the paper and let her read it. Suddenly, I could remember just how her face had changed that day, how hope had gone out of it and how in all the time since, her face had never changed back—never looked quite as hopeful and young as it had looked before that day. There was no need, after time had given her a little calmness, for her to have to look at another paper, and read as a million strangers who had not known Mr. Martin might read, that he was alive, and was coming home. It would be better for me to tell her, somehow, no matter how badly I told her, than for her to have to read it, like any stranger to him.

I put the newspaper under the cushion on the armchair. That theatre did not have good dressing-rooms. Only, in the star's dressing-room, it had an armchair with a cushion, to make it better than the rest of the rooms.

She said, "The lights made it dreadfully hot in there, today. I'm going for a long drive, along the Lake Shore, to see if I can't get cool, before I go back to the hotel."

I said, "That'll be nice, Miss Janice. Only I want you to take me with you." She looked surprised, because I never asked her to take me places, but she said, "All right."

I got her dressed fast, and hurried her out of the theatre. I had told the doorman, while I dressed her to get me a nice cab with cool cushions that would not be sticky. The cab was waiting for us. Along the Lake Shore was a little breeze, more than usual in Chicago when it is hot. I had the part of the newspaper with the story about Mr. Martin, folded up tight in my handbag.

Miss Janice did not talk at all—just lay back in the cab, and half-closed her eyes and rested.

I said, “Miss Janice, do you remember a big tea party you gave in New York one June?”

She said, “Which June?”

I said, “The party you gave when Miss Ann was visiting us, before she came to live with us finally.”

She said, slowly, “Yes, I remember the party.”

I said, “Remember there was a story in the paper that day about Mr. Martin—that he was dead?”

She said, just “Yes.”

I thought that was leading up to what I had to tell her, slowly, but leading up to it slowly was not really much use. I had to tell her just the same, when I got to the point.

I said, “There is another story about him in the paper today.”

She sat up straight. She stared at me. Her voice was shaking. She said, “Emma, what are you talking about?”

I said, “He is not dead. He found a lot of oases and things.”

She put her hand against her throat as if it were hard for her to breathe. Her enormous dark eyes still looked at me, as if she did not understand. I said, “Wait a minute and I will show you.” I took out the folded-up story, and handed it to her. She read only the headlines. She said, “Martin, oh my dear love,” and she fainted dead away.

The taxi-driver stopped at a drug store for some aromatic spirits of ammonia, and we gave her some, and pretty soon her eyelids fluttered a little, and she opened her eyes. She was smiling and weeping and trembling. We drove back to the hotel, and bought all the evening papers, and she read every variety of the story there was.

I said, “Now, Miss Janice, you had better lie down until it is time to get back to the theatre. He is still in Africa and he won’t be home for months. Time enough to get all upset when he arrives.” She did not pay any attention to me. She was trying to figure out where a cablegram would reach him.

I wished Mr. Hilary were around. Miss Janice had forgotten all the weeks before Mr. Martin went into the jungle, when she waited and waited for a cable

or a letter, and none came. There was no reason, even if he was alive, and famous, and a hero (supposing the newspaper stories were all true) that she should send him a cable, after this long time.

I said, “Miss Janice, it is not my place to advise you, but there is no one else around who could either, so I had better. I would not be sending Mr. Martin any cables, until you find out how many jungle wives he brought out with him.”

She was very cross with me. I don’t think I have ever seen her so cross with me as she was then. She did not speak to me until the next morning. But she did not send any cablegrams either.

The next morning there were longer stories than the night before. You would think, to read them, no white man had ever got lost in woods and found his way out alive, before, since the beginning of the world.

They made her happy as a kitten. And when I saw her, dancing about the room, laughing at nothing, reading every word about him with cheeks bright as a young girls, I did not want to say anything to disturb her. I pretended that it was all just as wonderful as she thought it was . . . When she began to count how long it would take him to reach New York, I pretended to believe as she did, that he was coming back to her, that he and she were going to be happy forever, as soon as he landed. But somehow I did not feel that he and she would have any more to do with each other. They had spent too much time separate now.

We closed in Chicago, and came home to New York. Mr. Hilary met us at the station and was specially nice to her. You could tell she wanted to talk about Mr. Martin, but would not, because she remembered that Mr. Hilary did not use to like him. However, when she began three or four times to say, “Don’t you think it is wonderful” and stopped then, and talked about something else, he began talking about Mr. Martin himself, and said that it was an extraordinary performance, an almost super-human feat for Mr. Martin to find his way through so many miles of jungle and mountains and desert.

