

"Tell me, at least," she begged in a cracked key of suspense, "do you know anything about — *Hilliard?*"

At that Dickie was vividly a victim of remorse.

"Oh — Sheila — damn! I *am* a beast. Of course — he's all right. Only, you see, he's been hurt and is in the hospital. That's why I came."

"You? — Hilliard? — Dickie. I can't really understand." She pushed back her hair with the same gesture she had used in the studio when Sylvester Hudson's offer of "a job" had set her brain whirling.

"No, of course. You would n't." Dickie spoke slowly again, looking at the rug. "I went East —"

"But — Hilliard?"

He looked up at her and flashed a queer, pained sort of smile. "I am coming to him, Sheila. I've got to tell you *some* about myself before I get around to him or else you would n't savvy —"

"Oh." She could n't meet the look that went with the queer smile, for it was even queerer and more pained, and was, somehow, too old a look for Dickie. So she said, "Oh," again, childishly, and waited, staring at her fingers.

"I went to New York because I thought I'd find you there, Sheila. Pap's hotel was on fire."

"Did you really burn it down, Dickie?"

He started violently. "*I* burned it down? Good Lord! No. What made you think such a thing?"

"Never mind. Your father thought so."