

MRS, MOREHEAD MARY

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

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

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

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

MARY. How did you know?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MARY. No. I found out this afternoon.

MRS. MOREHEAD. How far has it gone?

MARY. He's known her about three months. **MRS. MOREHEAD.** Does Stephen know you know?

MARY. (Shaking her head.) I wanted to speak to you first.

(The tears come anyway) Oh, Mother dear, what am I going to say to him?

MRS. MOREHEAD. Nothing.

MARY. Nothing?

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

MARY. Not Father

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

MARY. Did you say nothing?

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

MARY. But Stephen MRS. MOREHEAD. Stephen is a man. He's been married twelve years

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

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

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

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

MARY. But, Mother

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

MARY. But, Mother

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