Well, stories and pictures kept coming, of Mr. Martin at the Suez Canal on his way home, being interviewed by newspaper men at all those places, and on boats, too, of course.

Miss Janice’s show went into rehearsal, and our opening date in Atlantic City was only a week away, by the time Mr. Martin had got as far as London.

He did not write her, or send her a cable. That hurt her, I think—but she decided that there was not much he could have said in a letter or a cable—that

he was waiting until he saw her.

She talked to me about him all the time. There was really no one else to whom she could talk about him. Things change so fast in New York. I don't suppose anyone but Mr. Hilary and myself remembered now about her and Mr. Martin.

I got tired reading all the stories about him. I think Mr. Hilary did too. One day he was looking at a paper, waiting for Miss Janice to dress. There was a story in it about the scientific importance of some of the things Mr. Martin had found. Mr. Hilary said, "What do you think of all this, Emma?"

I said, "You would think he had done it on purpose, and as near as I can make out the only buried civilizations he found were when people dragged him around captive, and all he was looking for was the shortest way home."

Mr. Hilary laughed and said, "Miss Janice is looking lovely these days, isn't she?"

I just said, "Yes." I wished there were something encouraging I could say to him about her, because he was so crazy about her—but I knew if Mr. Martin still wanted her, Mr. Hilary was going to lose her forever now. Because she had pride about everything and everyone in the world except Mr. Martin—and none at all about him. She would go to him if he lifted a finger.

Finally I said to Mr. Hilary, "Well, he has had so many pictures of his own in the papers, he ought not to be jealous of her getting hers in, any more."

She practically stopped drinking cognac, which was a good thing, even if Mr. Martin was responsible for it. And she looked prettier and prettier, except that she was thinner than ever. I think she got so thin, waiting for a letter. Every morning when I brought her breakfast tray in, with whatever mail there was, she hunted through it, and I knew she was looking for something in his handwriting. Then when there was nothing, she would not be able to eat breakfast. Still she kept believing everything would be all right when he got to New York. I suppose she could not help that. She said all the time, "We'll do this and that when Mr. Martin gets home."

She had a new fur coat that she did not want to take to Atlantic City. She wanted to save it to wear when Mr. Martin came home, but I made her take it, because it can be cold at Atlantic City, late at night in the Fall, and I was not going to have her catching cold, thin as she was.

The papers were full of the welcome Mr. Martin was going to get when he reached New York. They were giving him a parade. His ship was arriving toward the end of the week we were to play in Atlantic City. That disappointed

her, that she would not be in New York the day he arrived. After her opening in Atlantic City (which went beautifully—the play was good, and she had worked harder than ever for it, because she wanted to please Mr. Hilary, for whom she was sorry, in the minutes she was not remembering Mr. Martin), she began to plan letting her understudy play one night, so that she could go to New York and meet Mr. Martin.

I used all the influence I had got with her in the years I had worked for her, to stop that. I did not want her, who was as famous in her way, even if no one ever planned a parade for her, as he could possibly be in his, to look foolish by going down with a crowd of strange people to his boat, and not having any attention paid to her.

I convinced her that no doubt now he had waited to see her so long, he would want to see her, for the first time, alone, and that would not be possible until they got through with his welcome. So we stayed in Atlantic City.

They were through with his welcome by the time we came back to town to open. But then she had a dress rehearsal, and the opening itself, so thank Heaven, she could not sit around at home much waiting for him to telephone.

After the opening night performance, she came straight home. The Filipino cook had stayed to cook her a little supper. She brought Mr. Hilary and her leading man, and an actress in the cast. I think she could not help bringing them all. They would not let her go home alone without some little celebration, on the night of a tremendous success. She got rid of them as soon as she could, politely, however. Then she called me. She said, “Emma, get Mr. Martin’s hotel and tell him I want to talk to him.”

I wished she would not do that, but there was nothing I could say. However, we did not reach him. The manager, or someone there, said Mr. Martin left orders he was not to be disturbed, by anyone. I gave him Miss Janice’s name and telephone number. She said then, “Emma, how stupid I have been. Of course, he could not reach me. I forgot that my telephone number is private. Information would not have given it to him.”

