

**George Eliot**

**Daniel Deronda**

**Abridged**



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## Note on the Abridgement

*Daniel Deronda*, George Eliot's final novel, was published in serial form in 1876 to great acclaim. It achieved higher sales than Eliot's previous masterpiece, *Middlemarch*; yet it is nowadays the lesser read of the two works.

This can be partly explained by the fact that *Daniel Deronda* is a more difficult book than *Middlemarch*, which itself can hardly be called light reading. Many critics have expressed reservations about its binary nature; there are two parallel storylines, those of Gwendolen Harleth and Daniel Deronda, which meet only occasionally.

This new abridgement keeps all elements of the plot, but reduces the book to around sixty per cent of the length of the original. Whilst it remains a sizeable work, I hope that it will prove more accessible to the general reader than the full version.

What has been cut? Some sentences and phrases almost cut themselves. The reader does not need to know where, on all occasions, Gwendolen laid her hat, or what exactly Grandcourt did with his gloves; and scene-setting and small talk are easily condensed. Many learned quotations (including the chapter epigraphs) have been removed, especially where they are likely to be obscure to the modern reader; as have some philosophical asides.

Beyond this, it becomes harder. George Eliot is inclined to employ great travelling-trunks of paragraphs, into which she carefully packs layers of nuanced and exactly detailed meaning. I have attempted to unpack such sections and repack them in shoulder-bag form, containing the essentials only. But what exactly comprises "the essentials" is, of course, open to question. In a book where so much depends on the characters' thoughts, intentions and motives, I have tried to ensure that these at least make sense.

However, this edition is obviously not suitable for use by those making an academic study of *Daniel Deronda*. The full text can be downloaded as a free ebook (though with some scanning errors) from Project Gutenberg; and numerous other editions are available elsewhere.

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The cover illustration shows Blackfriars Bridge in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## Regarding the List of Contents:

George Eliot divided *Daniel Deronda* into 8 books: hyperlinks are attached to each of these. Within these 8 books, hyperlinks are also provided for groups of chapters, rather than for each of the 70 chapters individually, in an attempt to keep the list of contents to a manageable length. While the titles of the 8 books are George Eliot's, the headings for each group of chapters are my own.

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## BOOK I: THE SPOILED CHILD

### Chapter One

Was she beautiful or not beautiful? and what was it that gave the dynamic quality to her glance? Was good or evil dominant in it? Probably evil; or why was the effect that of unrest rather than of charm? Why did he feel forced to look at her again, against his wishes?

She who raised these questions in Daniel Deronda's mind was occupied in gambling. They were in one of those splendid resorts which are prepared for the pleasure of fashionable persons by means of heavy gilt mouldings, dark-coloured decor and chubby nudities.

It was a September afternoon, so that the atmosphere was well-brewed to a visible haze. There was deep stillness, broken only by a light rattle, a chink, a small sweeping sound, and an occasional monotone in French, such as might be expected to come from an automaton. Around two long tables were gathered two crowds of humans, all save one with their attention bent on the tables. The one exception was a melancholy little boy in fancy dress; with a blank face turned toward the doorway, he stood close behind a lady deeply engaged at the roulette-table.

About this table fifty or sixty persons were assembled, many being mere spectators; except that one of them, usually a woman, might now and then put down a five-franc coin with a simpering air, just to see what the passion of gambling really was. Those who were absorbed in deeper play showed wide varieties of European type: Livonian and Spanish, Graeco-Italian and miscellaneous German, English aristocratic and English plebeian.

Here certainly was a striking admission of human equality. The white bejewelled fingers of an English countess were very near touching a bony, yellow, crab-like hand which belonged to someone not unlike a vulture. And where else would her ladyship have graciously consented to sit by that dry-lipped woman, prematurely old, withered like her artificial flowers, holding a shabby reticule, and occasionally putting in her mouth the point with which she pricked her card?

There too, very near the fair countess, was a respectable London tradesman, blonde and soft-handed, his sleek hair scrupulously parted, who liked to take his holidays fashionably, and who held that the only vice of gambling lay in losing. Standing close to his chair was a handsome Italian, calm and statuesque, reaching across him to place the first pile of napoleons from a new bagful. The pile was in half a minute pushed over to an old bewigged woman with eye-glasses pinching her nose.

But, while every single player differed markedly from every other, there was a certain uniform negativeness of expression which had the effect of a mask – as if they were all drugged into the same narrow monotony of action.

Deronda, observing this scene of dull, gas-poisoned absorption, suddenly felt the moment become dramatic. His attention was arrested by a young lady standing nearby, who was the last to whom his eyes travelled. She was bending and speaking English to a middle-aged lady seated beside her: but the next instant she returned to her play, showing the full height of a graceful figure, and a face which might possibly be looked at without admiration, but could not be passed with indifference.

Inwardly debating her nature, Deronda looked at her with increased scrutiny rather than admiration. At one moment his eyes followed the movements of her figure, her

arms and hands, as she bent forward to place her stake with an air of firm choice; and the next they returned to the face. She was a winner; and as her slender fingers, delicately gloved in pale-grey, were receiving the coins which had been pushed toward her, she looked around with a cold and neutral survey that seemed to conceal inward exultation.

But in the course of that survey her eyes met Deronda's and were held – how long? The darting sense that he was measuring her and looking down on her as an inferior, a specimen of a lower order, roused a tingling resentment. It did not bring the blood to her cheeks, but it sent it away from her lips. She controlled herself, and without other sign of emotion than these pale lips turned to her play.

But Deronda's gaze seemed to have acted as an evil eye. Her stake was gone. No matter; she had been winning from the start, and had a large reserve of coins. She had begun to believe in her luck, and so had others. Her friend and chaperon, who had not wished her to play at first, was starting to approve, only advising her to stop at the right moment and carry money back to England – to which Gwendolen replied that she cared for the excitement of play, not the winnings.

Yet, when her next stake was swept away, she felt her eyes getting hot, and the certainty she had (without looking) of that man still watching her was like a torturing pressure. The more reason why she should not flinch, but go on playing as if she were indifferent to loss or gain. Her friend touched her elbow and proposed that they should quit the table. For reply Gwendolen defiantly put ten louis on the same spot. Since she was not winning strikingly, the next best thing was to lose strikingly. Controlling her muscles, she showed no tremor of mouth or hands. Each time her stake was swept off she doubled it. Many were now watching her, but the sole observation she was conscious of was Deronda's, who, though she never looked toward him, she was sure had not moved away.

Such a drama takes no long while to play out. Within a few minutes, Gwendolen's arm was stretched to deposit her last poor heap of coins. And five seconds later she turned from the table, but turned resolutely with her face toward Deronda and looked at him. There was a smile of irony in his eyes as their glances met; but at least his attention had been fixed on her; that was better than to be disregarded.

Besides, in spite of his irony, it was difficult for her to believe that he did not admire her spirit as well as her person. The general conviction that we are admirable does not easily give way. Gwendolen took it for granted that she knew what was admirable and that she herself was admired. This basis of her thinking had received a disagreeable blow, and reeled a little, but was not easily to be overthrown.

That evening the same room was more stiflingly heated, and brilliant with gas-lights and ladies' costumes.

The sea-nymph in sea-green robes and silver ornaments, with a pale green feather falling over her green hat and light brown hair, was Gwendolen Harleth. She was under the wing or rather soared by the shoulder of the lady who had sat by her at the roulette-table; and with them was a stiff, German gentleman with a white moustache. Gwendolen was much observed.

“A striking girl – that Miss Harleth.”

“Yes, she has got herself up as a sort of serpent now, and winds her neck about a little more than usual.”

“Oh, she must always be doing something extraordinary. She is that kind of girl, I fancy. Do you think her pretty, Mr. Vandernoodt?”

“Very.”

“You like an upturned nose, then, and long narrow eyes?”

“When they go with such a costume.”

“The serpent’s?”

“If you like. Woman was tempted by a serpent; why not man?”

“She is certainly very graceful; but she needs colour in her cheeks.”

“On the contrary, I think her complexion one of her chief charms. And that delicate nose with its little upward curve is distracting. And then her mouth – there never was a prettier mouth, eh, Mackworth?”

“Think so? I cannot endure that sort of mouth. It looks so self-complacent, as if it knew its own beauty.”

“For my part, I think her odious,” said a dowager. “It is amazing what unpleasant girls get into vogue. Who are these Langens? Does anybody know them?”

“They are quite *comme il faut*. I have dined with them several times. The baroness is English, and Miss Harleth’s cousin. The girl herself is thoroughly well-bred, and as clever as possible.”

“Your baroness is always at the roulette-table,” said Mackworth. “I fancy she has taught the girl to gamble.”

“Oh, the old woman plays a very sober game. The girl is more headlong. But it is only a freak.”

“I hear she has lost all her winnings to-day. Are they rich?”

“Who knows?” said Mr. Vandernoodt, moving off to join the Langens.

It was true that Gwendolen wound her neck about more than usual this evening. This was because she watched for Deronda. She was still wincing under his measuring gaze. At last her opportunity came.

“Mr. Vandernoodt, you know everybody,” said Gwendolen, not too eagerly, but rather with a certain languor. “Who is that near the door? I mean the dark-haired young man with the dreadful expression.”

“Dreadful, do you call it? I think he is an uncommonly fine fellow.”

“But who is he?”

“He is lately come to our hotel with Sir Hugo Mallinger.”

“Sir Hugo Mallinger?”

“Yes. Do you know him?”

“No.” (Gwendolen coloured slightly.) “He has a place near us, but he never comes to it. What did you say was the name of that gentleman?”

“Mr. Deronda.”

“What a delightful name! Is he an Englishman?”

“Yes. He is reported to be rather closely related to the baronet. You are interested in him?”

“Yes. I think he is not like young men in general.”

“And you don’t admire young men in general?”

“Not in the least. I always know what they will say. I can’t at all guess what this Mr. Deronda would say. What *does* he say?”

“Nothing, chiefly. I sat with his party for an hour last night, and he never spoke. He looked bored.”

“Another reason why I should like to know him. I am always bored.”

“I should think he would be charmed to have an introduction. Shall I bring it about? Will you allow it, baroness?”

“Why not? – since he is related to Sir Hugo Mallinger. It is a new role of yours, Gwendolen, to be always bored,” continued Madame von Langen, when Mr.

Vandernoodt had moved away. "Until now you have always seemed eager about something all the time."

"That is just because I am bored to death. If I am to leave off gambling I must make something happen; unless you will go into Switzerland and take me up the Matterhorn."

"Perhaps this Mr. Deronda's acquaintance will do instead of the Matterhorn."

"Perhaps."

But Gwendolen did not make Deronda's acquaintance on this occasion. Mr. Vandernoodt did not succeed in bringing him to her that evening, and when she re-entered her own room she found a letter recalling her home.

## Chapter Two

This was the letter Gwendolen found on her table:

‘DEAREST CHILD. – I have been expecting to hear from you. In your last letter you said the Langens thought of leaving Leubronn for Baden. How could you be so thoughtless as to leave me in uncertainty about your address? I am in the greatest anxiety lest this should not reach you. I must entreat you to return as quickly as possible, for if you spent all your money I would be powerless to send you any more, and you must not borrow of the Langens, for I could not repay them.

‘This is the sad truth, my child – a dreadful calamity has befallen us all. You know nothing about business and will not understand it; but Grapnell & Co. have failed for a million, and we are totally ruined – your aunt Gascoigne as well as I, except that your uncle’s benefice means that they can manage. All the property our poor father saved for us is gone. There is nothing I can call my own. It is better you should know this at once, though it rends my heart to have to tell it you. We cannot help thinking what a pity it was that you went away just when you did; but I shall never reproach you, my dear child; I would save you from all trouble if I could.

‘On your way home you will have time to prepare yourself for changes. We shall leave Offendene. Of course we cannot go to the rectory – there is not a corner there to spare. We must get some hut or other to shelter us, and live on your uncle Gascoigne’s charity, until I see what else can be done. Summon your fortitude, my dear child; we must resign ourselves to God’s will. But it is hard to resign one’s self to the wicked recklessness which was the cause of the failure. Your poor sisters can only cry and give me no help. If you were here, there might be a break in the cloud – I always feel it impossible that you can have been meant for poverty. Come as soon as you can to your afflicted and loving mamma,

‘FANNY DAVILOW.’

The first effect of this letter on Gwendolen was half-stupefying. Her confidence that her destiny must be one of luxurious ease, where any trouble would be well provided for, had been stronger in her own mind than in her mamma’s, fed by her youth and her sense of superior claims. It was almost as difficult for her to believe suddenly in her poverty and humiliating dependence, as it would have been for her to take into her strong blooming life the chill sense that her death would really come.

She stood motionless for a few minutes, then tossed off her hat and automatically looked in the glass. The coils of her smooth light-brown hair were still in perfect order. On other nights, Gwendolen might have looked lingeringly at herself for pleasure; but now she took no note of her beauty, and simply stared before her. By-and-by she threw herself onto the sofa and read the letter again twice, letting it at last fall on the ground, while she sat still, shedding no tears. Her impulse was to survey and resist the situation rather than to wail over it. There was no pity for “Poor mamma!” Her mamma had never seemed to get much enjoyment out of life, and Gwendolen would rather have bestowed any pity on herself.

But it was anger, it was resistance that possessed her; it was bitter vexation that she had lost her gains at roulette, whereas if her luck had continued through this one day she would have had a handsome sum to carry home, or she might have gone on playing and won enough to support them all.



Even now was it not possible? She had little money left in her purse, but she had some ornaments which she could sell: a practice so common in stylish society here that there was no need to be ashamed of it. Even if she had not received her mamma's letter, she would probably have decided to get money for an Etruscan necklace which she had not worn since her arrival. With money and a return of her former luck, which seemed probable, what could she do better than go on playing for a few days? If her friends at home disapproved, as they certainly would, still the money would be there.

