

384 THE BEWILDERED BENEDICT

you please, Sophonisba. He won't run away. He's nobody to run away to," she gave me a sympathetic glance, and added, "*All* men should have somebody to run away to, except James of course—James is different."

I happened to know how "different" he was, and was careful to say nothing.

"You mean the grass-widow?" said Sophonisba laughing, "but he's confessed all his little affairs, and I've confessed all mine, and I guess it's about even!" She laughed joyously.

Pansy stared at Sophonisba, and then turned to me, "Sophonisba could never have anything to confess—poor girl," she said impatiently, "But what's this about you, Edward? Did you really confess? How much? *All* men keep something back—except James, but then James is different."

How this illusion was cherished of Pansy! Sophonisba and I caught each other's eyes, and then looked away again. We happened to know something of the things James kept back—wisely, I shouldn't wonder.

"Oh James is a paragon," Sophonisba answered easily, "and poor dear Edward isn't—thank goodness! He's just flesh and blood."

"Much too much flesh and blood," snapped Pansy, "*All* marriages make people too fat or too thin."

"We laugh too much," gurgled Sophonisba, "an' as we'd rather not give up laughin' we're not likely to give up bein' fat—not that Edward is fat, he's just right."

"And so is Sophonisba," I stated emphatically.

"What do you laugh at?" demanded Pansy suspiciously.

"At other people, an' relations an' things, an