Poor Miss Janice—so clever about some things, and so stupid about him. As if he could not have sent her a telegram or a note to the theatre, if he had wanted to.

He did not call back—although he must have got the message that she called. She waited a long time for the telephone to ring—and when she went to bed, I heard her talking to that picture again. She had not done that for a long time—not since we came home from Chicago, certainly.

In the morning, when I brought her breakfast, she asked if there were any telephone messages. I said, “No.” She flushed a little, and looked almost angry. I hoped she would get very angry with Mr. Martin. Then perhaps she would stop worrying about him.

There was a note in the mail from a gentleman we knew, inviting her to an impromptu party that night, “to meet Mr. Martin.” This gentleman was very nice, only he had the oddity that as soon as anyone got a lot of publicity, in the papers, he wanted to give him a party. He had given Miss Janice one once.

She read the invitation, and laughed a little bitterly. She said, “I should not go. I should have a little pride.” But I knew she would go—and sure enough, she got up early, and began telephoning her dressmaker to send her down any new frocks that had just come in from Paris.

Miss Ann came in, while Miss Janice was trying on the dresses, and helped her choose. She bought a sort of sapphire blue taffeta, made very plain up top, with a square front, and no back at all—but with a sort of interesting skirt that had a train.

She looked beautiful in it, but I thought it was not the kind of dress she usually chose. It was, in spite of the train, a very young girl’s dress, and while Miss Janice looked young, and was now, more beautiful than she had been in years, still she usually chose clothes that were dignified, and this dress somehow was not. It was something like the kind of dress she used to wear when she was a young unimportant actress whom his mother disapproved of—and whom he took to different parties than the parties where he went with his mother’s friends.

Miss Ann came out to the kitchen to talk to me a minute. She had come down for the opening, the night before, and she wanted to tell me she thought Miss Janice was getting to be a more magnificent actress than ever. She knew that would please me.

Miss Ann and I were lots more friendly since she was married and had a boy, and admired Miss Janice, instead of disapproving of her.

I asked Miss Ann how the baby was, and she said he was fine. Then she said, “Emma, I was going to this party tonight to meet Mr. Martin—and perhaps you can tell me . . .” She stopped, and I did not say anything. I wanted to find out just what she was asking. If she was just curious, about something in Miss Janice’s life that wasn’t anyone’s business except Miss Janice’s, I was not going to tell her a single thing.

She said, “There is not one person beside you I can ask. Janice is looking

so lovely nowadays . . . and I remember there was something. Was she terribly in love with Mr. Martin once? Were they engaged or something before he left? Has she seen him since he came back?" She laughed, sort of embarrassedly. Then she went on, "That's a good many questions, isn't it?—I just want to know, because Janice has been so wonderful to me—I should like her to be happy. She has never seemed to have much happiness of her own."

She meant that. Miss Ann was honest, whatever her faults. She said, "You know, Janice never mentioned his name to me, in all the time I lived with her, or since."

I made up my mind, suddenly, that it would be better for Miss Ann to know something of the story. If she was going to this party—and Mr. Martin should not be nice to Miss Janice, someone ought to be there to help her come home, so that no one would know, if she got upset.

I said, "Miss Ann, you and Mr. Parker are living in the house Miss Janice built to live in with Mr. Martin. Miss Janice never loved anybody but him, in all her life. The reason she drank so much and took up with Mr. Hilary, and did all the things you disapproved of, was to try to get over losing Mr. Martin. I don't think Mr. Martin ever loved her one-tenth as much as she him—though he loved her. He was one of those gentlemen who talk a lot about having to be free."

She said, "Oh. . . . I see. . . . What a blind and stupid girl I was not to guess. Poor Janice."

I said, "Miss Ann, he never wrote her a line nor telephoned, since he's come back famous. She is going to his party tonight, hopeful that everything will be just the way it used to be, and I am afraid for her."

Miss Ann put her hand on my arm, and said, "That is all right, Emma. I'll take care of her. I'll go to the party very early—and stay with her when she comes. . . . Thank you for telling me."

Miss Ann went to say good-bye to Miss Janice, then.

