

spoken to each other for three days. I will let her get a divorce, but I'm determined to be free."

Maughm wound up his letter. His cigar had burned down; he snuffed it out on the ash receiver.

Miss Moreland had finished her notes and sat waiting. In her close-fitting dark skirt, her immaculate white waist, her arms bare from the elbow down, she was one of the prettiest figures imaginable. The head bent over her book was gloriously furnished with reddish gold hair, beautifully kept and tastefully arranged. The lobe of her ear, the curve of her neck, her delicately modelled chin, the outline of her cheek, her long lashes hiding the eyes as she sat with pencil poised, made a picture which might have attracted a less lonely man.

She was young, yet he would have said that he'd known her a long time. Five years isn't a very long time, but it is long enough to grow accustomed and used to a thing if we like it, and to grow sick to death of it if we don't. As he looked at her, Maughm realised that he knew by heart every attractive detail before him, and that he had always thought Miss Moreland a very pretty girl.

He was beginning to realise why he came in here so regularly — why she had become a habit; and the memory of her smiles now began to warm his heart, just as though they had been a kind of goal toward which he was steadily approaching.

"Put up your book, Miss Moreland."

She did so, and he took a chair and sat down in front of her.

"Don't be frightened," he said gently.

She had no idea of being frightened, for he had never alarmed her in the least, and she looked at him trustfully.

"You've just taken the most important letter I've ever written."

She was silent.