

THE ROAD TO UNDERSTANDING

"Why, what — what do you mean?" All the color had drained from Helen Denby's face.

"Did you ever know a Mrs. Cobb?"

"That woman! Betty, she has n't — has she been — talking — to you?"

Betty nodded wearily.

"Yes, she's been talking to me, and — Oh, mother, mother, *why* did you come here — *now*?" cried Betty, springing to her feet in sudden frenzy again. "How could you let me go there? And only to-day — this morning, he told me he wanted to adopt me! And you — he was going to have us both there — to live. He said he was so lonely, and that I — I made the sun shine for the first time for years. And afterwards, when I found out *who* he was, I thought he meant it as a salve to heal all the unhappiness he'd caused you. I thought he was trying to *pay*; and I told him —"

"You *told* him! You mean you've seen him since — Mrs. Cobb?"

"Yes. I went back. I told him —"

"Oh, Betty, Betty, what are you saying?" moaned her mother. "What have you done? You did n't tell him *that* way!"

"Indeed I did! I told him I knew — everything now; and that he need n't think he could wipe it out. And he wanted to see you, and I said he could n't. I —"

An electric bell pealed sharply through the tiny apartment.