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The room was warm and clean, the curtains drawn, the two table lamps alight — hers and the one by the empty chair opposite. On the sideboard behind her, two tall glasses, soda water, whiskey, fresh ice cubes in the Thermos buckets.

Mary Maloney was waiting for her husband to come home from work.

Now and again she glanced up at the clock but without anxiety, merely to please herself with the thought that each minute he had made it nearer the time when he would come. There was a glow smiling about her, and about everything she did. The drop of a head as she bent over her sewing was curiously tranquil. Her skin for this year since her sixth month with child — had acquired a wonderful translucent quality, the mouth was set and the eyes, with their new placid look, seemed deeper and darker than before. When the clock said ten minutes to five, she began to listen, and a few moments later, punctually as always, she heard the tires on the gravel outside, and the car door slamming, the footsteps passing the window, the key in the lock. She laid aside her sewing, stood up, and went forward to kiss him when he came in.

"Hullo darling," she said.

"Hullo darling," he answered.

She took his coat and hung it in the closet. Then she walked over and made the drinks, a strongish one for him, a weak one for herself; and soon she was back again in her chair with the sewing, and he in the other, opposite, holding the tall glass with both hands, rocking it so the ice cubes tinkled against the side.

For her this was always a blissful time of day. She knew he didn't want to speak much until the drink was finished, and she, on her side, was content to sit quietly, enjoying his company. After the long hours alone in the house she loved to luxuriate in the presence of this man, and to feel — all the while heather feels the sun — that warm manly glow that came out of him to her when they were alone together. She loved him for the way he sat loosely in a chair, for the way he came in a door, or moved slowly across the room with long strides. She loved the intense far look in his eyes when they rested on her, the funny shape of the mouth, and the way he would sit silent about his tiredness, sitting still with himself until the whiskey had taken most of it away.

"Yes, darling?"

"Yes," he said. "I'm tired." And as he spoke, he did a stupid thing. He lifted his glass and drained it in one swallow although there was still half of it, at least half of it left. She wasn't really watching him, but she knew what he had done because she heard the ice cubes falling to the bottom of the glass when he lowered his arm. He paused a moment, leaning forward in the chair, then he got up and went slowly over to fetch himself another.

"I'll get it!" she cried, jumping up.

"Sit down," he said.