

"You just give me a certain promise, Barbs, and I give you my word of honor I'll settle to something above-board and make it hum. Look here now! How about it? Who's been so faithful to the one girl for so long? Who understands her so well? Who'd enjoy dying for her so much?"

"Good old Wilmot," she said gently and gave him her hand. He kissed it and would have liked to go on holding it forever, but she took it away from him, and after a silence said, with some bitterness: "I mustn't ever marry anybody. I've learned to know myself too well. And I've no constancy, and I don't trust myself."

"That," said Wilmot with the faith of a fanatic in his god, "is because you've never really cared."

"And besides," she said, "I have what I am pleased to call my career. And 'Down to Gehenna and up to the throne he travels fastest who travels alone.'"

"True," said Wilmot, "he arrives soonest, but all tired out, and the house is empty, and there are no children in it, and only paid servants. And it may be very showy to live for fame, but it isn't good enough. When we turned that bust you began into mud pies, we did a wise thing. We amused ourselves, and we said the last word on art as opposed to life. The best thing in this world is to *be* children and to *have* children—and the next best thing is nowhere."

"Would you," said Barbara, and her eyes twinkled a little, "really rather be a parent than a Praxiteles?"