

layed. Will you keep her in tomorrow night instead of tonight? Too bad to bother you. Sincerely,

MARGARET SMITH.

Alice read it with surprise. "She means it," she thought, with consternation. "I wonder what Dad will do?—and Ronald? Oh, well, this is all right. I know I have to do the essay sometime. Mother may be right."

The telephone rang just as Ronald was leaving. It was the flaxen-haired girl to whom he did not want to speak. Mrs. Smith ran to the door and called him back.

"O, it is you, Slim. . . . No, I haven't. . . . No, I can't go, or at least, well, maybe. . . . Anyway, I won't—I don't want to. No, don't 'phone to the store—business reasons. Maybe I am mean, but that's how it stands. . . ."

Ronald turned from the 'phone in a rage.

"Why didn't you tell me it was that freak? There, now, I had to hurt her feelings. I told you I would not talk to her. I feel like a cad—"

His mother smiled at him.

"The truth is best, Ronald, and kindest always. Get over that old notion that because you are a man you can't be square with a woman. You should have told her weeks ago that you didn't want her to 'phone. It's far more cruel to keep her dangling. You are like the people who are altogether too tender-hearted to chloroform their cat, so they simply turn it out to starve to death."

"Mother," said Ronald, "what's got into you?"

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The next afternoon the doctor was in the back-yard, happily at work on a new chicken-coop. He had had a good time on his fishing trip the day before, and had made his morning calls. Mrs. Smith, looking through the kitchen window as she washed the dishes, shook her head.