

## 322 THE VOICE ON THE WIRE

"Dear boy, I realize that I understand about you what you cannot fathom with me. You are not a moth, but your self-sacrifice, and bravery in this case are professional: you worked on this case as you have on a hundred others: you are a very original and successful expert in criminology. And I am not more than half bad at observation and deduction, myself; now, am I, dear?"

Shirley gracefully admitted defeat, with a question: "Who are you, Helene? And who is dear old Jack?"

The roses blossomed in her cheeks as she answered: "Jack is a very sweet boy, ten years older than you in gray hair and the calendar, and infinitely younger in worldly wisdom and intellect. He is an English army officer, who was foolish enough to imagine he loved me, foolish enough to propose every three days for the last three years and foolish enough to bore me until in self-defense I escaped from his clutches. As for myself, at least I am not the young woman who can stand staying in that gaudy theatrical hotel for another day longer. I have done so many bold, unmaidenly things that you may believe it easy for me. It is not.