

"Sara's still packing," she explained, turning to Arlington. "Well?"

He hesitated, looking her over with a doubtful eye. But she was, at least outwardly, quite cool and collected, her manner exhibiting no undue amount of anxiety.

Still, a certain amount of make-believe would seem no more than decent. . . .

"Look here," he said almost sharply — "you're feeling all right, eh?"

"Quite — only tired as a dog; and naturally —"

"I understand," he interrupted. "But you'll be fit to go on tonight, you think?"

"Don't worry about that," Joan advised him decidedly. "I'm hoping to get a nap before evening, but even if I don't, I know the first duty of an actress is always to her public."

"Yes," Arlington agreed briefly, avoiding her eyes. . . .

"Still, I must ask you to be prepared."

Joan's figure stiffened slightly, and her dark eyes widened.

"Dead?" she questioned in a low voice.

Arlington nodded. "I'm sorry . . . About half an hour after we got him home."

The girl sat down suddenly and buried her face in her hands.

"Oh!" she cried in a stifled voice — "how awful!"

"There!" Arlington moved over and rested a hand familiarly on her shoulder. "Brace up. You'll forget all about this before long."

"O no — never!" she moaned through her fingers.

"But you will," he insisted, looking down at her with an odd expression. "To begin with, I'm going to make it my business to see that you forget. You must. You can't do justice to your — genius, if you keep harping on this accident. It was n't your fault, you know. Just as soon as I've arranged a few details . . . By the way, how's the Cardrow woman?"