Gwendolen imagined following this course and its agreeable consequences, but not with the unbroken confidence of a committed gambler. She had gone to the roulette-table not because of passion, but in search of it: and while the chance of winning allured her, the chance of losing made a vision from which her pride shrank.

For she was resolved not to tell the Langens that any misfortune had befallen her family, or to make herself in any way indebted to their compassion; and if they were to see her part with her jewellery, they would interfere. The least risky course was to sell her necklace early in the morning, tell the Langens that her mother desired her immediate return without giving a reason, and take the train for Brussels that evening.

Instead of going to bed she began to pack, all the while foreseeing the events of the coming day – the tiresome explanations and farewells, and the whirling journey toward a changed home; or the alternative of staying just another day and standing again at the roulette-table. But always in this latter scene there was the presence of Deronda, watching her with exasperating irony, and seeing her again forsaken by luck. She resolved on departing immediately.

By the time she finishing packing, the faint dawn was stealing through the blinds. What was the use of going to bed? A slight trace of fatigue about the eyes only made her look more interesting. Before six o'clock she was equipped in her grey travelling dress, for she meant to walk out as soon as other ladies would be on their way to the springs.

Seated before the mirror, she turned to look at herself, leaning on the back of the chair in an attitude that might have been chosen for her portrait. She had a naïve delight in herself, which may be forgiven in a girl who had every day seen a pleasant reflection of that self in her friends' flattery as well as in the looking-glass. And even in this beginning of troubles, while she sat gazing at her image in the growing light, her face gathered a gradual complacency. Her beautiful lips curled into a more and more decided smile, till at last she took off her hat, leaned forward and kissed the cold glass. How could she believe in sorrow? If it attacked her, she felt the force to crush it, to defy it, or run away from it, as she had done already. Anything seemed more possible than that she could go on bearing miseries.

Madame von Langen never went out before breakfast, so Gwendolen could safely walk up to the shop she needed, which was sure to be open after seven. At that hour any observers would be either on their walks towards the springs, or still in their bedrooms; but certainly there was one grand hotel, the *Czarina*, from which eyes might follow her up to Mr. Wiener's shop. This was a risk: she remembered that the *Czarina* was Deronda's hotel; but she was already far up the road, and walked on with her usual floating movement, every line in her figure and drapery falling in gentle curves attractive to all eyes except those which saw in them too close a resemblance to the serpent.

She looked neither to right nor left on the way, and transacted her business in the shop with a coolness which gave little Mr. Wiener nothing to remark except her proud grace of manner, and the superior quality of the three central turquoises in the

necklace she offered him. They had belonged to a chain once her father's: but she had never known her father; and the necklace was the ornament she could most conveniently part with.

Gwendolen's chief regret was that she added only nine louis to the four in her purse: these Jew dealers were so unscrupulous in taking advantage of Christians unfortunate at play! But she was the Langens' guest in their apartment, and had nothing to pay there. Thirteen louis would do more than take her home; even if she decided to risk three, the remaining ten would suffice.

As she turned homeward and seated herself in the salon to await her friends and breakfast, she still wavered as to her immediate departure. She had resolved to tell the Langens simply that she had had a letter from her mamma desiring her return, and to leave it undecided when she should start. By now rather tired and hungry, she was leaning back when she heard some one enter. She rose expecting to see one of the Langens; but it was the servant bringing in a small packet for Miss Harleth, which had just been left at the door.

Gwendolen took it and immediately hurried to her room, paler and more agitated than when she had first read her mamma's letter. Something – she never quite knew what – revealed to her before she opened the packet that it contained the necklace she had just parted with. It was wrapped in a handkerchief, and with it was a scrap of note-paper, on which was written, in clear but rapid handwriting– “*A stranger who has found Miss Harleth's necklace returns it to her with the hope that she will not again risk the loss of it.*”

Gwendolen reddened with the vexation of wounded pride. A large corner of the handkerchief seemed to have been torn off to get rid of an owner's mark; but she at once believed in the first image of “the stranger” that presented itself to her mind. It was Deronda; he must have seen her go into the shop; he must have gone in immediately after and repurchased the necklace. He had taken an unpardonable liberty, and had placed her in a hateful position.

What could she do? – Not, certainly, straightway send the necklace back to him: for she might be mistaken. But even if the “stranger” were he, it would be too gross to let him know that she had realised this, and to meet him again with that recognition in their minds. He knew very well that he was causing her helpless humiliation: it was another way of smiling at her ironically.

Gwendolen felt bitter tears of mortification rolling down her cheeks. No one had ever before dared to treat her with irony and contempt. One thing was clear: she must leave at once; it was impossible for her to reappear in the salon, still less stand at the gaming-table with the risk of seeing Deronda.

There came a knock at the door: breakfast was ready. Gwendolen passionately thrust necklace, cambric, paper and all into her bag, pressed her handkerchief against her face, and after pausing a minute to summon her proud self-control, went to join her friends. Her signs of tears and fatigue seemed accordant enough with the account she gave of her having sat up to do her packing. Her friends protested against her travelling alone, but she refused any companion. She would be put into the ladies' compartment and go right on. She could rest exceedingly well in the train, and was afraid of nothing.

In this way it happened that Gwendolen never reappeared at the roulette-table, but that Thursday evening left Leubronn for Brussels, and on Saturday morning arrived at Offendene, the home to which she and her family were soon to say a last good-bye.

## Chapter Three

### A Year Previously

Pity that Offendene was not the home of Miss Harleth's childhood, or endeared to her by family memories! A human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land; a spot where early memories may be entwined with affection as a sweet habit of the blood. The best introduction to astronomy is to think of the nightly heavens as a little lot of stars belonging to one's own homestead.

But this blessed persistence in which affection can take root had been lacking in Gwendolen's life. Only a year before her recall from Leubronn, Offendene was chosen as her mamma's home simply for its nearness to Pennicote Rectory; and Mrs. Davilow, Gwendolen, and her four half-sisters were driven along the avenue for the first time on a late October afternoon when the rooks were cawing loudly, and the yellow elm-leaves were whirling.

The season suited the aspect of the old oblong red-brick house, rather too anxiously ornamented with stone at every line. The building was softened with green and grey lichen, so that there was no harshness in the face which it turned to the three avenues that cut through the grounds. One would have liked the house to have been lifted on a hill, so as to look over to the long thatched roofs of the distant villages, the church towers, the scattered homesteads and the gradual rise of surging woods in that beautiful part of Wessex.

The house was just large enough to be called a mansion, and had been let with sombre furniture and faded upholstery. But nobody could suppose it to be inhabited by trades-people: and to live in a house which had once sufficed for dowager countesses added to Mrs. Davilow's satisfaction in having her own establishment. This was suddenly possible on the death of Gwendolen's step-father, Captain Davilow, who had for the last nine years joined his family only in a brief and fitful manner; but Gwendolen cared not why, only that her prospects had become more agreeable in consequence.

She had disliked their former way of life, roving from one foreign watering-place to another, always feeling new dislike for new suites of hired furniture, and meeting new people under conditions which made her appear of little importance. The two years she had passed at a showy school, where she had been put in a foremost position, had only deepened her sense of herself as an exceptional person who could not remain in ordinary circumstances. Any fear of this evil was banished now that her mamma was to have an establishment.

She would probably have known more about her father but for an incident which happened when she was twelve years old. Mrs. Davilow had brought out, as she did only at wide intervals, mementos of her first husband, and while showing his miniature to Gwendolen recalled the fact that dear papa had died when his little daughter was in baby-clothes. Gwendolen, immediately thinking of the unlovable step-father whom she had known while she was in short frocks, said—

“Why did you marry again, mamma? It would have been nicer if you had not.”

Mrs. Davilow coloured deeply, a slight convulsive movement passed over her face, and she said, with a violence quite unusual in her—

“You have no feeling, child!”

Gwendolen, who was fond of her mamma, felt hurt and ashamed, and had never since dared to ask a question about her father.

This was not the only time she had felt a painful guilt towards her mother. It was always arranged, when possible, that she should have a small bed in her mamma's room; for Mrs. Davilow's motherly tenderness clung chiefly to her eldest girl. One night under an attack of pain she found that the medicine regularly placed by her bedside had been forgotten, and begged Gwendolen to get out of bed and reach it for her. That healthy young lady, snug and warm as a rosy infant, objected to step out into the cold, and lying perfectly still, grumbled a refusal. Mrs. Davilow went without the medicine and never reproached her daughter; but the next day Gwendolen was keenly conscious of what must be in her mamma's mind, and tried to make amends by caresses which cost her no effort.

Having always been the pet and pride of the household, waited on by all, she naturally found it difficult to think her own pleasure unimportant, and when it was thwarted felt an astonished and passionate resentment. Though never as a child thoughtlessly cruel, nay delighting to rescue drowning insects, there was a disagreeable silent remembrance of her having strangled her sister's canary-bird in a fit of exasperation at its shrill singing which had again and again jarringly interrupted her own. She had bought a white mouse for her sister in retribution, and though inwardly excusing herself on the grounds of a peculiar sensitivity which was a mark of her superiority, the thought of that understandable murder had always made her wince.

Gwendolen was not without remorse, but she liked to make her penances easy, and now that she was twenty, she guarded herself from the humiliation of penance. There was more show of fire and will in her than ever, but there was more calculation underneath it.

On this day of arrival at Offendene, a place which not even Mrs. Davilow had seen before, her brother-in-law Mr. Gascoigne having rented it for her – all four got down from the carriage, and were standing in front of the open door, to have a general view of the place and a glimpse of the stone hall and staircase hung with sombre pictures. No one spoke; mamma, the four sisters and the governess all looked at Gwendolen, as if their feelings depended entirely on her decision.

Of the girls, from Alice in her sixteenth year to Isabel in her tenth, hardly anything could be said but that they were girlish, and that their black dresses were getting shabby. Miss Merry, the elderly governess, was altogether neutral in expression. Mrs. Davilow's worn beauty seemed the more pathetic for the look of appeal which she cast at Gwendolen, who was glancing round at her surroundings with an air of rapid judgment. Imagine a young race-horse in the paddock among ponies and patient hacks.

"Well, dear, what do you think of the place?" said Mrs. Davilow.

"I think it is charming," said Gwendolen, quickly. "A romantic place; anything delightful may happen in it. No one need be ashamed of living here."

"There is certainly nothing common about it."

"Oh, it would do for fallen royalty. But I thought my uncle and aunt Gascoigne would be here to meet us, and my cousin Anna," added Gwendolen, her tone changed to sharp surprise.

"We are early," said Mrs. Davilow, and entering the hall, she said to the housekeeper, "You expect Mr. and Mrs. Gascoigne?"

“Yes, madam; they were here yesterday to give orders about the fires and the dinner. Everything is well aired and cleaned. When Mr. and Mrs. Gascoigne come, they’ll tell you nothing has been neglected. They’ll be here at five, for certain.”

This satisfied Gwendolen; and after tripping a little way up the stone staircase to take a survey there, she tripped down again, and followed by all the girls looked into each of the rooms opening from the hall – the dining-room all dark oak and worn red satin damask, the library with a smell of old brown-leather; and lastly the drawing-room.

“Mamma, mamma, pray come here!” said Gwendolen. “Here is an organ. I will be Saint Cecilia: some one shall paint me as Saint Cecilia. Jocosa (this was her name for Miss Merry), let down my hair. See, mamma?”

She had thrown off her hat and gloves, and seated herself before the organ in an admirable pose, looking upward; while the submissive Jocosa took out the comb which fastened her hair, till it fell in a smooth light-brown stream far below its owner’s slim waist.

Mrs. Davilow smiled and said, “A charming picture, my dear!” Gwendolen rose and laughed with delight.

“What a queer, quaint, picturesque room!” she said. “I like these old embroidered chairs, and the garlands on the wainscot, and the pictures that may be anything.”

“Oh, Gwendolen!” said the small Isabel, in a tone of astonishment, while she held open a hinged panel of the wainscot at the other end of the room.

Everyone went to look. The opened wall-panel had disclosed the picture of an upturned dead face, from which a figure seemed to be fleeing with outstretched arms.

“How horrible!” said Mrs. Davilow; but Gwendolen shuddered silently, and Isabel, a plain and inconvenient child with an alarming memory, said,

“You will never stay in this room by yourself, Gwendolen.”

“How dare you open things which were meant to be shut up, you perverse little creature?” said Gwendolen angrily. She closed the panel hastily, saying, “There is a lock – where is the key? Let nobody open this again; and bring the key to me.”

Then turning with a flushed face, she said, “Let us go to our own room, mamma.”

The housekeeper found the key in the drawer of a cabinet, and later handed it to Bugle, the lady’s-maid, telling her significantly to give it to her Royal Highness.

“I don’t know who you mean, Mrs. Startin,” said Bugle, rather offended at this irony in a new servant.

“I mean the young lady that’s to command us all,” replied Mrs. Startin.

When Gwendolen and Mrs. Davilow entered their black and yellow bedroom, where a pretty little white couch sat by the side of the bed, Gwendolen’s first movement was to go to the tall mirror, while her mamma sat down and looked at the reflection of her daughter and the room.

“That is a becoming glass, Gwendolen; or is it the black and gold colour that sets you off?” said Mrs. Davilow, as Gwendolen stood brushing back her hair.

“I should make a tolerable St. Cecilia with some white roses on my head,” said Gwendolen, “only how about my nose, mamma? Saints’ noses never turn up. I wish you had given me your straight nose. Now, mamma,” she said, going to help her mamma undress with caressing touches, “you should be happy. Can nobody be happy after they are quite young? You have made me feel sometimes as if nothing were of any use. But now you might be happy.”

“So I shall, dear,” said Mrs. Davilow, patting her cheek.

“Yes, but really. Not with a sort of make-believe,” said Gwendolen resolutely. “See your hand and arm!— much more beautiful than mine. Anyone can see you were more beautiful.”

