

MOTHER

By Jules Eckert Goodman

MRS. 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 \$10,000, 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 before Will does.

MRS. WETHERILL: Good evening, John. I've been expecting you all day.
CHASE: I wanted to be sure before I came.
MRS. WETHERILL: Sure of what?
CHASE: Of myself, for one thing. My course for another.
MRS. WETHERILL: My, but you're scowling to-night, John.
CHASE (hands her a piece of paper): I believe you've seen that note before?
MRS. WETHERILL (starts as she receives paper, but quickly recovers herself): Why, yes—of course. I gave it to Will last night.
CHASE: That isn't true, Kit—it isn't true, and you know it isn't. That signature is forged.
MRS. WETHERILL: That signature is mine.
CHASE: Guess I know your handwriting.
MRS. WETHERILL: It doesn't make any difference what you know. It's mine, I say.
CHASE: Kit, look at me! Don't make me feel that I'm just a stranger. Now, now, Kit—don't make me just your lawyer—please.
MRS. WETHERILL: I swore I wouldn't confess it to a soul.
CHASE: How are we to get out of it, then?
MRS. WETHERILL: The note must be made good.
CHASE: It can't be without the consent of the children. They at least must know.
MRS. WETHERILL: No—no, they last of all. I could never bear that.
CHASE: But they must. It's only fair to them. It means—it means a loss of pretty near everything to them.
MRS. WETHERILL: Isn't there any other way?
CHASE: Yes—just one. It's the way I advise, too—strongly advise.
MRS. WETHERILL: What?
CHASE: Repudiate the note. Let the law take its course. Oh, I know it sounds brutal.
MRS. WETHERILL: It does—it's more than brutal—it's inhuman.
CHASE: My sole object is to protect you. This is only the beginning. It will happen again and again.
MRS. WETHERILL: Of course, no!
CHASE: 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—
MRS. 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 to-night.

CHASE: What for? To beg off?
MRS. WETHERILL: Mr. Lake is sending him.
CHASE: Well, you just give me ten minutes with him.
MRS. 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.
CHASE: There won't, eh?
MRS. WETHERILL: No—not one word.
CHASE: Well, you just wait and see.
MRS. WETHERILL: You mean you will call him to account?
CHASE: You can just bet I'll do that, and some more.
MRS. WETHERILL: Then for the first time in my life—I'm afraid, John, I must ask you to go.



"That isn't true, Kit, and you know it isn't. That signature is forged."

CHASE: I claim the right of managing my own affairs.
MRS. WETHERILL: Kit—Kittie—you don't mean that?
CHASE: I do!
MRS. WETHERILL: You mean—I'm to keep my hands off?
CHASE: Exactly that.
MRS. WETHERILL: So I'm just your lawyer, after all.
CHASE: In a matter like this, yes.
MRS. WETHERILL: All right, Kit. It seems to me it's been my whole life. I loved you long before you ever met Billy Wetherill. There's



"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, Kittie.

MRS. WETHERILL: John!
CHASE: I'll send your papers around to-morrow when you give me the name of your new lawyer.

MRS. WETHERILL: You mustn't mind an old woman who is setting nervous in her old age.

CHASE: No, you're right, Kit. I hadn't realized what a proprietary interest I've been taking in you.

MRS. WETHERILL: And I appreciate it deeply. I'll try to do just as you say, for, after all, I've no head on me—only one thing—my boy mustn't have this disgrace—my family must be kept clean.

CHASE: Yes.

MRS. WETHERILL: Then as I take it—the girls must know. It isn't fair they shouldn't—it isn't even fair to Will.

MRS. WETHERILL: Couldn't you say that I wanted the loan?

CHASE: That wouldn't be square. Do you have any idea what it's going to mean to them? Poverty—that's just what it is.

MRS. WETHERILL: Does it—does it really mean the whole estate? Walter's share, too? And the girls' too?

CHASE: I'm sorry Kittie—

MRS. WETHERILL: No, you're right—they should know then. Walter's not home, so we'll have to act without him. I think this is the hardest thing I ever had to do.

CHASE: A whole family ruined to make good one scoundrel. God, it doesn't seem square! Guess I'd better go before he comes. (Will enters. When he first appears there is a slight pause, punctuated by exclamations from the girls, who have entered in response to their mother's summons. Mrs. Wetherill, shocked by his

appearance, stands stupefied for the instant. Then the note must be made good. (Will, after looking at one after the other, finally gazes at Chase.)

