

swift X ray; a temperature and blood count taken. Then he leaned on the table and looked down at her again. "I can guarantee it's nothing we can't fix," he said. "I can guarantee it."

Phoebe held onto the table's side. "You mean I have it?" she said.

"I mean," he said, still looking down at her, "that when the X ray's developed I think it will show a spot on the right lung. A spot we can clear up in a year," he said, and he said it so confidently that Phoebe's relief was a welling within her, a heavenly easing and welling. "Now," he said, "there can be no question of letting this pregnancy go through, of course."

"Of course," Phoebe said eagerly; "oh, yes, of course."

"We'll get Doctor Bates to attend to that. Then we'll pack you off to Trudeau and let them put you to bed. And inside of a year you'll be home again with nothing but a little reasonable caution necessary to keep you there. It's as simple as that. Now you trot back to Bates. I'll come around and see you at the hospital." He held out his hand and shook hers firmly, and left the room.

IN THE spell of his confidence Phoebe got on her clothes and left the building and found another taxi. "Ten Garth Road," she said, and got in and sat niling confidently at the back of the driver's head. She sat there smiling, and once coughed in the way that was so habitual to her now that she did not notice it. After the second cough she suddenly, freezingly thought, *My lung, my right lung, the spot, the —* Her fingers caught at the smooth leather buttons in the seat, her whole body grew tight, defiant. At that instant inside her question flung itself above the tumult of the fear: *Tom; what will happen to me because of this? Her breathing stopped. With me always beside him now, is disease latent in me so that even if he is in the end beyond wanting to keep me could never escape. Hungry for freedom in memory and hate and yet bound to me, dead — And if I died? If I died, a whole life, a wife he can trust, a widening city, love instead of hate.* Her breathing came again, although queerly. There was a feeling inside her like sleep. Like a loss of sleep.

"Forty-five cents, please," the driver said.

She got out, paid him and walked into the building and the elevator. In Doctor Bates' rooms she had to wait only a moment; then she was following the nurse to his office.

"Well," he said, "I've talked to Doctor Rogerson. We think we'd better put a stop to this pregnancy just as a precaution. How about getting it over with tomorrow morning? Could you get to the hospital at that?"

"Abort," he said. "In plain English. Unless she were well along, say three or four months."

"And if she refused?"

Doctor Bates began to look very still. "I should refuse to take the case."

"But if she were several months along, you would take the case?"

"Yes," he said, watching her.

PHOEBE said, "I see." Then, carefully: "I see. Thank you, Doctor Bates. And since the next few days aren't convenient for me to go to the hospital, may I let you know when I —"

"Just a minute, Mrs. West. Just a minute. Are you planning to have this child?"

Phoebe's fingers closed on her bag. She made no answer.

"Perhaps you don't understand," he said, "that in your case it amounts to suicide. But it does. Doctor Rogerson found a moderately advanced —"

"I understand everything."

"Is it because you have scruples against abortion?"

"No."

Silence.

Doctor Bates thrust his hands behind him and said, "Melodrama is something I don't like to get mixed up in, Mrs. West. I didn't expect it from you."

Phoebe said, "I'm sorry, Doctor Bates."

His squarish honest face was darkening to heavy red. "First you diet yourself down past resistance level," he said, "then you —" He stopped and stood up straight. "I'm not equipped to handle this kind of thing. I insist that anyone who is so eager to attract attention that she will pay for it with her life is in need of psychological help."

"I don't need a psychiatrist," Phoebe said. "Good-by, Doctor Bates. I'm sorry to lose your good opinion."

"I shall get in touch with your husband at once, of course. Possibly he can deal with this matter."

"Oh," PHOEBE said, stopping dead. "Oh, I—I didn't think of that." She moved back and sat down at the desk.

"Doctor Bates," she said. "I love my husband very deeply. I have smashed his life by being—by being the most miserable kind of creature. He was going to do great things; he had already done some. It was possible for him because he had faith, because —" She bent forward over the words, struggling harder.

"But I ruined his faith and now —"

"Now you want to kill yourself because you're ashamed," Doctor Bates said briefly.

Phoebe said with great effort, "It's because every time he sees me he remembers, because every time—because I am destroying him."

"Why don't you divorce him, then?"

"Because he won't let me."

"All you want to do," Doctor Bates said between thin lips, "is get out of a tough situation and be a heroine at the same time. Well, you're no heroine to me."

"I don't want to be a heroine to

The secret, of course, is this SHARP cheese!



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