“No, dear; I was always heavier. Never half so charming as you are.”

“Well, what is the use of my being charming, if it is to end in my being dull and not minding anything? Is that what marriage always comes to?”

“No, child, certainly not. Marriage is the only happy state for a woman, as I trust you will prove.”

“I will not put up with it if it is not a happy state. I am determined to be happy – at least not to muddle away my life as other people do, being nothing remarkable. I shall not let other people interfere with me as they have done.” Gwendolen proceeded to take off her own dress, waiting to have her hair wound up by her mamma.

There was silence for a minute, till Mrs. Davilow, coiling up her daughter’s hair, said, “I am sure I have never crossed you, Gwendolen.”

“You often want me to do what I don’t like.”

“You mean, giving Alice lessons?”

“Yes. I have done it because you asked me. But I don’t see why I should. It bores me to death, she is so slow. It would be much better for her to be ignorant, mamma; she would do it well.”

“That is a hard thing to say of your poor sister, Gwendolen, who is so good to you, and waits on you hand and foot.”

“I don’t see why it is hard to call things by their right names, and put them in their proper places. The hardship is for me to have to waste my time on her. Now let me do your hair, mamma.”

“Make haste; your uncle and aunt will be here soon. For heaven’s sake, don’t be scornful to them, my dear child! or to your cousin Anna. Do promise me, Gwendolen. You can’t expect Anna to be equal to you.”

“I don’t want her to be equal,” said Gwendolen, with a toss of her head and a smile.

When Mr. and Mrs. Gascoigne and their daughter came, Gwendolen, far from being scornful, behaved as prettily as possible. Her relatives had not seen her since she was sixteen, and she was anxious – no, not anxious, but resolved that they should admire her.

Mrs. Gascoigne bore a family likeness to her younger sister. But she was darker and slighter than Gwendolen’s mother, her face was unworn by grief, her movements were less languid, her expression more alert and critical, as suited a rector’s wife. They both had natures inclined to obedience; but had ended up in very different places. The younger sister had been unfortunate in her marriages; the elder believed herself the most enviable of wives, and based her decided opinions on her husband’s authority. And there was much to encourage trust there. Mr Gascoigne had agreeable virtues, some striking advantages, and his failings leaned toward the side of success.

One of his advantages was a fine appearance, even more impressive at fifty-seven than it had been earlier in life. He looked a gentleman with his handsome dark features and iron-grey hair. Perhaps he owed this unclerical aspect to the fact that he had once been Captain Gaskin, having taken orders and a diphthong only shortly before his engagement. He had authority in his parish, and a gift for administration, being a tolerant man. He smiled pleasantly at the flower-growing interests of his fellow-clergyman: for himself, he preferred following the history of a campaign. Mr. Gascoigne would have thought of himself as free from nonsense, a man who looked at

religion by daylight, and saw it in its relation to other things. Indeed, the worst criticism of him was worldliness: not that he did not care for the poor, but it was not to be denied that the friendships he cultivated were of a kind likely to be useful to the father of six sons and two daughters.

Gwendolen wondered that she had not remembered how very fine a man her uncle was. It was a matter of extreme interest to her that she should have a dignified male relative nearby, and that her family life would cease to be entirely, insipidly feminine. She did not intend that her uncle should control her, but she saw at once that she would like him to be proud of introducing her as his niece. And he appeared likely to feel that pride. He certainly looked at her with admiration as he said—

“You have outgrown Anna, my dear,” putting his arm tenderly round his daughter, whose shy face was a tiny copy of his own. “She is a year younger than you, but her growing days are certainly over. I hope you will be excellent companions.”

He did give a comparing glance at his daughter; but it was clear that Anna’s timid appearance and miniature figure must appeal to a different taste from that which was attracted by Gwendolen, and that the girls could hardly be rivals. Gwendolen, at least, was aware of this, and kissed her cousin with real cordiality, saying,

“A companion is just what I want. I am so glad we are come to live here. And mamma will be much happier now she is near you, aunt.”

The aunt trusted that it would be so, and felt it a blessing that a suitable home had been vacant in their uncle’s parish. Then, of course, notice had to be taken of the four other girls, whom Gwendolen had always felt to be superfluous and unimportant, and yet from her earliest days an obtrusive fact in her life. She was conscious of having been much kinder to them than could have been expected. She could tell that her uncle and aunt also felt it a pity there were so many girls:— what rational person could feel otherwise, except poor mamma, who never would see how Alice hunched her shoulders, how Bertha and Fanny whispered and tittered together about everything, or how Isabel was always listening and staring and forgetting where she was?

“You have brothers, Anna,” said Gwendolen. “I think you are enviable there.”

“Yes,” said Anna, simply. “I am very fond of them; but of course their education is a great anxiety to papa. He used to say they made me a tomboy. I really was a great romp with Rex. I think you will like Rex. He will come home before Christmas.”

“I remember I used to think you rather wild and shy; but it is difficult to imagine you a romp,” said Gwendolen, smiling.

“Of course, I am altered now; I am come out, and all that. But I like to go blackberrying with Edwy and Lotta as well as ever. I am not very fond of society; but I dare say I shall like it better now you will be often with me. I am not at all clever, and I never know what to say.”

“I shall like going out with you very much,” said Gwendolen, well disposed toward this naïve cousin. “Are you fond of riding?”

“Yes, but we have only one Shetland pony. Papa can’t afford more; he has so many expenses.”

“I intend to have a horse and ride a great deal,” said Gwendolen decisively. “Is the society pleasant in this neighbourhood?”

“Papa says it is, very. There are clergymen all about, you know; and the Quallons, and the Arrowpoints, and Lord Brackenshaw, and Sir Hugo Mallinger’s place, where there is nobody— that’s very nice, because we make picnics there.”

Just then dinner was announced, and Gwendolen’s question was soon answered by her uncle, who dwelt much on the advantages of their getting a place like Offendene.

“It is always worth while to make a little sacrifice for a good style of house,” said Mr. Gascoigne, in his easy, pleasantly confident tone; “all the best people will call upon you; and you need give no expensive dinners. Of course, I have to spend a good deal in that way; but then I get my house for nothing. If I had to pay three hundred a year for my house I could not keep a table. My boys are too great a drain on me. You are better off than we are, in proportion; there is no great drain on you now, after your house and carriage.”

“I assure you, Fanny, now that the children are growing up, I am obliged to cut and contrive,” said his wife. “Henry has taught me how to manage. He is wonderful for making the best of everything; he allows himself no extras, and gets his curates for nothing. It is rather hard that he has not been made a prebendary.”

“Oh, my dear Nancy, thank Heaven, there are three hundred as good as I. And ultimately, we shall have no reason to complain, I am pretty sure. There could hardly be a better friend than Lord Brackenshaw – your landlord, you know, Fanny. Lady Brackenshaw will call upon you. And I have spoken for Gwendolen to be a member of the Brackenshaw Archery Club – the most select thing anywhere. That is, if she has no objection,” added Mr. Gascoigne.

“I should like it of all things,” said Gwendolen. “There is nothing I enjoy more than taking aim – and hitting,” she ended, with a pretty smile.

“Anna, poor child, is too short-sighted for archery. But you shall practise with me. I must make you an accomplished archer before our great meeting in July. In fact, as to neighbourhood, you could hardly be better placed. There are the Arrowpoints – they are some of our best people. Miss Arrowpoint is a delightful girl – she has been presented at Court. They have a magnificent place at Quetcham Hall; and their parties are the best things of the sort we have. Mrs. Arrowpoint is peculiar, certainly; but well-meaning, and Miss Arrowpoint is as nice as possible. It is not all young ladies who have mothers as handsome and graceful as yours and Anna’s.”

Mrs. Davilow smiled faintly at this little compliment, but the husband and wife looked affectionately at each other, and Gwendolen thought, “My uncle and aunt, at least, are not dull and dismal.”

Altogether, she felt satisfied with her prospects at Offendene. Even the curates were almost always young men of family, and Mr. Middleton, the present curate, was said to be quite an acquisition: it was only a pity he was soon to leave.

But there was one point about which she was anxious. Her mamma, she knew, intended to submit to her uncle’s judgment about expenditure: so the question of a saddle-horse had to be referred to Mr. Gascoigne. After Gwendolen had played on the piano, had sung to her hearers’ admiration, and had joined her uncle in a duet, she seized the opportune moment for saying, “Mamma, you have not spoken to my uncle about my riding.”

“Gwendolen desires above all things to have a horse to ride – a pretty, light, lady’s horse,” said Mrs. Davilow, looking at Mr. Gascoigne. “Do you think we can manage it? She rides so well. She has had lessons, and the riding-master said she might be trusted with any mount.” Even if Mrs. Davilow had not wished her darling to have a horse, she would not have dared to be lukewarm in trying to get it for her.

“We could lend her the pony sometimes,” said Mrs. Gascoigne, watching her husband’s face, and quite ready to disapprove if he did.

“I cannot endure ponies,” said Gwendolen. “I would rather give up some other indulgence and have a horse.” (Was there ever a young person not ready to give up an unspecified indulgence for the sake of a favourite one?)



“There is the price of the horse, and then his keep,” said Mr. Gascoigne, considering. “The carriage-horses are already a heavy item. And remember what you ladies cost in clothes now.”

“I really wear nothing but two black dresses,” said Mrs. Davilow hastily. “And the younger girls need nothing yet. Besides, Gwendolen will save me so much by giving her sisters lessons.” Here Mrs. Davilow blushed. “If it were not for that, I must have a more expensive governess, and masters besides.”

“That is decidedly good,” said Mr. Gascoigne, heartily. And Gwendolen, who was a deep young lady, suddenly moved away to the other end of the long drawing-room, and busied herself with pieces of music.

“The dear child has had no pleasures,” said Mrs. Davilow pleadingly. “She really needs the exercise – she needs cheering. And if you were to see her on horseback, it is something splendid.”

“Certainly, a fine woman never looks better than on horseback,” said Mr. Gascoigne. “And Gwendolen has the figure for it. I will consult Lord Brackenshaw’s head groom.”

“You are very kind.”

“That he always is,” said Mrs. Gascoigne. And later that night, when she and her husband were in private, she said,

“I thought you were almost too indulgent about the horse for Gwendolen. She ought not to claim so much more than your own daughter; especially before we see how Fanny manages on her income. You have enough to do without taking this trouble on yourself.”

“My dear Nancy, this girl is worth some expense: you don’t often see her equal. She ought to make a first-rate marriage, and I should not be doing my duty if I did not help her forward. She has been under a disadvantage with such a stepfather. I feel for the girl. And I should like your sister to have the benefit of your having married rather a better specimen of our kind than she did.”

“Rather better! I should think so. I would not grudge anything to poor Fanny. But I have been thinking of one thing you have never mentioned.”

“What is that?”

“The boys. I hope they will not be falling in love with Gwendolen.”

“Don’t presuppose anything of the kind, my dear, and there will be no danger. Rex will never be at home for long, and Warham is going to India. It is wiser to take it for granted that cousins will not fall in love. The boys will have nothing, and Gwendolen will have nothing. They can’t marry. At the worst there would only be a little crying, and you can’t save boys and girls from that.”

Mrs. Gascoigne’s mind was satisfied: if anything did happen, there was the comfort of feeling that her husband would know what was to be done, and would have the energy to do it.

## Chapter Four

It would be a little hard to blame the rector of Pennicote for regarding Gwendolen as a girl likely to make a brilliant marriage. Why should he be expected to differ from his contemporaries in this matter? To his credit, his feelings on the subject were entirely good-natured. Mr. Gascoigne, being a rational man, did not even think of getting too frisky a horse in order that Gwendolen might be threatened with an accident and be rescued by a man of property. He wished his niece well, and he meant her to be seen to advantage in the best society of the neighbourhood.

This fell in perfectly with Gwendolen's own wishes. But let no one suppose that she also contemplated a brilliant marriage as the result of her bewitching grace on horseback. She assumed that she was to be married some time or other, and felt sure that her marriage would not be a mediocre one, such as most girls were contented with. But her thoughts never dwelt on marriage; the dramas in which she imagined herself a heroine did not end that way. To be hopelessly sighed for as a bride was indeed an agreeable sign of womanly power; but to become a wife and wear domestic fetters was an unpleasant necessity. She thought of marriage as a dreary state in which a woman could not do what she liked, had more children than she wished, and was dull and humdrum.

Of course marriage was social promotion; she could not look forward to a single life; but Gwendolen meant to lead. For such passions dwell in feminine breasts as well as men's. In Gwendolen's, however, they dwelt among strictly feminine furniture, and had nothing to do with learning or politics. She meant to do what was pleasant to herself in a striking manner; or rather, to strike others with admiration and get in that reflected way a more ardent sense of living.

"Gwendolen will not rest without having the world at her feet," said Miss Merry, the governess: words often used in exaggeration. And words could hardly be too vague to indicate the hazy prospects facing poor Gwendolen on the heights of her young self-exultation. Other people allowed themselves to be made slaves of, and to have their lives blown hither and thither like empty ships. It was not to be so with her; she would not be sacrificed to creatures worth less than herself, but would make the very best of the chances that life offered her, and conquer circumstances by her exceptional cleverness.

Certainly, to be settled at Offendene, with the archery club and dinner invitations at the Arrowpoints' as the highest lights in her scenery, was not a position that seemed to offer remarkable chances; but Gwendolen had confidence in herself. She felt well equipped for the mastery of life. Although she had suffered disadvantages, she felt that these did not include her education. In the school-room she had quickly picked up enough rules and facts to save her from feeling ignorant; and as for other knowledge, she thought herself sufficiently acquainted with it through novels, plays and poems. About her French and music, she felt no ground for uneasiness; and when to all these qualifications we add her sense of capability, which persuaded her that she could form a correct judgment on any subject, who can wonder if Gwendolen felt ready to manage her own destiny?