After Miss Ann had gone, I had an idea. I was just a girl who came up from Georgia, and I could have pride if I wanted, but I did not have to have pride, if it was a nuisance to me. No one would know the difference. I decided to go up to Mr. Martin's hotel, and walk up and down in the street, on the chance that I might see him. I just had to know what he looked like, after so long. It was hard to tell from the newspaper pictures.

It was all right to leave Miss Janice. She had planned to rest all afternoon, anyway, and the housemaid and the Filipino were there, if she wanted

anything. I told her I was going out, that I had some shopping to do—and I took a taxi.

I was lucky. I had not been walking up and down more than five minutes when along came Mr. Martin, followed by a crowd of small boys. He was enjoying himself, being a celebrity, if I ever saw anyone that was.

I walked right up to him. I said, “How do you do, Mr. Martin.”

He knew me. He looked embarrassed for a minute, but he was polite. He said, “Why, how do you do, Emma? Did Miss Janice send you?”

I said, “Of course not. She is resting from her opening. It was the biggest success, ever. I just came out to do an errand in the neighborhood. Are you staying around here?”

He looked surprised that I did not know. He said, “I read her press notices this morning. They were splendid.”

I said, “They always are. She is used to that. Well, I must be running along.”

He said, “Wait a minute, Emma.” He looked sort of confused at the crowd of small boys who were staring at him. Well, I could stand being conspicuous if he could. I waited.

He said, “I’ve been meaning to get in touch with Janice . . . but I haven’t had a minute to myself.”

I said, “She understands about that . . . She has been famous so long herself.”

He looked down the crowded Avenue, as if he were seeing something altogether different, and I thought, as I had thought since I saw him coming down the street, how dreadfully changed he was. So old and hard and dissipated-looking. He said, but not especially to me, “Her face . . . a mirage before me . . . all those timeless months and years, something to fight toward, something to get through for . . . and yet—I dread seeing her now.”

I understood Mr. Martin. He was saying, in his elaborate way, that I remembered well, that he had thought of Miss Janice often.

He said, “Emma, tell me. Is she very much changed? Has she begun to be old?”

So that was it. I was sorry for him, but I hated him. No matter what suffering it caused her, waiting for him, he could not bear to see her, in case she was not as lovely as he wanted to remember her being.

I said, “Mr. Martin, she hasn’t changed at all, hardly. She hasn’t changed, one-tenth as much as you have. Good-bye.” I walked off and left him.

Then I could not decide at all any more, what would happen at the party. When he saw her again, looking lovely, not quite so fresh-faced maybe, but more distinguished certainly, he might want her again, after all.

I did not know what I wanted to happen, even, except I did not want her to be hurt any more.

Of course, she could not go to the party until after the show. I took her new dress along to the theatre with us, and the slippers she had ordered to match it. They just came, five minutes before we left the apartment. They had to be specially dyed.

Her second night audience liked the play just as well as the first night people had. Miss Janice took her curtain calls politely, but she hurried through them as fast as she could. Then she bathed and dressed, as carefully as she would have done at home. Mr. Hilary came to her door while she was dressing. She called out excitedly, to ask him whether he was going to the party. He said, “No,” but that he hoped she had a lovely time.

When she was all ready, she stood in front of the mirror in her dressing-room a long minute, and said, “Emma, have I lost my looks terribly?”

I said, “Don’t be silly, Miss Janice. You look lovelier than you ever did.” She did look lovely. She looked something like an excited young girl going to her first party. Only her big dark eyes were the eyes of a woman who had been through trouble.

I put her in Mr. Hilary’s car, which he had left waiting for her, as he always left it after the theatre, when she was going places and he was not. Then I went home. I hunted for something to read, because I meant to stay up until she got home, no matter what time it was. But I could not find anything I felt like reading except the Bible, of which I had not had time to read much, in all the years since Georgia. There was something in it near the beginning, about “Male and Female, He Created Them . . .” Southern clergymen used to preach sermons about that. I could not find the passage, so I just sat in front of the fire I had lighted for her, and meant to keep going all night if necessary. I held the Bible, and I thought about her life, and his life, and how strange all life was. I thought maybe that was the Lord’s original mistake, creating people male and female.

The telephone rang, suddenly, and the sound frightened me. It was Miss Ann.

She said, “Emma, has she gone home? Has she reached home yet?”

I said, “No, Miss Ann. Isn’t she at the party?”

She said, “She did not stay. I’m coming right over.” And she hung up. She must have made her taxi-man hurry. She was not more than ten minutes. She looked frightened. I had never seen Miss Ann look so frightened.