WILL: Well?

MRS. WETHERILL: My poor boy!

WILL: Cut it out! None of that maudlin sentiment.

WILL (addressing the girls): You two seem mighty glad to see your brother after four years! Gee, you've grown up, haven't you? You're quite a lady—

MRS. WETHERILL: Will!

WILL: Well, why don't you all say what you've got to say? What did you make me come here to say?

MRS. WETHERILL: Made you come, why?

WILL: You knew all right the man who could fetch me—you knew Lake had a half-Nelson on me. Well, here I am—and here you are, and here's your family attorney. Let him get busy.

MRS. WETHERILL: I don't think you quite understand, Will.

WILL: Understand, eh? (Turns to Chase.) Why

"Don't you do that—don't touch me—I can't stand it, I tell you."



don't you begin? Here's the biggest chance of your life for a nice long text beginning with, "I told you so," and ending, "Now, go to the devil!"

CHASE: I think, if you haven't any need for me I'll just go, Kit.

WILL: What, without a single text, a single lesson? You're not going to miss a chance like this!

CHASE: God, but I wish I had the right to do what I'd like to do.

WILL: And what would that be—preach?

CHASE: Beat the hide off you. (Exit Chase.)

WILL: That old codger—how he hates me!

MRS. WETHERILL: Will, dear, do sit down and let's have a talk.

WILL: What's the use of beating around the bush? Let's have it out—get the worst over first.

ARDATH: Do you think it fair, Will, to treat mother this way when she's trying so hard to do her best?

WILL: Trying so hard to do her best? I have the ring of the words! I tried to do my best and what the devil—I beg your pardon—good did it do? I've been associating with my wife so long I forgot how to talk to a lady. My, but you've grown up—and so pretty! I can't seem to get it

The Big Scene from the Powerful Drama of Mother Love Now Playing at the Hackett Theatre.

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through my head. And you—you look older than I remember you.

MRS. WETHERILL: Four years makes a big difference in a girl.

WILL: And the twins—they must be quite big boys now.

MRS. WETHERILL: They've just gone to bed, or—

WILL: No, don't call them. I just can't somehow get used to you—you—girls, you look so grown. Don't you do that—don't touch me—I can't stand it. If you've got anything to say, for God's sake say it. Don't sit around trying to be kind. I can't stand it, I tell you. I can't stand it. (He drops in a chair, burying his face in his hands. Mrs. Wetherill looks at him a second, then she motions to Leonora and Ardath to leave. They go out quietly. Mrs. Wetherill goes up to Will and puts her hand on his shoulder. He jerks back quickly.)

WILL: Don't do that, I tell you! Oh, you! Where are the girls?

MRS. WETHERILL: They'll be back in a few minutes. So you think Leonora's grown?

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

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

WILL: 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.

MRS. WETHERILL: Yes, that's it.

WILL: Yes, that's it. That's what's the matter with my head. I haven't had anything to eat since yesterday morning. I forgot all about it. Where are you going?

MRS. WETHERILL: Why, to get you something to eat.

WILL: You came back here. Now, I want to know and know right now what you intend to do.

MRS. WETHERILL: Do about what, Will?

WILL: There's no use beating about the bush. But I want you to know first—I won't go to jail—get that?

MRS. WETHERILL: What you are going to do—why you sent for me?

WILL: I won't, I tell you. I don't care now. I haven't anything to live for, anyway—nor any one. Did you know Sadie's left me?

MRS. WETHERILL: Yes, no, no—has she?

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—what does she care if—I want to know what you are going to do—why you sent for me?

MRS. WETHERILL: I'm not going to do anything.

WILL: Nothing, eh?

MRS. WETHERILL: At least, nothing about you.

WILL: What, then?

MRS. WETHERILL: I thought maybe you could tell me something about Walter.

WILL: What's the matter with him?

MRS. WETHERILL: He went away last night. I thought maybe you'd know where he was.

How should I? WILL:

MRS. WETHERILL: It was—it was Sadie's sister.

WILL: What?

MRS. WETHERILL: He brought her here to see me yesterday.

WILL: He brought that woman to see you—and Leonora—here in this house? And you?

MRS. WETHERILL: I only had to tell her that Walter—that we had nothing—

WILL: Oh, she's like her sister, all right. She'd so then. And he's followed her?

MRS. WETHERILL: I don't know. I don't know where he is.