There were many subjects in the world – perhaps most – in which she felt no interest, because they were stupid; for subjects are apt to appear stupid to the young as light seems dim to the old; but she would not have felt at all helpless if they had turned up in conversation. It must be remembered that no one had disputed her

superiority. The first thought of those at Offendene was always, what will Gwendolen think? If the wood smoked in the bedroom fireplace, Mrs. Davilow, whose own weak eyes suffered much from it, apologised to her daughter. If Gwendolen did not appear at the breakfast table till everyone else had finished, the only question was how her coffee and toast should be kept hot and crisp; and when she appeared with her freshly-brushed hair streaming backward and awaiting her mamma's hand to coil it up, it was always she herself who had to be tolerant – to beg that Alice would not stick up her shoulders in that frightful manner, and that Isabel, instead of asking questions, would go away.

Always she was the princess in exile, who was to have the best of everything. Why was this? The answer may seem to lie in her beauty, in the decision of will which made itself felt in her graceful movements and clear unhesitating tones. This potent charm, added to the fact that she was the eldest daughter, toward whom her mamma felt apologetic for the evils brought on her by a step-father, may seem sufficient reason for Gwendolen's domestic empire.

But I have seen the same attention given to persons who were not at all beautiful, whose firmness showed itself without grace, and who were not eldest daughters with a tender, timid mother. Some of them were very common sort of men. The only point of resemblance among them all was a strong determination to have what was pleasant, with a total fearlessness in making themselves disagreeable or dangerous when they did not get it. Even without her powerful charm, Gwendolen might still have played the queen in exile, with her energy of egoistic desire, and her power of inspiring fear as to what she might say or do.

However, she had the charm, and those who feared her were also fond of her; the fear and the fondness being both heightened by what may be called the iridescence of her character, and its contrary nature.

## Chapter Five

Gwendolen's reception in the neighbourhood fulfilled her uncle's expectations. She was welcomed with admiration, and even those ladies who did not quite like her felt a comfort in having a new, striking girl to invite to their parties. In addition, Mrs. Davilow always made a quiet, picturesque figure as a chaperon, and Mr. Gascoigne was everywhere in demand for his own sake.

Among the houses where Gwendolen was not quite liked, and yet invited, was Quetcham Hall. One of her first invitations was to a large dinner-party there, which introduced her to the society of the neighbourhood.

No figure there compared to Gwendolen's as she passed through the long suite of rooms adorned with light and flowers. Visible at first as a slim figure floating in white drapery, she approached through one wide doorway after another into fuller illumination. She had never had that sort of promenade before, and she felt exultingly that it befitted her: while her cousin Anna felt as embarrassed as a rabbit suddenly deposited in that well-lit-space.

"By George!" said the Archdeacon's son. "Who is that girl with the awfully well-set head and jolly figure?"

But to some onlookers, it was rather exasperating to see how Gwendolen eclipsed others, including Miss Arrowpoint, unfortunately also dressed in white. Since Miss Arrowpoint was generally liked for the amiable unpretending way in which she wore her fortunes, and softened the oddities of her mother, it did not seem fitting for Gwendolen to look so much more important.

"She is not really so handsome," said Mrs. Arrowpoint, later in the evening, confidentially to Mrs. Vulcany. "She has a certain style, which produces a great effect at first, but afterward she is less agreeable."

In fact, Gwendolen had unintentionally offended her hostess. The lady of Quetcham had a squat figure, a harsh parrot-like voice, and a high head-dress; and since these points made her appear rather ridiculous, it seemed only natural that she should have literary tendencies.

Gwendolen, who was kindly disposed toward anyone who could make life agreeable to her, meant to win Mrs. Arrowpoint by showing her more interest and attention than other people were likely to. But self-confidence is apt to imagine dullness in others; as people who are well off speak in a cajoling tone to the poor, and the young raise their voice and talk artificially to seniors, assuming them to be deaf and slow. Gwendolen, with all her cleverness, could not escape that form of stupidity: she thought, unreflectingly, that because Mrs. Arrowpoint was ridiculous she was also likely to be lacking in penetration, and she went through her little scenes without suspicion that her behaviour was noted.

"You are fond of books, I hear," Mrs. Arrowpoint said to her after dinner. "Catherine will be very glad to have so sympathetic a neighbour." This little speech might have seemed gracefully polite if spoken in a low, melodious tone; but with a twang, fatally loud, it gave Gwendolen a sense of exercising patronage when she answered:

"It is I who am fortunate. Miss Arrowpoint will teach me what good music is. I shall be entirely a learner. I hear that she is a thorough musician."

"Catherine has certainly had every advantage. We have a first-rate musician in the house – Herr Klesmer; perhaps you know his compositions. You sing, I believe.

Catherine plays three instruments, but she does not sing. I hope you will let us hear you. I understand you are an accomplished singer.”

“Oh, no! – ‘die Kraft ist schwach, allein die Lust ist gross,’ as Mephistopheles says.”

“Ah, you are a student of Goethe. Young ladies are so advanced now. I suppose you have read everything.”

“No, really. I shall be so glad if you will tell me what to read. There is nothing readable in the library at Offendene; the books smell musty. I wish I could write books to amuse myself, as you can! How delightful it must be to write books after one’s own taste instead of reading other people’s! Home-made books must be so nice.”

For an instant Mrs. Arrowpoint’s glance was a little sharper, but Gwendolen appeared more simple than satirical when she added, “I would give anything to write a book!”

“And why should you not?” said Mrs. Arrowpoint, encouragingly. “Pen and paper are at everybody’s command. But I will send you all I have written with pleasure.”

“Thanks. I shall be so glad to read your writings. Knowing authors must give a special understanding of their books: one would be able to tell then which parts were funny and which serious. I am sure I often laugh in the wrong place.” Here Gwendolen became aware of danger, and added quickly, “In Shakespeare, you know, and other great writers. But I always want to know more than there is in the books.”

“If you are interested in any of my subjects I can lend you many extra sheets in manuscript,” said Mrs. Arrowpoint – while Gwendolen felt herself painfully in the position of the young lady who pretended to like potted sprats. “These are things I dare say I shall publish eventually: my Tasso, for example.”

“I dote on Tasso,” said Gwendolen.

“Well, you shall have my papers, if you like. So many have written about Tasso; but as to the nature of his madness, and his feelings for Leonora, they are all wrong. I differ from everybody.”

“How very interesting!” said Gwendolen. “I like to differ from everybody. I think it is so stupid to agree. That is the worst of writing your opinions; you make people agree with you.”

This speech renewed a slight suspicion in Mrs. Arrowpoint. But Gwendolen looked very innocent, and continued with a docile air:

“I know nothing of Tasso except the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, which we read at school.”

“Ah, his life is more interesting than his poetry. I have constructed the early part of his life as a sort of romance.”

“Imagination is often truer than fact,” said Gwendolen, decisively, though she could no more have explained these glib words than if they had been Coptic or Etruscan. “I shall be so glad to learn all about Tasso – and his madness especially. I suppose poets are always a little mad, although they are not always found out. Mad people are often very cunning.”

Again a shade flitted over Mrs. Arrowpoint’s face; but then the gentlemen came in.

“Ah, here is Herr Klesmer,” said Mrs. Arrowpoint, rising; and introducing him to Gwendolen, she left them together. Herr Klesmer had a happy combination of German, Slav and Semitic looks, with grand features, brown hair floating in artistic fashion, and brown eyes in spectacles. His English had little foreignness; and his

alarming cleverness was made less formidable by a softening air of silliness which will sometimes befall even Genius in the desire of being agreeable to Beauty.

Music was soon begun. Miss Arrowpoint and Herr Klesmer played a four-handed piece on two pianos, which convinced the company in general that it was long, and Gwendolen in particular that the placid-faced Miss Arrowpoint had a mastery of the instrument which put her own performance out of the question.

After this everyone became anxious to hear Gwendolen sing; and Mr. Arrowpoint led her to the piano. Herr Klesmer smiled with pleasure at her approach; then placed himself a few feet away so that he could see her as she sang.

Gwendolen was not nervous: she enjoyed singing. Her voice was a moderately powerful soprano, her ear good, and she was able to keep in tune, so that her singing gave pleasure to ordinary hearers, and she had been used to unmingled applause. She had the rare advantage of looking almost prettier when she was singing than at other times, and to have Herr Klesmer in front of her was not disagreeable. Her song was an aria of Bellini's, in which she felt quite sure of herself.

"Charming!" said Mr. Arrowpoint, and the word was echoed around the room. But Herr Klesmer stood as mute as a statue. Gwendolen was pressed to sing again, and she did not wish to refuse; but first she said to Herr Klesmer, with a smiling appeal, "It would be cruel to a great musician. You cannot like to hear poor amateur singing."

"No, truly; but that makes nothing," said Herr Klesmer, suddenly speaking in an odious German fashion with staccato endings, just as Irishmen resume their strongest brogue when they are agitated. "That makes nothing. It is always acceptable to see you sing."

Was there ever so unexpected an assertion of superiority? Gwendolen coloured deeply, but, with her usual presence of mind, did not show an ungraceful resentment by moving away immediately; and Miss Arrowpoint, who had been near enough to overhear (and also to see that Herr Klesmer was looking at Gwendolen with more conspicuous admiration than was quite consistent with good taste), now with the utmost tact and kindness came up and said—

"Imagine what I have to go through with this professor! He can hardly tolerate anything we English do in music. We can only put up with his severity. One can bear it when everyone else is admiring."

Gwendolen, recovering herself, answered, "I dare say I have been extremely ill taught, in addition to having no talent – only liking for music." This was very well expressed considering that it had never entered her mind before.

"Yes, it is true: you have not been well taught," said Herr Klesmer, quietly. Woman was dear to him, but music was dearer. "Still, you are not quite without gifts. You sing in tune, and you have a pretty fair voice. But you produce your notes badly; and that dawdling, see-saw kind of music is beneath you. It has no breadth of horizon. There is a self-satisfied folly about such melody; no deep, mysterious passion – no conflict – no sense of the universal. It makes men small as they listen to it. Sing now something larger."

"Oh, not now. By-and-by," said Gwendolen, with a sinking heart. For a lady desiring to lead, this first encounter in her campaign was startling. But she was bent on not behaving foolishly, and Miss Arrowpoint helped her by saying,

"Yes, by-and-by. I always require half an hour to get up my courage after being criticised by Herr Klesmer. We will ask him to play to us now: he will show us what is good music."

To be quite safe on this point Herr Klesmer played a composition of his own; and he certainly fetched as much passion out of the piano as that instrument lends itself to, having an imperious magic in his fingers that drew a quivering lingering speech from the strings. Gwendolen, despite her wounded egoism, could feel the power of this playing, and it gradually turned her mortification into an excitement which lifted her for the moment into a desperate indifference to her own shortcomings, or at least a determination to laugh at them. Her eyes had become brighter, her cheeks flushed, and her tongue ready for any mischief.

“I wish you would sing to us again, Miss Harleth,” said Clintock, the Archdeacon’s son, as soon as Herr Klesmer’s performance was ended. “That is the style of music for me. I never can make anything of this tip-top playing, but I could listen to your singing all day.”

“Yes, we should be glad of something popular now – another song from you would be a relaxation,” said Mrs. Arrowpoint politely.

“That must be because you have no breadth of horizon. I have just been taught how bad my taste is, and am feeling growing pains. They are never pleasant,” said Gwendolen, ignoring Mrs. Arrowpoint, and smiling at young Clintock.

Mrs. Arrowpoint was not insensible to this rudeness, but merely said, “Well, we will not press you.”

“I am glad you like this neighbourhood,” said young Clintock, well-pleased to be with Gwendolen.

“Exceedingly. There seems to be a little of everything, and not too much of anything. I like a little of everything; a little absurdity, for example, is very amusing.”

“Decidedly,” Mrs. Arrowpoint thought, “this girl is satirical. I shall be on my guard against her.”

But Gwendolen, nevertheless, continued to receive polite attentions from the family at Quetcham; the trying scene at the piano had awakened a kindly solicitude toward her in the gentle mind of Miss Arrowpoint, who managed all the invitations and visits, her mother being otherwise occupied.

## Chapter Six

That lofty criticism had caused Gwendolen a new sort of pain. She could not question Herr Klesmer's taste with the confidence of knowledge; nor could she admit to herself that she was jealous of Miss Arrowpoint: not because she was an heiress, but because a girl with a slight figure, small features and a sallow complexion had nevertheless a mental superiority and accomplishment which could not be explained away.

But Gwendolen did not like to dwell on facts which threw an unfavourable light on herself. Klesmer was not always on the scene; since he was backward and forward between London and Quetcham, she thought she would have opportunities for converting him to a more admiring state of mind.

Meanwhile, since her singing was received with pleasure at Brackenshaw Castle and elsewhere, she recovered her equanimity, not being one of those exceptional persons who thirst for perfection. Perhaps it would have been rash to say that she was at all exceptional inwardly, or had any more unusual quality than her rare grace of movement, and a certain daring; for her egoistic ambition was such as exists under many clumsy exteriors. But good looks can persuade us that supremacy is easily attainable. Gwendolen rejoiced to feel herself exceptional; but her horizon was that of the genteel romance where the heroine's soul, poured out in her journal, is full of vague power, originality, and general rebellion, while her life moves strictly in the sphere of fashion; and if she wanders into a swamp, the pathos lies chiefly in her having on her satin shoes.

What Gwendolen was clear upon was, that she did not wish to lead the same sort of life as ordinary young ladies; but what she was not clear upon was, how she should set about leading any other. Offendene remained a good background, if anything would happen there; but on the whole the neighbourhood was in fault.