She said, “Where could she have gone, Emma? Where shall we find her?” She walked up and down.

I said, “I don’t know, Miss Ann. Maybe if you told me what happened, I could think.”

She said, “He was there a long time before she got there. I don’t think he knew that she was expected. No one mentioned it. Everyone made an enormous fuss over him, of course. Ultimately, he was sitting near the entrance to the drawing-room, with his back toward the entrance, talking to that Marianne creature . . . do you remember the girl Parker was so foolish about for a little while? I expect not. I sat down near him, because I wanted to be close to her, in case . . . anything . . .

“She came to the door of the room. She was almost close enough to him to touch him. She was smiling, the strangest smile, when she looked at him. He was talking at a great rate to the Marianne girl, and did not see Janice, standing behind him. Marianne hates her of course, so she did not look up.

“Janice stood there. . . . The party was pretty well settled down in little groups, so no one noticed her immediately. Martin was talking on to Marianne about the necessity of a man to be free, to live the important part of his life among other men . . . about the way women distorted and enclosed men’s lives . . .

“She stood and listened. She did not look sad. She looked entirely calm. . . . But, after half a minute, she turned and went away. By the time I followed her through the door, she was gone.”

I was frightened now, myself. I said, “We might try Mr. Hilary.” Miss Ann called his apartment, and a couple of his clubs, but we could not reach him.

Then I heard Miss Janice’s key in the door.

She came in. She smiled vaguely at us both—but she did not say a word. She walked straight into her bedroom, flung her evening wrap on the bed, went up to the portrait of the Commodore, and began to laugh.

We followed her. We stood looking at her. She noticed us, for she asked

me to pour her a glass of cognac. She drank it, talking to him, gayly.

She said to him, “It’s a stirrup cup . . . it is a celebratory stirrup cup, do you understand, Commodore Richard?” His face smiled down at her. Ann caught my hand . . . I whispered, “Don’t interrupt her, we have to know.”

She went on talking to him . . . “My dear, I stood and looked at him—for a minute that seemed long . . . I remembered in that minute, all the best and worst of what we had had. . . . For the last time in my heart . . . young love went past . . . then I had to leave . . . I could not speak to him . . . I had nothing to say to him . . . we have nothing to say to each other ever in the world . . . ah, you understand. . . . It’s the winds of life we have talked about so often. They blow joy, irresponsibility, hopes, dreams, along—far, far from one in the end . . . and in the end, they blow old sorrow past. . . . Commodore, did you know that, too? In the end, when you saw your bright-haired love, changed, sedate, quiet, a stranger to you . . . a stranger you once loved, were you reconciled?”

She flung her head back, and smiled, gorgeously. Her smile *was* like his. “Did you know then—that you had your hours in a cool New England garden, with her—and your whole life besides? Your destiny along the Spanish Main—your moments, here and there. Would you have admitted in the end, that you would not change—that your life was entertaining, that you would not if you could, open the gate to that closed garden? Did an hour come when you looked at your wife, Eulalia, and knew that she and you were better suited, than you and your lost young love could ever have been? . . . Were you, too, at last set free from a ghost? . . .”

The doorbell rang. I whispered to Miss Ann, “She is all right, but stay with her. I will answer.” It was Mr. Hilary. I brought him right into the bedroom. She turned, saw him, smiled at him. She said, “I went to your apartment, and to the theatre, and called at the Players for you on my way home . . . I have been looking for you everywhere.”

Poor Mr. Hilary could not believe what he was hearing. . . . He had to be sure, I suppose. He said, “You and Martin did not have much to say to each other, apparently.”

She laughed. She said, “Not a single word, Hilary, I have so much to say to you—after all these years. . . . My dear, I am set free. Do you understand? . . . Will you take me somewhere to dance . . . I want to stay up all night and talk to you . . .”

He said, “Put on your wrap.”

I held it for her. Before she went out with him, she stood for a moment

before the Commodore's portrait. She said, "You all think I'm mad . . . but he was my best friend. . . . Ann, take the portrait home with you, will you? I don't need him any more. He will understand. . . . And he was the most picturesque of our ancestors. Your son should have his picture."

Then she slipped her arm through Mr. Hilary's, and they went out, laughing.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *Love Goes Past* by Ursula Parrott]