

JANET ROSS SAT IN THE EMPTY ROOM AND glanced at the wall clock. It was 9 a.m. She looked down at the desk in front of her, which was bare except for a vase of flowers and a notepad. She looked at the chair opposite her. Then, aloud, she said, "How're we doing?"

There was a mechanical click and Gerhard's voice came through the speaker mounted in the ceiling. "We need a few minutes for the sound levels. The light is okay. You want to talk a minute?"

She nodded, and glanced over her shoulder at the one-way mirror behind her. She saw only her reflection, but she knew Gerhard, with his equipment, was behind, watching her. "You sound tired," she said.

"Trouble with Saint George last night," Gerhard

said.

"I'm tired, too," she said. "I was having trouble with somebody who isn't a saint." She laughed. She was just talking so they could get a sound level for the room; she hadn't really paid attention to what she was saying. But it was true: Arthur was no saint. He was also no great discovery, though she'd thought he might be a few weeks ago when she first met him. She had

been, in fact, a little infatuated with him. ("Infatuated? Hmm? Is that what you'd call it?" She could hear Dr. Ramos now.) Arthur had been born handsome and wealthy. He had a yellow Ferrari, a lot of dash, and a lot of charm. She was able to feel feminine and frivolous around him. He did madcap, dashing things like flying her to Mexico City for dinner because he knew a little restaurant where they made the best tacos in the world. She knew it was all silly, but she enjoyed it. And in a way she was relieved—she never had to talk about medicine, or the hospital, or psychiatry. Arthur wasn't interested in any of those things; he was interested in her as a woman. ("Not as a sex object?" Damn Dr. Ramos.)

Then, as she got to know him better, she found herself wanting to talk about her work. And she found, with some surprise, that Arthur didn't want to hear about it. Arthur was threatened by her work; he had problems about achievement. He was nominally a stockbroker—an easy thing for a rich man's son to be—and he talked with authority about money, investments, interest rates, bond issues. But there was an aggressive quality in his manner, a defensiveness, as if he were substantiating himself.

And then she realized what she should have known from the beginning, that Arthur was chiefly interested in her because she was substantial. It was—in theory—more difficult to impress her, to sweep her off her feet, than it was to impress the little actresses who hung out at Bumbles and the Candy Store. And therefore more satisfying.

As time went on, she no longer drew pleasure from being frivolous around him, and everything became