Her early invitations brought little excitement, and she came home after sallies of satire and knowingness, such as had offended Mrs. Arrowpoint, to fill her days with the most girlish devices. The strongest assertion she made of her own claims was to stop Alice's lessons, and to employ her with Miss Merry and the maid in helping to make various dramatic costumes, which Gwendolen wanted ready for future occasions of acting in charades or theatrical pieces, occasions which she meant to bring about. She had never acted – only made a figure in *tableaux vivans* at school; but she felt assured that she could act well; and having been once or twice to the Theatre Francais, and also heard her mamma speak of Rachel, her dreams as to how she would manage her destiny sometimes turned on the question whether she would become an actress like Rachel, since she was more beautiful than that thin Jewess.

Meanwhile the wet days before Christmas were passed pleasantly in the preparation of costumes, Greek, Oriental, and Composite, in which Gwendolen posed and speechified before a domestic audience.

"Do I look as well as Rachel, mamma?" said Gwendolen, one day when she had been showing herself in her Greek dress to Anna, and going through scraps of scenes with much tragic intention.

"You have better arms than Rachel," said Mrs. Davilow. "But your voice is not so tragic as hers; it is not so deep."

"I can make it deeper, if I like," said Gwendolen; "but I think a higher voice is more tragic: it is more feminine; and the more feminine a woman is, the more tragic it seems when she does desperate actions."



“If there is anything horrible to be done, I should like it to be left to the men.”

“Oh, mamma, as if all the great poetic criminals were not women! The men are poor cautious creatures.”

“Well, dear, and you – who are afraid to be alone at night – I don’t think you would be very bold in crime, thank God.”

“I am not talking about reality, mamma,” said Gwendolen, impatiently. When her mamma was out of the room, she turned quickly to her cousin, and said,

“Anna, do ask my uncle to let us get up some charades at the rectory. Mr. Middleton and Warham could act with us – just for practice. Mr. Middleton is a stick, but we could give him suitable parts. Do ask, or else I will.”

“Oh, not till Rex comes. He is so clever, and such a dear old thing, and he looks just like Napoleon. Rex can do anything.”

“I don’t in the least believe in your Rex, Anna,” said Gwendolen, laughing. “He will turn out to be like those wretched water-colours of his which you hang in your bedroom and worship.”

“You will see,” said Anna. “Papa says he will get a fellowship, and nobody is better at games. He is cleverer than Mr. Middleton, and everybody but you calls Mr. Middleton clever.”

“So he may be. But he *is* a stick.”

“Oh, Gwendolen! It is unkind of you to speak so, for he admires you very much. I heard Warham say to mamma, ‘Middleton is regularly spooney upon Gwendolen.’ That is what they say at college for being in love.”

“How can I help it?” said Gwendolen, rather contemptuously.

“You can’t, of course; and he is to go away soon. But it makes me sorry when you ridicule him.”

“What shall you do to me when I ridicule Rex?” said Gwendolen wickedly.

“Now, Gwendolen, dear, you will not?” said Anna, her eyes filling with tears. “I could not bear it. But there really is nothing in him to ridicule. Only you may find out things. For no one ever thought of laughing at Mr. Middleton before you. Everyone said he was nice-looking, and his manners perfect. But you will not ridicule Rex – promise me.”

“You are a dear little coz,” said Gwendolen, touched. “I don’t want to vex you. Especially if Rex is to bring about charades.”

And when at last Rex was there, the animation he brought to Offendene and the rectory, and his ready partnership in Gwendolen’s plans, left her no inclination for any ridicule that was not of an open and flattering kind, such as he himself enjoyed. He was a fine open-hearted youth, with a handsome face resembling his father’s, but softer in expression; and a bright, healthy, loving nature, enjoying ordinary innocent things so much that vice had no temptation for him. He returned Anna’s affection as fully as could be expected; and he had never known a stronger love.

The cousins were continually together at one house or the other – chiefly at Offendene, where Gwendolen ruled; and whatever she wished, Rex agreed with. It was at Offendene that the charades and *tableaux* were rehearsed and presented. Mr. Middleton was at first a little pained and jealous at Gwendolen’s comradeship with Rex, but persuaded himself that this sort of cousinly familiarity excluded any serious passion, and considered making his advances before he left Pennicote.

Miss Gwendolen, quite aware that she was adored by this young clergyman, had no objection to being adored, but had no other feeling for him. She caused him many

mildly agitating hopes by seeming always to avoid dramatic contact with him – for all meanings, we know, depend on how one chooses to interpret them.

As for Rex, he was too completely absorbed in a first passion to notice anything. He did not observe Gwendolen; he only felt what she said or did, and without looking was aware when she was in the room. Before the end of the first fortnight he was so deeply in love that it was impossible for him to think of his life except as bound up with Gwendolen's. He could see no obstacles, poor boy; his own love seemed to guarantee hers; he could no more dream of her giving him pain than an Egyptian could dream of snow. She sang and played to him, was always glad of his companionship in riding, was ready to join in any fun, and showed an appreciation of Anna. No mark of sympathy seemed absent. It had not occurred to him that this perfect creature was to make a grand match.

One incident in the course of their dramatic attempts impressed Rex as a sign of her sensitivity which he could not have foreseen.

After much rehearsing it was resolved that a select party should be invited to Offendene to witness the performances. Anna had proved a surprisingly good actress, and Mr. Middleton did very well by not trying to be comic. The main source of doubt was Gwendolen's desire to appear in her Greek dress. She could not think of a charade that would let her strike a statuesque pose in this favourite costume. Everybody of course was concerned to satisfy this wish of Gwendolen's, and Rex proposed that they should wind up with a tableau in which the effect of her majesty would not be marred by any speech. This pleased her thoroughly, and the only question was the choice of tableau.

"Something pleasant, children, I beseech you," said Mrs. Davilow.

"What do you say to Briseis being led away?" said Rex. "I would be Achilles, and you would be looking round at me – like the print we have at the rectory."

"That would be a good attitude," said Gwendolen. "But it will not do. There must be three men in costume, else it will be ridiculous."

"I have it," said Rex. "Hermione as the statue in Winter's Tale? I will be Leontes, and your mother, Paulina."

Gwendolen urged that instead of the mere tableau there should be just enough acting of the scene to introduce the music as a signal for her to step down and advance. Then Leontes, instead of embracing her, was to kneel and kiss the hem of her garment, and so the curtain was to fall. The antechamber with folding doors worked admirably as a stage, and the whole establishment was absorbed in the preparations. Gwendolen exulted in the prospect of this occasion, for she knew that Herr Klesmer was again at Quetcham, and she had taken care to include him among the invited.

Klesmer came. He was in one of his placid, silent moods, and sat in serene contemplation. Everything indeed went off smoothly, until the incident occurred which showed Gwendolen in unforeseen emotion.

The tableau of Hermione was striking: a murmur of applause went round while Leontes gave his permission that Paulina should exercise her art and make the statue move.

Hermione, her arm resting on a pillar, was elevated by about six inches, which she counted on as a means of showing her pretty foot, when at the given signal she should advance and descend.

"Music, awake her, strike!" said Paulina.

Herr Klesmer, who had been good-natured enough to seat himself at the piano, struck a thunderous chord – but in the same instant, and before Hermione had put forth her foot, the movable panel flew open opposite the stage and disclosed the picture of the dead face and the fleeing figure, pale in the candle-light.

Everyone was startled, but as all eyes turned toward the open panel there came a piercing cry from Gwendolen, who stood with an expression that was terrifying in its terror. She looked like a statue into which a soul of Fear had entered: her pallid lips were parted; her eyes were dilated and fixed. Her mother and Rex rushed to her side, as Gwendolen fell on her knees and put her hands before her face. She was still trembling, but mute, and presently allowed herself to be led away.

A quick fire of undertoned question and answer went round. “Was it part of the play?”

“Oh, surely not. Miss Harleth was too much affected. A sensitive creature!”

“Dear me! I was not aware that there was a painting behind that panel.”

“Some eccentricity in the Earl’s family long ago, I suppose.”

“Was the door locked? It is very mysterious. It must be the spirits. Is there a medium present?”

“Oh, it was probably the vibration from the piano that sent it open.”

This conclusion came from Mr. Gascoigne, who begged Miss Merry to get the key. This was produced, and he turned it firmly in the lock and pocketed it.

Gwendolen soon reappeared, evidently determined to ignore the striking change she had made in the part of Hermione.

But when Klesmer said to her, “We have to thank you for devising a perfect climax,” she flushed with pleasure. She liked to accept as a belief what was really no more than delicate pretence. He realised that her betrayal of fear had been mortifying to her, and wished her to think that he took it for good acting. Gwendolen cherished the idea that now he was struck with her talent as well as her beauty, and her uneasiness about his opinion was half turned to complacency.

No one else took the trouble to soothe Gwendolen. The general sentiment was that the incident should be let drop.

There *had* been a medium concerned in the starting open of the panel: one who had hastily quitted the room and crept to bed. It was the small Isabel, whose curiosity had kept her on the watch for an opportunity of finding the key, stealing it from the drawer, and getting on a stool to unlock the panel. While she was there, an approaching footstep alarmed her: she closed the door, but not daring to linger, did not lock it. She had returned the key to its former place, thinking that if the door were found to be unlocked, nobody would know how it came about. She did not foresee her own impulse to confession the next morning, when Gwendolen said, “Some one must have been to my drawer and taken the key.”

It seemed to Isabel that Gwendolen’s awful eyes rested on her, and she said, with a trembling lip: “Please forgive me, Gwendolen.”

Forgiveness was soon bestowed, as Gwendolen desired to forget her susceptibility to terror. She wondered at herself in these occasional experiences, which seemed like a brief remembered madness; and in this instance she felt vexed that her helpless fear had shown itself in company. Her ideal was to be daring and reckless in braving dangers; although the restrictions of her life gave her little opportunity.

She had always disliked what she had been taught in the way of religion, in the same way that some people dislike arithmetic: it raised no emotion in her: but she did not wish others to know of her liability to fits of spiritual dread. She was ashamed and

frightened at the terror she felt when, for example, she was walking alone and there came some change in the light. Solitude in any wide scene impressed her with a feeling of immeasurable existence aloof from her, in the midst of which she was helpless: but always when someone joined her she resumed her indifference to the vastness in which she seemed an exile, and recovered her confidence.

To her mamma and others her fits of terror were accounted for by her "sensitiveness". As for Rex, he was more persuaded than ever that she must be instinct with all feeling, and able to love better than other girls. Rex felt the summer on his young wings and soared happily.

## Chapter Seven

The first sign of the unimagined snow-storm was like the transparent white cloud that sets off the blue. Anna was in the secret of Rex's feeling; though he had said nothing to her about it, and took it for granted that she knew. For the first time, Anna could not tell Rex what was in her mind: she had to conceal her doubt and anxiety on his behalf. Anna admired her cousin – would have said sincerely, "Gwendolen is always very good to me;" but she looked at her with mingled fear and distrust, as at some wondrous animal whose nature was a mystery, and who, for anything Anna knew, might have an appetite for devouring small creatures.

And now Anna's heart was sinking under the heavy conviction that Gwendolen would never care for Rex. Poor Rex! Papa would be angry with him if he knew. He was too young to be in love; and Anna had thought that it would be years before anything of that sort, and that she would be Rex's housekeeper ever so long. But what a heart must that be which did not return his love! Anna, in the prospect of his suffering, was beginning to dislike her too fascinating cousin.

If Rex had been questioned on the subject he would have said that he had no wish to conceal what he hoped would be an engagement: and yet for the first time in his life he was reserved. Anna was nervous each time her father or mother began to speak to her in private lest they should say anything about Rex and Gwendolen. But the elders were not aware of this agitating drama: they regarded the doings of the young ones with scarcely more attention than they gave to the action of lively ants.

"Where are you going, Rex?" said Anna one grey morning when her father had set off in his carriage with Mrs. Gascoigne, and she had observed that her brother had on his hunting gear.

"Going to see the hounds set off at the Three Barns."

"Are you going to take Gwendolen?" said Anna timidly.

"She told you, did she?"

"No, but – does papa know you are going?"

"No, but I don't suppose he would mind."

"You are taking his horse?"

"He knows I do that whenever I can."

"Don't let Gwendolen ride after the hounds, Rex," said Anna, whose fears gifted her with second-sight.

"Why not?" said Rex, smiling rather provokingly.

"Papa and mamma think it is not right."

"Why should you suppose she is going to do what is not right?"

"Gwendolen minds nobody sometimes," said Anna.

"Then she would not mind me," said Rex.

"Oh Rex, I cannot bear it. You will make yourself very unhappy." Here Anna burst into tears.

"Nannie, Nannie, what on earth is the matter with you?" said Rex, a little impatient.

"She will not care for you one bit – I know she never will!" sobbed the poor child.

Rex reddened and hurried away. He thought of her unwelcome words as he rode along; but he quickly explained them as springing from little Anna's tenderness, and began to be sorry he had come away without soothing her. While he did not believe

she was right, he had just enough doubt and uneasiness to hurry on a confession which he might have delayed.

Gwendolen was already mounted and riding up and down the avenue when Rex appeared. The groom was dismissed, and the two rode away in delightful freedom. Gwendolen was in her highest spirits, and Rex thought that she had never looked so lovely; her figure, her long white throat, and her face were set off to perfection by her riding dress. He could not conceive a more perfect girl.

It was an exquisite January morning, with the charms of a mild winter scene – the hedgerows sprinkled with red berries and haunted with low twitterings, the purple bareness of the elms, the rich brown of the furrows. The horses' hoofs made a musical chime, accompanying their young voices. She was laughing at his plain equipment, and he was enjoying her laughter; the freshness of the morning mingled with the freshness of their youth; and every sound, every glance flowed from a spring of joy. It was all morning to them.

"Anna got it into her head that you would want to ride after the hounds this morning," said Rex.

"Did she?" said Gwendolen, laughingly. "What a little clairvoyant she is!"

"Shall you?" said Rex, who had not believed in her intending to do it if the elders objected, but assumed she had good reasons.

"I don't know. I can't tell what I shall do till I get there. Clairvoyants foresee what is likely, but I am not fond of what is likely: it is always dull. I do what is unlikely."

