

## MOTHER

By Jules Eckert Goodman

**M**RS. WETHERILL, the little mother, has been living a life of labor and love since the death of her husband, bringing up six children. Her husband left her a small estate which had sufficed to supply necessities and to educate Leonora, one of the two daughters. Leonora, Ardath, the other daughter; Walter, a boy of twenty-one, and the two twin boys of twelve, are with their mother, but Will, the oldest boy, has not seen her or set foot inside the house since his marriage to a chorus girl, four years before.

His wife turned him against his mother and led him into such extravagances that he has been driven to embezzle from his employers to meet his debts. Finally the thefts, aggregating \$16,000, are discovered, and Will goes to his mother and asks for a loan of that amount, not giving any reason therefor. She explains to him in a kindly way that he has already over-borrowed on his share of the estate and that she hasn't the money to lend.

The next day, to prevent prosecution, Will gives the firm a note for \$10,000, forged with his mother's name. His mother hears of it and sends for him to come to her. John Chase, the family attorney and executor of the estate, is asked by the firm if the note is all right. He knows it is a forgery, surmises the reason for it, and hurries to Mrs. Wetherill to prevent its going through. He reaches the house

to-night.

**C**HASE: What for? To beg off?

**M**RS. WETHERILL: Mr. Lake is sending him.

**C**HASE: Well, you just give me ten minutes with him.

**M**RS. WETHERILL: Look here, John. Will is my boy—you can't get around that and I can't, and it tells—blood tells. There'll be no hard words—no accusations.

**C**HASE: There won't, eh?

**M**RS. WETHERILL: No—not one word.

**C**HASE: Well, you just wait and see.

**M**RS. WETHERILL: You mean you will call him to account?

**C**HASE: You can just bet I'll do that, and some more.

**M**RS. WETHERILL: Then for the first time in my life—I'm afraid, John, I must ask you to go.

**C**HASE: Kit, it isn't true, and you know it isn't. That signature is forged.

**M**RS. WETHERILL: My, but you're scowling to-night, John. I believe you've seen that note before?

**M**RS. WETHERILL: paper, but quickly recovers herself? Why, yes—of course. I gave it to Will last night.

**C**HASE: That isn't true, Kit—it isn't true, and you know it isn't. That signature is forged.

**M**RS. WETHERILL: That signature is mine.

**C**HASE: Guess I know your handwriting.

**M**RS. WETHERILL: It doesn't make any difference what you know. It's mine, I say.

**C**HASE: Kit, it isn't true, and you know it isn't. That signature is forged.

**M**RS. WETHERILL: I swore I wouldn't confess it to a soul.

**C**HASE: How are we to get out of it, then?

**M**RS. WETHERILL: The note must be made good.

**C**HASE: It can't be without the consent of the children. They at least must know.

**M**RS. WETHERILL: No—no, they last of all. I could never bear that.

**C**HASE: But they must. It's only fair to them. It means—it means a loss of pretty near everything to them.

**M**RS. WETHERILL: Isn't there any other way?

**C**HASE: Yes—just one. It's the way I advise, too—strongly advise.

**M**RS. WETHERILL: What?

**C**HASE: Repudiate the note. Let the law take its course. Oh, I know it sounds brutal.

**M**RS. WETHERILL: It does—it's more than brutal—it's inhuman.

**C**HASE: My sole object is to protect you. This is only the beginning. It will happen again and again.

**M**RS. WETHERILL: No, no!

**C**HASE: It will, if you give in this time. He did it as a test. If it works, he'll try it again, and finally he'll end up in the same place. Forgive me, Kit, for speaking this way, but—

**M**RS. WETHERILL: You make it rather hard, John. No other man would dare speak that way about my boy in my presence. He's coming home



"My boy! I've got my boy back! I've got him back again!"

never been another woman like you. Seems to me from the very start I unconsciously dedicated my whole life to you. You seemed the one thing that kept me alive—gave me some purpose in the world—to protect you, watch over you—a little corner in your life. (Goes toward the door.) Good-bye, Kitte.

**M**RS. WETHERILL: You hardly know the twins. They're so big now and so clever. Really, they're getting almost too much for me. What is it?

**C**HASE: It's my head—there's something the matter with it. Don't touch me. I'm not drunk. I haven't touched a drop. Guess it must be because I haven't slept in most a week or more.

**M**RS. WETHERILL: I can't get used to it somehow. I can't get used to Leonora being grown. Why, she was such a young thing.

**C**HASE: That's a lie—pretend. Both Chase and Lake told you about the note. They said so to me. Now, come, cards down on the table. Now, let's make it a showdown.

**M**RS. WETHERILL: I only had to tell her that Walter—that we had nothing—

**C**HASE: Well, I can find out easy enough. Just let me catch him. I'm only waiting for chance to get even with that crowd. I should think he'd have learned something from me. If he's in town I'll bring him back. He sha'n't disgrace the family—he sha'n't.

**M**RS. WETHERILL: Don't do that, I tell you! Oh, you! Where are the girls?

**C**HASE: They'll be back in a few minutes. So you think Leonora's grown?

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**M**RS. WETHERILL: Will:

I'm a great one to be talking about disgracing the family, ain't I, though? It's no use. There's just one reason why you brought me here—let's have it.

**C**HASE: MRS. WETHERILL: I've told you.

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**M**RS. WETHERILL: Will:

You spoke just now about the family honor. Well, this is my honor to make good my notes—MY notes—you understand.

**C**HASE: MRS. WETHERILL: Chase said—

**M**RS. WETHERILL: Will:

The girls are going to help me.

**C**HASE: MRS. WETHERILL: The girls—Leonora, too.

**M**RS. WETHERILL: Yes—we all stand together—the family.

**C**HASE: MRS. WETHERILL:

My boy—my boy!

**M**RS. WETHERILL: The family—the family that I've disgraced, ruined! Chase was right—the family that I've begged! You sha'n't do it! You sha'n't! I'll kill myself first. You sha'n't—

**C**HASE: MRS. WETHERILL: —I'm not worth it!

**M**RS. WETHERILL: MRS. WETHERILL:

WILL:

As she put it: "Don't catch me going to sea in a rotten ship—the shore for mine."

After all I did for her, too! You don't begin to know how I worked for her. I did more than that, too, for her, and now just when I need her she's left me, thrown me away like you'd throw away an old shoe. She's done with me—got all she could out of me. What does she care whether I go to the devil or not—whether I loved her, like a crazy fool that I was—

**C**HASE: MRS. WETHERILL: What does she care if I—want to know what you are going to do—why you sent for me?

**M**RS. WETHERILL: MRS. WETHERILL:

I'm not going to do anything.

**C**HASE: MRS. WETHERILL: Nothing, eh?

**M**RS. WETHERILL: At least, nothing about mother.

**C**HASE: MRS. WETHERILL: What, then?

**M**RS. WETHERILL: I thought maybe you could tell me something about Walt.

**C**HASE: MRS. WETHERILL: What's the matter with him?

**M**RS. WETHERILL: He went away last night. I thought maybe he'd come back again.

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