

NANCY-MARY

2ND HAIRDRESSER. Mr. Michael will be ten minutes, madam, Anyone in particular for your manicure?

MARY. I'd like the girl who does Mrs. Fowler's nails.

2ND HAIRDRESSER. Olga. I'll see. (Exits.)

NANCY. God, I'd love to do Mrs, Fowler's nails, right down to the wrist, with a nice big buzz saw.

MARY Sylvia's all right. She's a good friend underneath.

NANCY Underneath what?

MARY. Nancy, you don't hurt or your friends enough.

NANCY. So that's the big idea coming here? You're humoring Sylvia?

MARY. Oh, you did hurt her. I had it all over again at lunch. (She catches a glimpse of herself in mirror.) Nancy, am I getting old?

NANCY. Who put that in your head? Sylvia?

MARY. Tell me the truth.

NANCY. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and twaddle to that effect.

MARY. But it's such a scary feeling when you see those little wrinkles creeping in.

NANCY. Time's little mice.

MARY. And that first gleam of white in your hair. It's the way you'd feel about autumn, if you knew there'd never be another spring.

NANCY. (Abruptly.) There's only one tragedy for a woman.

MARY. Growing old?

NANCY. Losing her man.

MARY. That's why we're all so afraid of growing old.

NANCY. Are you afraid?

MARY, Well, I was very pretty when I was young. I never thought about it twice then. Now I know it's why Stephen loved me.

NANCY. Smart girl.

NAK

MARY. Now I think about it all the time.

NANCY. Love is not love which alters when it alteration find.

NANCY. How many ounces?

MARY. Nancy, you've never been in love.

NANCY. Says who?

MARY. (Surprised.) Have you?

NANCY. Yes.

MARY. You never told me.

NANCY. You never asked--- (Wistfully.) Neither did he. (Olga enters with *fresh* bowl of water.) Here, innocent. (Gives book to Mary.) The book my readers everywhere have been waiting for with such marked apathy.

MARY. "All the Dead Ladies"?

NANCY. Originally called, "From the Silence of the Womb." My publisher thought that would make too much noise.

MARY. What's it about? (Olga begins to file Mary's nails.)

NANCY. Women I dislike: "Ladies"

MARY. Oh, Nancy!

OLGA. (Putting Mary's hand in water.) Soak it, please.

NANCY. No good? Too bad. It's a parting shot. I'm off.

MARY. Off?

NANCY. Alright.

MARY. But not today?

NANCY. I know if I told you you'd Scurry around and do things A party. Steamer baskets of sour fruit. Not nearly as sour as the witty cables your girl friends would send me--So don't move. No tears. For my sake-just soak it. Good-bye, Mary

MARY. Good-bye, Nancy. I'll miss yall

NANCY. I doubt it. Practically nobody ever misses a clever woman. (Exits)

OLGA. Funny, isn't she?

MARY, She's a darling

OLGA. She's a writer? How do those writers think up those plots? I guess the plot part's not so hard to think up as the end. I guess anybody's life'd make a interesting plot if it had a interesting end - Mrs. Fowler sent you in? (Mary, absorbed in Nancy's book, nods.) She's sent me three clients this week. Know the Countess de Lage? Well, she inherited this fortune when her first husband died and---

MARY. (Shortly.) I don't know her

OLGA. Soak it, please. Know Mrs. Potter?

MARY. Yes.