WILL: Well, I can find out easy enough. Just let me catch him. I'm only waiting for a 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 shan't disgrace the family—he shan't—

MRS. WETHERILL: Will!

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.

MRS. WETHERILL: I've told you.

WILL: That's a lie—a pretext. 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.

MRS. WETHERILL: Very well.

WILL: Now, I warn you.

MRS. WETHERILL: You needn't warn me, Will. My mind's quite made up and has been for some time.

WILL: Well.

MRS. WETHERILL: When—I—when I sign my name to a note, the note is usually made good.

WILL: When—you—sign—your—name?

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

WILL: Chase said—

MRS. WETHERILL: The girls are going to help me.

WILL: The girls—Leonora, too?

MRS. WETHERILL: Yes—we all stand together—the family.

Some Facts About My Family

By James J. Morton.

MY brother was a rising young man. First thing he did after he got a job was to raise a check. Later in life he was raised to a tree. He didn't like it at first, but he got the hang of it after a while. One time he ran for office down in Kentucky, but he couldn't shoot straight enough to win.

My wife's father was the laziest man I ever knew. His name was John Hole, and he was so lazy that when he signed his name he simply put down the letter "J" and then punched a hole in the paper.

My father was a policeman by trade—he was a carpenter also. He was one of the best carpenters on the force. He'd nail anything. One day a sergeant asked him if he knew how to make a Venetian blind.

"Why, sure," said father; "I'd jab him in the eye with a club."

My father was also a judge—the finest judge of liquor I ever saw. He was a great lover of wine. He fell down our cellar steps once with five bottles of wine and didn't break one of them. You see, he drank them before he fell down the steps. But hard drink finally killed him—a piece of ice hit him on the head.

My brother was a very clever fellow. Everything he touched seemed to turn into

money. He touched me once, but I didn't turn. He was head push-and-pull in a big bank—he pushed open the door and pulled out the dirt.

My father drove a cab once in Chicago. A passenger whom he had one night complained that he wasn't driving fast enough.

"Hey, there, get a move on your horse. Wake up the biped."

"Sure, I haven't the heart to beat him," said my father.

"What's the matter with him," asked the passenger, "is he sick?"

"No, he isn't sick; he's unlucky, that's all. You see, every morning before I put him in harness I toss him to see whether he'll have a feed of oats or I'll have a drink of whiskey, and the poor beast has lost five mornings running."

Business was so bad in Chicago that father went broke. And he wanted to get out of Chicago. He went to a railway

ticket office and asked them if they would give him a pass.

They refused. And then he asked if they would give him a half rate ticket, and they refused him even that.

"Well, then," he said, "will you give me a quarter and tell me where the nearest drug store is?"

"What do you want," asked the agent, "whiskey?"

"No," answered father. "I want some strychnine. I'm going to leave Chicago somehow."

After a while he came back home and got his old job on the police force again. He was on the force about two months when another copper named Flannigan borrowed a hundred dollars from him, which he was to pay the following month. The day before it was due Flannigan didn't have the money to settle. The thought weighed heavily on him and he couldn't sleep. So he got up and dressed, and came around to our house and woke father up.

"It's me," says Flannigan. "I come to tell you that I can't pay you what I owe you to-morrow. The thought of it worried me so much I couldn't sleep."

"Why didn't you wait until to-morrow?" yelled father. "Now I can't sleep, either."

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Mr. Morton.

WILL (breaking down): The family—the family that I've disgraced, ruined! Chase was right—the family that I've beggared! You shan't do it! You shan't! I'll kill myself first. You shan't—I'm not worth it!

MRS. WETHERILL: My boy—my boy!

WILL (trying to move from her grasp, but she holds him): Take your hands off me, I tell you. I can't stand it! Take 'em away—please. For God's sake, mother. I can't stand it—mother, mother! (He drops on his knees, clasping her around the waist and crying.)

MRS. WETHERILL: My boy! I've got my boy back! I've got him back again!

(Curtain.)

"Why do you watch the baseball ball-tins so carefully?" asked one woman.

"My husband is an enthusiast over the game," replied the other. "I make it a rule never to discuss household or military expenses with him except on days when the home team wins."

Violet—I never had such a streak of luck. He fell in love in Paris, proposed in Rome and bought the ring in Naples.

Pierrot—Did your luck end there?

Violet—Oh, no! While we were at Monte Carlo he won enough from paper for us to get married on.

The contributor wrote, "The incidents are original and have never been published."

The editor answered, "I can quite believe it."