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GEORGE. (*Crossing down step and to Left*) Right on my way, Ma'm! Wait for me, Tracy. I make the Gatehouse in nothing flat, now. (*Exits Left 1.*)

SETH. Does he by any chance ever walk anywhere?

TRACY. When he likes, I expect.

(MARGARET goes Left to chaise and sits.)

SETH. (*Left Center*) I have a feeling he's going to take the ring tomorrow and go through center with it.

MARGARET. Seth, you idiot.

TRACY. That's very amusing, I'm sure. (*Over to Right Center.*)

SETH. (*Crossing in Center*) Oh, don't take things to heart so, Tracy. You'll wear yourself out.

LIZ. (*Entering Right 1*) I won't be a minute. (*Crosses up to window, Right Center.*)

MARGARET. There's no hurry, Miss Imbrie.

(Liz exits Right Center. TRACY sits stool Right.)

SETH (*Back of Center table, stirring cocktails*) What bothers me at the moment is the spectacle we're all making of ourselves for the benefit of the young man and woman from *Destiny*.

TRACY. Whose fault is it?

SETH. That's beside the point.

MARGARET. Never in my life have I felt so self-conscious. It's all simply dreadful.

SETH. It's worse; it's stupid and childish and completely undignified.

TRACY. So are other things.

SETH. They can publish what they like about me, but—

TRACY. (*Rises. Crossing up Center*) —My idea is, they'll publish nothing about any of us.

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SETH. How do you propose to stop them? (*Pours two cocktails.*)

TRACY. I don't quite know yet. (*Sits Right of table.*)

SETH. Well, at present the least we can do is to inform Connor and the camera-lady that we are all quite aware of their purpose here. I insist on that.

TRACY. All right! I'll tell them myself.

SETH. I think it will come better from me, don't you—as, at least, titular head of the family? (*Crosses down Left with drink for MARGARET.*)

TRACY. (*A moment. Then TRACY speaks deliberately, harshly*) Of course—inasmuch as you let us in for it in the first place.

SETH. (*Crossing in Left Center*) Do keep that note out of your voice, Tracy. It's most unattractive.

TRACY. Oh? How does Miss Mara talk? Or does she purr?

MARGARET. Tracy!

SETH. (*Turning to Left*) It's all right, Margaret.

TRACY. Sweet and low, I suppose. Dulcet. Very ladylike. —You've got a fine right, you have—after the way you've treated Mother—after the way you've treated us all—a magnificent right you've got to come back here in your best country manner and strike attitudes and make stands and criticize my fiancé and give orders and mess things up generally, just as if you'd done—

MARGARET. Stop it instantly, Tracy!

TRACY. (*Rises*) I can't help it. It's sickening.—As if he'd done nothing at all!

MARGARET. It is no concern of yours. If it concerns anyone, it concerns—well, actually, I don't know whom it concerns, except your father.

SETH. (*Crossing in Left Center towards MARGARET*) That's very wise of you, Margaret. What most wives won't seem to realize is that their hus-

band's philandering—particularly the middle-aged kind—has nothing whatever to do with them.

TRACY. (*Crossing down a step, Right Center*) Oh? Then what has it to do with?

SETH. (*Crossing in Center and sits Left of table*) A reluctance to grow old, I think. I suppose the best mainstay a man can have as he gets along in years is a daughter—the right kind of daughter.

TRACY. (*Crossing over Right Center*) That's interesting, to say the least.

SETH. —One who loves him blindly—as no good wife ever should, of course.—One for whom he can do no wrong—

TRACY. How sweet.

SETH. I'm talking seriously about something I've thought out thoroughly. I've had to. I think a devoted young daughter gives a man the illusion that youth is still his.

TRACY. Very important, I suppose.

SETH. Very—and without her, he's inclined to go in search of it again, because it's as precious to him as it is to any woman.—But with a girl of his own full of warmth for him, full of foolish, unquestioning, uncritical affection—

TRACY. —None of which I've got.

SETH. None. You have a good mind, a pretty face and a disciplined body that does what you tell it. You have more wealth than any of us, thanks to one grandfather's name, and another's red hair, and a shameless play for both of them since about age three. In fact—

TRACY. I never! I loved them!

SETH. —In fact, you have everything it takes to make a lovely woman except the one essential—an understanding heart. Without it, you might just as well be made of bronze.

TRACY. (*After a moment. Turns front*) That's an awful thing to say to anyone.

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SETH. Indeed it is.

TRACY. (*Turns to him*) So I'm to blame for Tina Mara, am I?

SETH. If any blame attaches, to some extent I expect you are.

TRACY. You coward.

SETH. No.—But better to be one than a prig—and a perennial spinster, however many marriages.

MARGARET. Seth! That's too much.

SETH. I'm afraid it's not enough. (*Rises; crosses Left to MARGARET*) I'm afraid that nothing is.

TRACY. (*Is staring at him*) Wha-what did you say I was?

SETH. Do you want me to repeat it?

MARGARET. Seth—now I understand a great deal that I didn't.

SETH. (*Crossing to MARGARET*) It's all past now, Margaret. It has been for some time. Forgive me. You won't have to again. I understand a lot more than I did, as well. (*Pats shoulder. She touches his hand.*)

TRACY. "A prig and a—?" You mean—you mean you think I think I'm some kind of a virgin goddess or something?

SETH. (*Crossing Left Center*) If your ego wishes to call it that, yes.—Also, you've been talking like a jealous woman.

TRACY. (*Right Center*) A—? (*Turns away to Right, her face a study*) What's the matter with everyone all at once, anyhow? (*Goes to column Right.*)

UNCLE WILLIE. (*Comes in from Right 1. Crossing up Center*) Miss Imbrie preferred dressing, to my company. (*To SETH*) What do you make of that, Uncle Willie?

SETH. (*Crossing in Center*) We're going to drop all this. From now on you're yourself again—and

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so am I. I shall tell them we know what their tender mission is, and at the first opportunity.

(SANDY and DINAH enter Left Center. He goes to back of table.)

UNCLE WILLIE. (*Crossing back of table*) It's a pity. It was jolly good fun. Let's have a drink—

SANDY. (*Crossing back of table*) Damme, let's do that. (*Pours cocktails.*)

DINAH. (*Crossing down Right Center*) We're all so completely commonplace. I don't see how we interest anyone.

MARGARET. (*Rises, crossing to DINAH Right Center*) I think that dress hikes up a little behind.

DINAH. No—it's me that does.

(MARGARET sits Right of Center table. SANDY pours two glasses of champagne.)

TRACY. You look adorable, Dinah.

DINAH. Oh, thanks, Tracy! Thanks ever so much!

SANDY. A wedding without ushers and bridesmaids. Peace! It's wonderful—

DINAH. (*Crossing in to Left of MARGARET*) I'm the bridesmaid!—So can I have a cocktail at last? Can I?

MARGARET. Certainly not.

DINAH. It's a dirty gyp. (*Goes over to chaise and sits.*)

SANDY. Tracy? (*Goes to her with cocktail. She shakes her head*) Champagne, instead?

TRACY. No, thanks.

SANDY. Excuse, please. I forgot, you never. (*Puts drink down on table.*)

UNCLE WILLIE. Never? The girl's demented.

TRACY. —But prigs don't.