

MERRICK. She does not look happy. No.

Mrs. KENDAL. Lady Ellen?

MERRICK. Too thin.

Mrs. KENDAL. Then who?

MERRICK. Certain women. They have a kind of ripeness. They seem to stop at a perfect point.

Mrs. KENDAL. My dear she doesn't exist.

MERRICK. That is probably why I never saw her.

Mrs. KENDAL. What would your friend Bishop How say of all this I wonder?

MERRICK. He says I should put these things out of my mind.

Mrs. KENDAL. It that the best he can suggest?

MERRICK. I put them out of my mind. They reappeared, snap.

Mrs. KENDAL. What about Frederick?

MERRICK. He would be appalled if I told him.

Mrs. KENDAL. I am flattered. Too little trust has maimed my life. But that is another story.

MERRICK. What a rain. Are we going to read this afternoon?

Mrs. KENDAL. Yes. Some women are lucky to look well, that is all. It is a rather arbitrary gift; it has no really good use, though it has uses, I will say that. Anyway it does not signify very much.

MERRICK. To me it does.

Mrs. KENDAL. Well. You are mistaken.

MERRICK. What are we going to read?

Mrs. KENDAL. Trust is very important you know. I trust you.

MERRICK. Thank you very much. I have a book of Thomas Hardy's here. He is a friend of Frederick's. Shall we read that?

Mrs. KENDAL. Turn around a moment. Don't look.

MERRICK. Is this a game?

Mrs. KENDAL. I would not call it a game. A surprise. (*She begins undressing.*)

MERRICK. What kind of a surprise?

Mrs. KENDAL. I saw photographs of you. Before I met you. You didn't know that, did you?

MERRICK. The ones from the first time, in '84? No, I didn't.

Mrs. KENDAL. I felt it was—unjust. I don't know why. I cannot say my sense of justice is my most highly developed characteristic. You may turn around again. Well. A little funny, isn't it?

MERRICK. It is the most beautiful sight I have seen. Ever.

Mrs. KENDAL. If you tell anyone, I shall not see you again, we shall not read, we shall not talk, we shall do nothing. Wait. (*Undoes her hair.*) There. No illusions. Now. Well? What is there to say? "I am extremely pleased to have made your acquaintance?"

(*Enter TREVES.*)

TREVES. For God's sakes. What is going on here? What is going on?

Mrs. KENDAL. For a moment, Paradise, Freddie. (*She begins dressing.*)

TREVES. But—have you no sense of decency? Woman, dress yourself quickly. (*Silence. MERRICK goes to put another piece on St. Phillip's.*) Are you not ashamed? Do you know what you are? Don't you know what is forbidden?

*Fadeout.*