

Paper

"What's that?" asked Constance.

Her father took his time before answering. He laid down the stylus that was in his left hand, and folded and put into his pocket his glasses. Constance at first thought with some disappointment that she'd induced a long lecture-story, but all he said was, "It's paper," and lifted the thin, bright, flimsy sheet for her to see. It looked like fabric. He held it out to her so she could feel how smooth it was; she gripped the corner of it in her little fist and was at first dismayed by the fact that the folds stuck - but her father only smiled and flattened it out again on the desk.

"Did I ruin it?" she asked, seeing all the creases still there.

"No, silly, keeping it flat isn't what it's for."

"What's it for?"

He leaned back in his chair, reflecting. She saw that he had been very peaceful for some time, for the skin on his face was untroubled, like deep water.

"It's for a lot of things," he finally replied, "but I think I use it most often to see myself think."

From then on, whenever Constance peeked her head around the door and saw her father scribbling on paper, she would go to her mother and say, "Shh! Daddy's mind is looking in the mirror."