"Ah, there you tell me a secret. Now that I know you would do the opposite of what is likely for people in general, you have come round to a likelihood of your own sort. Now you couldn't surprise me."

"Yes, I could. I should turn round and do what was likely for people in general," said Gwendolen, with a musical laugh.

"You see you can't escape some sort of likelihood."

"I shall do what pleases me." (If Gwendolen had been any less attractive, ten to one her words would have jarred on the sweet-natured Rex. But he saw only humour and pretty banter.) "Girls' lives are so stupid: they never do what they like."

"I thought that was more the case of men. They are forced to do hard things, and are often dreadfully bored, and knocked to pieces too. And then, if we love a girl very dearly we want to do as she likes, so after all you have your own way."

"I don't believe it. I never saw a married woman who had her own way."

"What should you like to do?" said Rex guilelessly, and in real anxiety.

"Oh, I don't know! – go to the North Pole, or ride steeple-chases, or be a queen in the East like Lady Hester Stanhope," said Gwendolen, flightily. She would have been at a loss to give a deeper answer.

"You don't mean you would never be married?"

"No; I didn't say that. Only when I married, I should not do as other women do."

"You might do as you liked if you married a man who loved you more dearly than anything else in the world," said Rex. "I know one who does."

"Don't talk of Mr. Middleton, for heaven's sake," said Gwendolen, hastily, a quick blush spreading over her face; "I hear the hounds. Let us go."

She put her chestnut to a canter, and Rex had no choice but to follow. Still he felt encouraged. Gwendolen was perfectly aware that he was in love with her; but she had no idea of the importance of the matter to him, having never felt painful love herself. She wished the small romance of Rex's devotion to fill the time, and to avoid explanations which would bring it to an untimely end. Besides, she objected, with a

physical repulsion, to being directly made love to. With all her imaginative delight in being adored, there was a certain fierceness of maidenhood in her.

But all other thoughts were soon lost for her in the excitement of the scene at the Three Barns. Several gentlemen of the hunt knew her, and exchanged pleasant greetings. Rex could not get another word with her. The stir of the field had taken possession of Gwendolen, although she had never yet ridden after the hounds – only said she should like to do it, and been forbidden; her mamma dreading the danger, and her uncle declaring that it was unseemly in a lady.

Some of the most respectable women in the neighbourhood occasionally went to see the hounds throw off; but none of them were present this morning. At the stir of the hounds and horses, Gwendolen felt that excitement of the coming chase, which consists in feeling something like a combination of dog and horse, with the superadded thrill of centaur-power.

Rex would have felt the same enjoyment if he could have kept nearer to Gwendolen, and not seen her constantly occupied with acquaintances on lively horses which veered about and swept the surrounding space.

“Glad to see you here this fine morning, Miss Harleth,” said Lord Brackenshaw, an easy-going, middle-aged peer of aristocratic seediness in stained pink. “We shall have a first-rate run. Have you ever tried your little chestnut at a ditch? you wouldn’t be afraid, eh?”

“Not at all,” said Gwendolen. Just then the hounds gave tongue, and the whole field was in motion as if the whirl of the earth were carrying it; Gwendolen along with everything else. Rex followed her without a second thought. Under other circumstances he would have enjoyed the run, but he was perturbed by her check on his attempt to utter his love; and hampered by his father’s grey nag, Primrose, a good horse enough in his way, but of sober years and ecclesiastical habits.

Gwendolen on her spirited little chestnut was up with the best, and felt as secure as an immortal goddess, having no idea of risk for herself or her cousin. If she had thought of Rex, it would have struck her as a droll picture: a fine lithe youth falling behind, stuck on a stiff clerical hackney. But Gwendolen was apt to think rather of those who saw her than of those whom she could not see; and Rex was soon so far behind that if she had looked she would not have seen him. For I grieve to say that in the search for a gate, Primrose fell, broke his knees, and threw Rex over his head.

Fortunately a blacksmith’s son following the hounds on foot happened to see Rex’s misfortune. He ran to give help which was greatly needed, for Rex was stunned and in considerable pain. Joel Dagge assured Rex that his shoulder was only a bit out of joint, and offered experienced surgical aid.

“Lord, sir, let me shove it in again for you! I’s seen Nash, the bone-setter, do it, and done it myself for our little Sally. If you’ll trust to me and tighten your mind up a bit, I’ll do it for you in no time.”

“Come then, old fellow,” said Rex, who could tighten his mind better than his seat in the saddle. And Joel managed the operation, though not without much pain to his patient, who turned so pale that Joel remarked, “Ah, sir, you aren’t used to it, that’s how it is. I’s see lots and lots o’ joints out. Now, sirrey” (this was addressed to Primrose), “you come alonk.”

Joel being clearly a low character, it is, happily, not necessary to say more of him to the refined reader, than that he helped Rex to get home with as little delay as possible. All the while Rex was anxious about Gwendolen. He comforted himself by

reflecting that everyone would take care of her, and that some acquaintance would be sure to conduct her home.

Mr. Gascoigne was at home writing in his study, having learnt from Anna that Rex and Gwendolen had gone to the meet, when he was interrupted by seeing poor Rex come in looking pale and distressed.

“What is the matter?” he said hastily.

“I’m very sorry, sir; Primrose has fallen down and broken his knees.”

“Where have you been with him?” said Mr. Gascoigne, with a touch of severity.

“To the Three Barns to see the hounds throw off.”

“And you were fool enough to follow?”

“Yes, sir. I didn’t go at any fences, but the horse got his leg into a hole.”

“And you got hurt yourself, I hope, eh!”

“I got my shoulder put out, but a young blacksmith put it in again for me. I’m just a little battered, that’s all.”

“Well, sit down.”

“I’m very sorry about the horse, sir.”

“And what has become of Gwendolen?” said Mr. Gascoigne, abruptly. Rex answered with a nervous blush that was the more remarkable for his previous paleness—

“I am anxious to know – I would like to go to Offendene – but she rides so well, and there would most likely be many round her.”

“I suppose it was she who led you on, eh?” said Mr. Gascoigne, looking at Rex with more marked examination.

“She didn’t intend it beforehand – she was led away by the spirit of the thing. And, of course, I went when she went.”

Mr. Gascoigne, after a brief interval of silence, said, with quiet irony, “But now you see that you are not furnished with a horse which will enable you to play the squire to your cousin. You must give up that amusement. You have spoiled my nag for me, and that is enough mischief for one vacation. I shall beg you to get ready to start for Southampton tomorrow and join Stilfox, till you go up to Oxford with him.”

Poor Rex felt his heart swelling.

“I hope you will not insist on my going immediately, sir.” He bit his lips and felt the tears starting, to his great vexation; then he tried to say more firmly, “I want to go to Offendene.”

“I am going there myself. I can bring word about Gwendolen, if that is what you want.”

Rex broke down. “Father, I can’t go away without telling her that I love her, and knowing that she loves me.”

Mr. Gascoigne was inwardly going through some self-rebuke for not being more wary, and was now really sorry for the lad; but deciding on the wisest tactics in the case, he answered quietly—

“My dear boy, you are too young to be taking momentous steps of that sort. This is the fancy of an idle week or two: you must dismiss it. There is every reason against it. An engagement at your age would be totally rash; and moreover, alliances between first cousins are undesirable. Make up your mind to a brief disappointment. Life is full of them. We have all got to be broken in; and this is a mild beginning for you.”

“No, not mild. I can’t bear it. I shall be good for nothing. If it were settled between us, I could do anything,” said Rex, impetuously. “But it’s of no use to pretend that I will obey you, and never see Gwendolen again.”



“Well, wait till tomorrow morning, that we may talk of it again,” said Mr. Gascoigne; and Rex could not refuse.

When the rector went to Offendene that evening, he found Gwendolen not only safe, but elated. She had been given the fox’s brush, and had fastened it on her saddle; and Lord Brackenshaw had conducted her home, and had shown himself delighted with her spirited riding. All this was told to her uncle, to justify her acting against his advice; and the rector did feel himself in a slight difficulty, for he wished his niece to be well-regarded by the Brackenshaws. Mrs. Davilow put in—

“I do hope you will not do it again, Gwendolen. I should never have a moment’s quiet. Her father died by an accident, you know.”

“Mamma, dear,” said Gwendolen merrily, “children don’t take after their parents in broken legs.”

Not one word had yet been said about Rex. In fact there had been no anxiety about him at Offendene. Gwendolen had observed to her mamma, “Oh, he must have been left far behind, and gone home in despair.” But now Mr. Gascoigne said, with some emphasis—

“Well, the exploit has ended better for you than for Rex.”

“Yes, I dare say he had a terrible round.” said Gwendolen, without the faintest sign of alarm.

“Rex has had a fall,” said Mr. Gascoigne, curtly, throwing himself into an arm-chair while he watched Gwendolen, who said—

“Oh, poor fellow! he is not hurt, I hope?” with a correct look of superficial anxiety.

“He put his shoulder out, and got some bruises.” Here Mr Gascoigne made another pause of observation; but Gwendolen, instead of turning pale and silent, only said again,

“Oh, poor fellow! it is nothing serious, then?” and Mr. Gascoigne held his diagnosis complete. But wishing to make assurance doubly sure, he went on.

“He got his arm set again rather oddly. Some blacksmith set it for him immediately. I believe Primrose came off worst. His knees are cut to pieces. He came down in a hole, and pitched Rex over his head.”

Gwendolen’s face had become contented again, since Rex’s arm had been reset; and now laughter broke forth.

“Pray forgive me, uncle,” she said. “Now Rex is safe, it is so droll to fancy the scene. It would make a capital caricature of ‘Following the Hounds.’”

Gwendolen rather valued herself on her superior freedom in laughing where others might only see matter for seriousness. Indeed, she laughed so gracefully that her opinion was often shared by others; and it even entered into her uncle’s head that it was no wonder a boy should be fascinated by this young witch.

“How can you laugh at broken bones, child?” said Mrs. Davilow. “I was wrong to encourage you in asking for that horse.”

“Yes, seriously, Gwendolen,” said Mr. Gascoigne, in a judicious tone, “I strongly recommend you not to repeat today’s adventure. Lord Brackenshaw is very kind, but I feel sure he would agree. Depend upon it, his lordship would not let his daughters hunt, if they were old enough to do so. When you are married, you may do whatever your husband sanctions. But if you intend to hunt, you must marry a man who can keep horses.”

“I should certainly not marry without *that* prospect, at least,” said Gwendolen, pettishly. Her uncle’s speech had annoyed her, and she went out.

“She always speaks in that way about marriage,” said Mrs. Davilow; “but it will be different when she has seen the right person.”

“Her heart has never been touched?” said Mr. Gascoigne.

Mrs. Davilow shook her head. “It was only last night she said to me, ‘Mamma, I wonder how girls manage to fall in love. Men are too ridiculous.’”

Mr. Gascoigne laughed a little, and made no further remark.

The next morning at breakfast he said—

“How are your bruises, Rex? Do you feel ready for a journey to Southampton?”

“Not quite,” answered Rex, with his heart in his mouth.

“Well, you can wait till tomorrow, and go to say goodbye to them at Offendene.”

Mrs. Gascoigne, who now knew the whole affair, looked steadily at her coffee lest she should begin to cry, as Anna was doing already. Mr. Gascoigne felt that he was applying a sharp remedy to poor Rex, but he believed it to be kindest to let him know the hopelessness of his love from Gwendolen’s own lips.

Presently Rex, with his arm in a sling, was on his two miles’ walk to Offendene. He was rather puzzled by the unconditional permission to see Gwendolen, but his father’s real reason never entered his head.

When he got to the house, the four younger girls rushed out and hung round him with compassionate inquiries about his arm, while Mrs. Davilow wanted to know exactly what had happened. Rex had never found the family troublesome before, but just now he wished them all away and Gwendolen there.

“Where is Gwendolen?” he said. “Aunt, I want to speak to Gwendolen – I want to see her alone.”

“Very well, dear; go into the drawing-room. I will send her there,” said Mrs. Davilow, who had observed that he was fond of being with Gwendolen, but had not thought of this as significant.

Rex for his part felt that his life was hanging on this interview. He had to walk up and down the drawing-room in expectation for nearly ten minutes; yet, strange to say, he was occupied only in thinking how, once Gwendolen had accepted him, he could satisfy his father that the engagement was prudent.

But when the door opened and Gwendolen entered, he felt suddenly a tremor and distrust which he had never felt before. Miss Gwendolen, in her black silk, a black band fastening her silky abundance of hair, seemed more queenly than usual, with none of her usual latent fun. How much of this was due to her fear that he was going to talk of love? How much from her desire to show regret about his accident? Something of both. But perhaps Gwendolen was also out of temper – or not exactly that, but felt the world unequal to her demands.

However it might be, Rex saw an awful majesty about her as she entered and put out her hand without a smile. She said with perfect propriety, “I hope you are not much hurt, Rex. You should reproach me for your accident.”

“Not at all,” said Rex, feeling the soul within him spreading like an attack of illness. “There is hardly any thing the matter with me. I am so glad you had the pleasure, only I was sorry to break the horse’s knees.”

Gwendolen walked to the hearth and stood looking at the fire.

“My father wants me to go to Southampton,” said Rex, his voice trembling a little.

“Southampton! That’s a stupid place to go to, isn’t it?” said Gwendolen, chilly.

“It would be to me, because you would not be there.” Silence. “Should you mind about me going away?”

“Of course. All company matters in this dreary country,” she said curtly. The perception that poor Rex wanted to be tender made her curl up and harden.

“Are you angry with me, Gwendolen? Why do you treat me in this way?” said Rex, flushing, and with spirit.

Gwendolen looked round at him and smiled. “Treat you? Nonsense! I am only rather cross.”

“Be as cross as you like – only don’t treat me with indifference,” implored Rex. “All the happiness of my life depends on your loving me.”

He tried to take her hand, but she hastily eluded his grasp and moved away.

