

he assumed unhesitating direction of her will as he had already seized control of the conversation.

"Let's avoid recriminations," she suggested wearily, when they were alone once more. "If Norman divorces Margery on your account, it will be only natural for me to divorce you; and, after all you've made me suffer, it's your duty to give me just the technical help I need. You don't want to spoil my life any more . . . just because I've run straight?"

"And if Norman doesn't divorce her?" Freddie asked. "If I could look back on four hundred years of family history without a single scandal, I should say it was time to have a big one. That's not Norman's point of view, though. And it may simplify things if you rule out any idea that I'm going to upset our marriage until it's had a fair trial. When you're truly my wife . . . and no longer find it necessary to remind me that you made a loveless *mariage de convenance*, you will discover that it's quite easy to keep my love; you're the only person I ever wanted to marry. . . . These trials of strength effect nothing: you're honest enough with yourself to know that you generally come off second-best and to remember—though it's a thing no woman ever confesses—that you married me *partly* because you were afraid to stand alone; you'd think even worse of me than you do if I didn't . . . let's say keep my end up." . . . Walking to the window, he lighted a cigarette and turned to face her, with his hands on the sill. "What d'you expect of life, Gloria? What d'you want? I've known women who were sex-mad; and, poor devils, you may thank your stars you're not one of them; I've known women who were maternity-mad, women who cared only for power over their fellow-creatures, women who were limelight-mad. I'm convinced that you've never *quite* made up your mind what you want. Two years, two and a half years ago you were *really* in love with Norman." To her surprise Gloria found herself nodding. "He was the biggest thing in your life?"

"Yes."

"You've outgrown that?"

With a flash of illumination, Gloria recognized that she had only ceased to love Norman when she set herself, nine hours before, to wreck his life:

"Yes."

"But you've never succeeded in putting any one in his place. Quite disinterestedly, Gloria, I think that's a pity. For two years you've been looking for distractions, but what is it you want?"