

CLAIRE. *(Crossing to the bar. She begins mixing a drink. FLEMMING approaches behind her.)* She's a dependable girl. We're lucky to have her. Some of the servants these days are unbelievable. *(Turns with the drink, holds it out.)* Drink, darling?

FLEMMING. *(Caught off guard. He can't reveal his gloved hands.)* Not now. Set it down, will you?

CLAIRE. *(She puts the glass on the bar and crosses to the French doors; she opens them and inhales the air; her negligée billows slightly in the breeze.)* It's such a beautiful night, isn't it?

FLEMMING. I hadn't noticed.

CLAIRE. Perfect flying weather. I can see for miles. You know, I've never been frightened on a plane. I wonder why? Actually, when you come right down to it, you're all sealed up in metal, and if anything goes wrong what are your chances? I suppose it's the same with a car, though. And the way some people drive—*(He has been moving up behind her, until he stands a few inches away; abruptly, she turns.)* Do you know what I've been thinking?

FLEMMING. What?

CLAIRE. When we get back I'm going to redecorate the apartment. It's so cold now—it needs warmer colors. It looks as if no one really lives here. Besides, we haven't had a party in ages. I think we should start entertaining again. Wouldn't it be nice to have people over for a change?

FLEMMING. If you like.

CLAIRE. You'd like it too, wouldn't you? *(Happily.)* And we're going to have such a wonderful time this week end. Did you tell anyone where we're going?

FLEMMING. Miss Petrie knows we'll be upstate, but I haven't told her about the lodge.

CLAIRE. You really love that place. Have you ever taken a woman up there besides me? I mean, before we were married?

FLEMMING. Dozens. Providing they didn't mind digging for worms.

CLAIRE. Well, I'm not outdoorsy, darling, but we'll have a good time, anyway. *(She puts her arms around him in a little hug of affection; he responds, stroking her back with his gloved hands.)* I'll hang my stockings in the bathroom and we'll have a week end of sin.

FLEMMING. You'd better close the window and get dressed.

*(She turns and latches the French doors; FLEMMING braces himself.)*

CLAIRE. *(Drawing the curtains aside and looking into the sky.)* Well, a few more hours and we'll be there. A second honeymoon. *(Smiles.)* Might even be better than the first.

*(His hands suddenly shoot around her neck, the fingers closing; CLAIRE stiffens with shock and begins to struggle against him; there is a sheen of sweat on his forehead and we hear her gagging, the taut pull of breath in her throat. The TELEPHONE rings. FLEMMING looks at it wildly, then frantically increases his pressure; finally he lets go and she slides to the floor; he breathes heavily for a moment, then hurries to the phone and snatches it up.)*