

"Tell her yourself, Tom. Explain to her you are tired. I hate lying; there's no luck in it."

"Go on, Maggie. Don't give yourself airs at this late date. You are the world's best little friendly liar. Step right up there and let me hear you. I know your ability, and yet even I am continually being surprised. Throw in some of that local color of yours, bright, breezy human guff. Be my rubber tire again, Maggie, and save me from the jolts. Go on, I tell you—will I have to get cross?"

"You old fraud," she laughed, "if people knew you as I do they would not think so much of you."

"The same to you, Maggie, that's just what I am saying. You and I will have to hang together or we'll hang separately. Do your stuff now. Don't you know poor Jim Alverton is in the throes of a stomach-ache? Have you no bowels of compassion, woman?"

Mrs. Smith telephoned.

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When she went back to her pudding sauce Mrs. Smith was disturbed in her mind. Supposing Jim Alverton should die? Tom did lead a hard life, as every doctor does, but surely he could be more direct and honest when he did not want to go. There must be some way without this continuous deception.

She mashed the potatoes and creamed the carrots. Everything was ready now if Alice and Ronald would come. The irregularity of a doctor's house was reflected in their easy-going habits. It had been her fault, and she knew it. She had bribed them to be quiet to let their father sleep; she had let them stay out longer than she should to keep them out of his way when he was