“Pray don’t make love to me! I hate it!” she said fiercely.

Rex turned pale and was silent, but could not take his eyes off her. Gwendolen herself had not foreseen that she should feel this way. It was all a sudden, new experience to her. The day before she had been quite aware that her cousin was in love with her; she did not mind, so long as he said nothing about it. But now she felt passionately averse to this volunteered love.

To Rex the joy of life seemed at an end.

“Is that last word you have to say to me, Gwendolen? Will it always be so?”

She could not help feeling a little regret for the old Rex. Decisively, but yet with some return of kindness, she said—

“About making love? Yes. But I don’t dislike you for anything else.”

There was a pause before he said a low “good-bye” and left the room. She heard the heavy hall door bang behind him.

Mrs. Davilow, too, heard it, and came into the drawing-room, where she found Gwendolen seated on the low couch, her face buried, sobbing bitterly.

“My child, my child, what is it?” cried the mother, who had never before seen her darling struck down in this way, and felt an alarmed anguish; for this child had been her ruler. She pressed her cheek against Gwendolen’s, and Gwendolen, letting her head rest against her mother, cried out sobbingly, “Oh, mamma, what can become of my life? there is nothing worth living for! I shall never love anybody. I can’t love people. I hate them.”

“The time will come, dear, the time will come.”

Gwendolen was convulsed with sobbing; but putting her arms round her mother’s neck with an almost painful clinging, she said brokenly, “I can’t bear anyone to be very near me but you.”

Then the mother began to sob, for this spoiled child had never shown such dependence on her before: and so they clung to each other.

## Chapter Eight

There was a much more lasting trouble at the rectory. Rex threw himself on his bed in a state of apathy, which the next day began to be interrupted by signs of illness. Nothing could be said about his going to Southampton: instead, the chief thought of his mother and Anna was how to tend this patient who did not want to be well, and from being the brightest, most grateful spirit in the household, was changed into a dull-eyed creature who met all affectionate attempts with a murmur of "Let me alone."

His father was sorry for his suffering, and sat with him now and then, parting with a "God bless you, my boy." Anna was always there, and was allowed to hold his unresponding hand. Her soul was divided between anguish for Rex and reproach of Gwendolen. And even Mrs. Gascoigne had an angry feeling toward her niece which she could not refrain from expressing to her husband.

"Really, Henry, I think she is hard; she has the heart of a coquette. And some blame attaches to poor Fanny; she is quite blind about that girl."

Mr. Gascoigne answered: "I ought to have been more awake myself. Rex may be thankful if nothing worse ever happens to him."

The rector felt that there had been a great escape. Gwendolen in love with Rex would have made a much harder problem to solve. But he had further difficulty to come.

One fine morning Rex asked for his bath, and dressed himself. Anna, excited at this change, listened for his coming down, and on hearing his step, ran to meet him. For the first time he gave her a faint smile, but such a melancholy one that she could hardly help crying.

"Nannie!" he said gently, taking her hand and leading her slowly to the drawing-room. His mother was there, and when she came to kiss him, he said: "What a plague I am!"

Then he sat still and looked out of the bow-window on the lawn and shrubs covered with hoar-frost. He felt as if he had had a resurrection into a new world, and did not know what to do with himself there. Anna sat near him, pretending to work, but really watching him. After a while, she could not resist the impulse to bring a little stool and seat herself against his knee, looking up at him with an expression which seemed to say, "Do speak to me." And he spoke.

"Nannie, I think I will go to Canada, or somewhere of that sort."

"Oh, Rex, not for always!"

"Yes. I should like to build a hut, and work hard at clearing, and have everything wild about me, and a great wide quiet."

"And not take me with you?" said Anna tearfully.

"How could I?"

"I should like it better than anything; and settlers go with their families. I could make the fires, and mend the clothes, and cook the food. It would be like playing at life as we used to do when we made our tent with the drugget, and had our little plates and dishes."

"Father and mother would not let you go."

"Yes, I think they would, when I explained everything. It would save money to bring up the boys with."

The talk ended in Rex's consenting that Anna should go with him when he spoke to his father on the subject. They chose a time when the rector was alone in his study.

"Well, my children!" said Mr. Gascoigne, cheerfully, as they entered. It was a comfort to see Rex about again.

"May we sit down with you, papa?" said Anna. "Rex has something to say."

"With all my heart."

"You know all about what has upset me, father," Rex began, and Mr. Gascoigne nodded. "I am quite done up for life in this part of the world. I am sure it will be no use my going back to Oxford. I should fail, and cause you expense for nothing. I want to have your consent to take another course, sir."

Mr. Gascoigne nodded more slowly, the line on his brow deepening.

"I should like to go to the colonies and work on the land there." Rex thought the vagueness of "the colonies" less likely to be rebutted than any particular settlement.

"Oh, and with me, papa," said Anna. "Rex would want someone to take care of him, you know, to keep house. And we shall never, either of us, be married. And I should cost nothing, and I should be so happy. I know it would be hard to leave you and mamma; but there are the others to bring up, and we two should be no trouble to you any more."

Anna had gone closer to her papa as she spoke. He did not smile, but drew her on his knee and held her there, as if to put her gently out of the question while he spoke to Rex.

"You will admit that my experience means that I can probably guide you in practical matters better than you can guide yourself?"

Rex was obliged to say, "Yes, sir."

"And perhaps you will admit that you are bound in duty to consider my judgment and wishes?"

"I have never yet opposed you, sir."

"But you will do so if you persist in following a rash and foolish course. You think, I suppose, that you have had a shock which has stupefied your brains, unfitted you for anything but manual labour, and given you a dislike to society? Is that what you believe?"

"Something like that. I shall never be up to the sort of work I must do in this part of the world. I have not the spirit for it. I shall never be the same again. And I think a young fellow should be allowed to choose his way of life, if he harms nobody."

"But suppose I am convinced on good evidence that this state of mind is transient, and that you would by-and-by repent, and feel that you had lost the chance of education? Have you not strength of mind enough to see that you had better act on my assurance for a time, and test it? In my opinion you have no right whatever to go abroad until you have honestly endeavoured to turn to account the education you have received here. I say nothing of the grief to your mother and me."

"I'm very sorry; but what can I do? I can't study, that's certain," said Rex.

"Not just now, perhaps. You will have to miss a term. I have made arrangements for you. But I confess I am disappointed in you, Rex. I thought you had more sense than to suppose that because you have fallen into a common trouble, such as most men have to go through, you are loosened from all bonds of duty – as if your brain had softened and you were no longer a responsible being."

What could Rex say? Inwardly he rebelled, but he had no arguments to meet his father's; and it lay in a deep fold of his consciousness that he ought to feel more about

his old ties. This is the sort of faith we live by in our soul sicknesses. He got up from his seat.

“You assent to my arrangement, then?” said Mr. Gascoigne.

There was a pause before Rex answered, “I’ll try, sir. I can’t promise.” His thought was, that trying would be of no use.

Her father held Anna, though she wanted to follow Rex out of the room. “Oh, papa,” she said when the door had closed; “it is very hard for him. Doesn’t he look ill?”

“Yes, but he will soon be better; it will all blow over. And now, Anna, be as quiet as a mouse about it. Never let it be mentioned.”

“No, papa.” Anna dared not say that she was disappointed at not being allowed to go to the colonies with Rex; but that was her secret feeling.

## Chapter Nine

Some months later, a rumour spread which excited interest in many persons. Just as when a visit of majesty is announced, the dream of knighthood is to be found under various nightcaps, so the news in question raised a vision of marriage in several well-bred imaginations.

The news was that Diplow Hall, Sir Hugo Mallinger's place, which had for a couple of years been shut up, was to be inhabited in a fitting style. But not by Sir Hugo: by his nephew, Mr. Mallinger Grandcourt, who was presumptive heir to the baronetcy, his uncle's marriage having produced nothing but girls. Moreover, young Grandcourt's mother had given a baronial streak to his blood, so that if certain intervening persons died, he would become a baron and peer of the realm.

Some readers will doubtless regard it as incredible that people should construct matrimonial prospects on the mere report that a bachelor of good fortune was coming within reach, and will aver that this is not human nature. But nothing is here narrated of human nature generally: this history concerns only a few people in a corner of Wessex.

There were the Arrowpoints, for example: no one could attribute sordid views about their daughter's marriage to parents who could leave her at least half a million; but since Catherine had already refused Lord Slogan, an unexceptionable Irish peer, they wondered whether Mr. Grandcourt was good-looking and virtuous, or at least reformed; and without wishing anybody to die, thought his succession to the title an event to be desired.

If the Arrowpoints had such thoughts, it is the less surprising that they were present in Mr. Gascoigne, who despite being a clergyman was not the less subject to the anxieties of a parent and guardian. Naturally, the two families did not discuss these hopes with each other.

To her husband Mrs. Gascoigne said, "I hear Mr. Grandcourt has got two places, but comes to Diplow for the hunting. Have you heard what sort of a young man he is, Henry?"

Mr. Gascoigne had not heard; or if his male acquaintances had gossiped, he was not disposed to repeat their gossip. Whatever Grandcourt had done, he had not ruined himself; and it is well-known that in gambling, for example, a man who has the strength of mind to leave off when he has only ruined others, is a reformed character. This is an illustration merely: Mr. Gascoigne had not heard that Grandcourt had been a gambler; and it was not certain on any other showing that Mr. Grandcourt had needed reformation more than other young men of five-and-thirty.

Mrs. Davilow, too, could not be indifferent to an arrival that might promise a brilliant lot for Gwendolen. Mr. Grandcourt's name raised in her mind the picture of a handsome, accomplished, excellent young man whom she would be satisfied with as a husband for her daughter; but would Gwendolen be satisfied with him? There was no knowing what would meet that girl's taste or touch her affections. The mother even said to herself, "It would not signify about her being in love, if she would only accept the right person." Whatever her own marriage had been, how could she the less desire it for her daughter?

Mrs. Davilow did not let fall a hint of this aerial castle-building which she had the good taste to be ashamed of; for such a hint was likely to make Gwendolen detest the desirable husband beforehand.

The discussion of the dress that Gwendolen was to wear at the Archery Meeting was a relevant topic, however; and when it had been decided that as a touch of colour on her white cashmere, nothing suited her better than pale green, Gwendolen, throwing herself into the attitude of drawing her bow, said with a look of comic enjoyment—

“How I pity all the other girls at the Archery Meeting – all thinking of Mr. Grandcourt! And they have not a shadow of a chance. You know they have not, mamma. You and my uncle and aunt all intend him to fall in love with me.”

Mrs. Davilow, piqued, said, “Oh, my dear, that is not so certain. Miss Arrowpoint has charms which you have not.”

“I know, but they demand thought. My arrow will pierce him before he has time for thought. He will declare himself my slave – I shall send him round the world to bring me back the wedding ring of a happy woman – in the meantime all the men between him and the title will die – he will come back Lord Grandcourt and fall at my feet. I shall laugh at him – he will call for his steed and ride to Quetcham, where he will find Miss Arrowpoint just married to a needy musician.”

Was ever any young witch like this? You sat upon your secret, and all the while she knew exactly what you were sitting on! As well turn the key to keep out the damp!

“Why, what kind of a man do you imagine him to be, Gwendolen?”

“Let me see!” said the witch, with a little frown. “Short – just above my shoulder – trying to make himself tall by turning up his moustache – a glass in his right eye, which will cause him to make horrible faces, especially when he smiles. I shall cast down my eyes, and he will perceive that I am not indifferent to his attentions. I shall dream that night that I am looking at the face of a magnified insect – and the next morning he will make an offer of his hand; the sequel as before.”

“Mr. Grandcourt may be a delightful young man.”

“Oh, yes,” said Gwendolen carelessly. “A delightful young man would have hunters, and a London house and two country-houses – one with battlements and another with a veranda. And I feel sure that with a little murdering he might get a title.”

Poor Mrs. Davilow said, distressed:

“Don’t talk in that way, child, for heaven’s sake! you do read such books. I declare when I was your age I knew nothing about wickedness.”

“Why did you not bring me up in that way, mamma?” said Gwendolen. But immediately perceiving her mother’s crushed look, she knelt at her feet crying—

“Mamma! I was only speaking in fun. I meant nothing. Dear mamma, I don’t find fault with you – I love you. How can you help what I am? Besides, I am very charming. Come, now.” Here Gwendolen gently rubbed away her mother’s tears. “Really, how dreadfully dull you must have been!”

Such tender cajolery quieted the mother, as it had often done before. However, Gwendolen dreaded the unpleasant sense of compunction which was the nearest to self-condemnation that she had known; and Mrs. Davilow’s timid maternal conscience dreaded any reproach. Hence, after this, the two excluded Mr. Grandcourt from their conversation.

When Mr. Gascoigne referred to him, Mrs. Davilow feared lest Gwendolen should betray some of her alarming keen-sightedness about what was probably in her uncle’s mind; but Gwendolen was determined not to clash with her uncle. The good understanding between them was much fostered by their enjoyment of archery



together. Mr. Gascoigne was gratified to discover his niece's skill; and Gwendolen was the more careful not to lose the shelter of his fatherly indulgence, because since the trouble with Rex both Mrs. Gascoigne and Anna had been unreasonably alienated from her. Toward Anna she behaved with regretful affection; but neither of them dared to mention Rex's name, and Anna was ill at ease with her.

This unfair resentment had rather a hardening effect on Gwendolen, and made her defiant. Her uncle too might be offended if she refused the next person who fell in love with her. But happily, Mr. Middleton was gone without having made any avowal; and Gwendolen had no other suitors.

For not every man who admires a fair girl will be enamoured of her, and not every man who is enamoured will necessarily declare himself. Gwendolen was far from holding supremacy in the minds of all observers. Since not one of the eligible young men in the neighbourhood had made Gwendolen an offer, why should Mr. Grandcourt be thought likely to do it?

Perhaps because a great deal of what passes for likelihood in the world is simply the reflex of a wish. Mr. and Mrs. Arrowpoint, for example, having no anxiety that Miss Harleth should make a brilliant marriage, had quite a different likelihood in their minds.

## Chapter Ten

Brackenshaw Park, where the Archery Meeting was held, looked out from gentle heights over the valley to the eastern downs and the broad, slow rise of country hanging like a vast curtain toward the west. The castle was built of rough-hewn limestone, full of lights and shadows made by dark lichens and the washings of the rain. Beech and fir sheltered it, and spread down the green slopes to the water below. The archery-ground was a carefully-kept enclosure at the farthest end of the park, protected by tall elms and a shading screen of hollies. The Archery Hall, with an arcade in front, showed like a white temple against the greenery.

What could make a better background for the flower-groups of ladies, moving and bowing like leisurely lilies? There was a pleasant sound of musical laughter and a harmony of happy speech, now rising to mild excitement, now sinking to an agreeable murmur.

No Archery Meeting could be more select. Within the enclosure no plebeian spectators were admitted except Lord Brackenshaw's tenants and their families, chiefly the feminine members, who liked to consider which of those sweetly-dressed ladies they would choose to be. Probably they would not have chosen Gwendolen, but some lady with more pink in her cheeks and hair of fashionable yellow; but among the males, she was unanimously pronounced the finest girl present.

No wonder she enjoyed her existence on that July day. Pre-eminence is sweet to those who love it, even under mediocre circumstances.

And who can deny that bows and arrows are the prettiest weapons in the world for feminine forms to play with? They prompt attitudes full of grace and power, where fine marksmanship is freed from associations of bloodshed. All the prizes were of the nobler symbolic kind; the gold arrow and the silver, the gold star and the silver, to be worn in sign of achievement. Altogether the Brackenshaw Archery Club was an institution framed with good taste.

And today all the elements were in its favour. There was mild warmth, and no wind to disturb either hair or the course of the arrow; and when there was a general march to extract the arrows, the joyous promenade of graceful movement was a show worth looking at. Everyone was obliged to admit Gwendolen's surpassing charm.

"That girl is like a high-mettled racer," said Lord Brackenshaw to young Clintock. "Tremendously pretty too."

Perhaps she had never looked so well. Her face beamed with pleasure; for, being satisfied with her own chances, she felt kindly toward everybody. Not to be marked out as an heiress, like Miss Arrowpoint, gave an added triumph in eclipsing those advantages. Gwendolen was too full of joyous belief in herself to feel the least jealousy, although Miss Arrowpoint was one of the best archeresses.

Even the reappearance of the formidable Herr Klesmer seemed only to fall in with Gwendolen's amusement. What great musical maestro could make a good figure at an archery meeting? There was a satirical light in Gwendolen's eyes as she looked toward the Arrowpoint party, with its intense contrast between Klesmer and the group of English country people.

Fancy a gathering of men all with that ordinary stamp of the well-bred Englishman, watching the entrance of Herr Klesmer – his mane of hair floating backward under the absurd chimney-pot hat; his tall, thin figure clad in noticeably un-English style. When the fire that showed itself in his glances was turned into comedy

by his hat, one felt why it is often better for greatness to be dead, and to have got rid of the outward man.

Many present knew Klesmer, or knew of him; but they had only seen him on candle-light occasions when he appeared as a musician. Seeing him presented unexpectedly on this July afternoon, some were inclined to laugh; others felt a little disgust at the want of judgment shown by the Arrowpoints.

“What extreme guys those artistic fellows usually are!” said young Clintock to Gwendolen. “Do look at the figure he cuts.”

“You are blind to the majesty of genius,” said Gwendolen. “Herr Klesmer smites me with awe; I feel crushed in his presence; my courage oozes from me.”

“Ah, you understand about his music.”

“No, indeed,” she said with a light laugh; “it is he who understands mine and thinks it pitiable. But how remarkably well Miss Arrowpoint looks! She would make quite a fine picture in that gold-coloured dress.”

“Too splendid, don’t you think?”

“Well, perhaps a little too much like the figure of Wealth in an allegory.”

This speech of Gwendolen’s had rather a malicious sound, but it was not really more than a bubble of fun. She did not wish Miss Arrowpoint or anyone else to be out of the way, believing in her own good fortune even more than in her skill. The belief in both naturally grew stronger as the shooting went on, for she promised to achieve one of the best scores. She trod on air, and all things pleasant seemed possible.

“How does the scoring stand, I wonder?” said Lady Brackenshaw to her lord in an interval of shooting. “It seems to me that Miss Harleth is likely to win the gold arrow.”

“Gad, I think she will, if she carries it on! she is running Juliet Fenn hard. It is wonderful for one in her first year. Catherine is not up to her usual mark,” continued his lordship, turning to the heiress’s mother nearby. “But she got the gold arrow last time.”

“Catherine will be very glad for others to win,” said Mrs. Arrowpoint, “she is so magnanimous. It was entirely her kindness that made us bring Herr Klesmer instead of Canon Stople. I am sure she would rather have brought the Canon; but she is always thinking of others. But where is our new neighbour? I thought Mr. Grandcourt was to be here to-day.”

“So he was. The time’s getting on too,” said his lordship, looking at his watch. “But he only got to Diplow the other day. Why, Gascoigne!” – the rector was just then close by with Gwendolen – “this is too bad; you bring your niece to beat all the archeresses.”

“It *is* rather scandalous in her,” said Mr. Gascoigne, with much inward satisfaction. “But it is not my doing, my lord.”

“It is not my fault, either,” said Gwendolen, with pretty archness. “If I am to aim, I can’t help hitting.”

“Ay, ay, that may be fatal for some people,” said Lord Brackenshaw, good-humouredly; then taking out his watch again – “The time’s getting on. Grandcourt is always late, and he’s no bowman – understands nothing about it. But I told him he must come and see the flower of the neighbourhood.”

Gwendolen, who joined her mamma and aunt until it was time to shoot again, felt that Mr. Grandcourt’s absence might compromise her pleasure. Under all her saucy satire, she was far from indifferent as to the impression she would make on him. True, he was not to have the slightest power over her (for Gwendolen had not considered

that the desire to conquer is itself a sort of subjection); she had made up her mind that he was to be one of those complimentary and admiring men of whom she had some experience, and she imagined he would be ridiculous.

But that was no reason why she could spare his presence: she did not wish him to save her the trouble of a refusal, by showing no desire to make her an offer. Mr. Grandcourt taking hardly any notice of her, and becoming shortly engaged to Miss Arrowpoint, was not a picture which flattered her imagination.

Hence Gwendolen had been all ears to Lord Brackenshaw's words about Grandcourt; and when he did arrive, no-one was more awake to the fact than her, although she steadily avoided looking where he was likely to be. She would not betray the slightest interest in Mr. Grandcourt. She became again absorbed in the shooting, and resolutely abstained from looking round, so that even if he were watching, it might be clear she was not aware of him. And all the while the certainty that he was there made a distinct thread in her consciousness. Perhaps her shooting was the better for it: at any rate, she raised a storm of clapping and applause by three hits in the gold – a feat which was rewarded by a special gold star.

That moment was a happy one. There was a general falling into ranks to give her space to advance and receive the gold star from Lady Brackenshaw; she was the central object of that pretty picture, and everyone must gaze at her.

She herself was determined not to turn her eyes any way except toward Lady Brackenshaw, but her thoughts undeniably turned in other ways. It pleased her that Herr Klesmer must be observing her at a moment when music and his superiority were far in the background; for the unconquered Klesmer threw a trace of his malign power even across her pleasant consciousness that Mr. Grandcourt was probably admiring her. She did not expect to admire *him*, but that was not necessary to her peace of mind.

Gwendolen met Lady Brackenshaw's smile charmingly, and bent with easy grace to have the star fixed near her shoulder. After an exchange of congratulations, she was standing aside examining an arrow with rather an absent air when Lord Brackenshaw came up and said:

“Miss Harleth, here is a gentleman who is not willing to wait any longer for an introduction. Will you allow me to introduce Mr. Mallinger Grandcourt?”

## BOOK II: MEETING STREAMS

### Chapter Eleven

Mr. Grandcourt's wish to be introduced was not unexpected; but when Gwendolen came face to face with the real man, there was a little shock which flushed her cheeks. The shock came from the reversal of her expectations: Grandcourt could hardly have been more unlike her imaginary portraits of him.

He was slightly taller than herself, and their eyes seemed to be on a level; there was not the faintest smile on his face as he looked at her, not a trace of self-consciousness or anxiety in his bearing: when he raised his hat he showed an extensive baldness surrounded with a fringe of reddish-blond hair, but he also showed a perfect hand; and his features were decidedly handsome. It was not possible for a face to be freer from grimace: also it was perhaps not possible for a breathing man to look less animated. His bearing was relaxed; his long narrow grey eyes expressed nothing but indifference.

Attempts at description are stupid: who can all at once describe a human being? Our knowledge of his appearance must be completed by innumerable impressions. We recognize the alphabet; we are not sure of the language. Gwendolen's first impressions were summed up in the words, "He is not ridiculous."

As Lord Brackenshaw left, conversation began, while Grandcourt looked at Gwendolen persistently with a slightly exploring gaze, but without change of expression. She only occasionally glanced at him with a flash of observation a little softened by coquetry. After her answers there was a pause before he spoke again.

"I used to think archery was a great bore," Grandcourt began. He spoke with a fine accent, but with a broken and distinguished drawl.

"Are you converted to-day?" said Gwendolen.

(Pause, during which she imagined various opinions about herself that Grandcourt might hold.)

"Yes, since I saw you shooting. In things of this sort one generally sees people missing and simpering."

"I suppose you are a first-rate shot with a rifle."

(Pause, during which Gwendolen made a brief graphic description of Grandcourt to an unknown hearer.)

"I have left off shooting."

"Oh, then you are a formidable person. People who have done things once and left them off make one feel very contemptible. I hope you have not left off all follies, because I practice a great many."

(Pause, during which Gwendolen made several interpretations of her own speech.)

"What do you call follies?"

"Well, in general, I think whatever is agreeable is called a folly. But you have not left off hunting, I hear."

(Pause, wherein Gwendolen recalled Grandcourt's position, and decided that he was the most aristocratic-looking man she had ever seen.)

"One must do something."

"And do you care about the turf? – or is that among the things you have left off?"

(Pause, during which Gwendolen thought that a man of extremely calm, cold manners might be less disagreeable as a husband than other men, and not likely to interfere with his wife's preferences.)

"I run a horse now and then. Are you fond of horses?"

"Yes, indeed: I never like my life so well as when I am on horseback, having a great gallop. I think of nothing. I only feel myself strong and happy."

(Pause, wherein Gwendolen wondered whether Grandcourt would like what she said, but assured herself that she was not going to disguise her tastes.)

"Do you like danger?"

"I don't know. When I am on horseback I never think of danger. It seems to me that if I broke my bones I should not feel it. I should go at anything that came in my way."

(Pause, during which Gwendolen had run through a whole hunting season with two chosen hunters to ride at will.)

"You would perhaps like tiger-hunting or pig-sticking. I saw some of that for a season or two in the East. Everything here is poor stuff after that."

"You are fond of danger, then?"

(Pause, wherein Gwendolen speculated that men of coldest manners were probably the most adventurous, and felt the strength of her own insight.)

"One must have something or other. But one gets used to it."

"I begin to think I am very fortunate, because everything is new to me: I am not used to anything except being dull, which I should like to leave off as you have left off shooting."

(Pause, during which it occurred to Gwendolen that a man of cold and distinguished manners might possibly be a dull companion; but then most persons were dull – and after all she was not going to accept Grandcourt.)

"Why are you dull?"

"This is a dreadful neighbourhood. There is nothing to be done in it. That is why I practised my archery."

(Pause, during which Gwendolen reflected that the life of an unmarried woman who could not go about must be dull indeed.)

"You have made yourself queen of it. I imagine you will carry the first prize."

"But I have great rivals. Did you not observe how well Miss Arrowpoint shot?"

(Pause, wherein Gwendolen was thinking that men had been known to choose some one else than the woman they most admired, and recalled several experiences of that kind in novels.)

"Miss Arrowpoint. No – that is, yes."

"Shall we go and hear the scoring? Everyone is going to the other end now – shall we join them? I think my uncle is looking toward me. He perhaps wants me."

Gwendolen found it a relief to thus change the situation: not that the *tête-à-tête* was quite disagreeable; but while it lasted she could not get rid of the unwonted flush in her cheeks and the sense of surprise which made her feel less mistress of herself than usual. And this Mr. Grandcourt must not take for granted that he was of great moment to her, or that because others speculated on him as a desirable match she held herself at his beck and call.

"You have just missed the gold arrow, Gwendolen," said Mr. Gascoigne. "Miss Juliet Fenn scores eight above you."

"I am very glad to hear it. I should have felt that I was taking the best of everything," said Gwendolen easily. It was impossible to be jealous of Juliet Fenn, a

girl middling in everything but her archery and her plainness, in which she resembled one of the more intelligent fishes.

There was now a lively movement of mingling groups. Gwendolen observed that Grandcourt was having Klesmer presented to him by a middle-aged man, with a dark, full face and fat hands, who seemed to be friendly with both. Who this stranger was she did not care to know; but she wished to observe Grandcourt's manner toward others than herself. Precisely the same: except that he did not look much at Miss Arrowpoint, but rather at Klesmer, who was speaking with animation and tossing his mane. Grandcourt listened with an impassive face and narrow eyes, his left fore-finger in his waistcoat-pocket, and his right slightly touching his thin whisker.

"I wonder which style Miss Arrowpoint admires most," thought Gwendolen, rather mockingly. Then she gave all her animation to those immediately around her, determined not to care whether Mr. Grandcourt came near her again or not.

He did not come, however, until it was time to conduct Mrs. Davilow to her carriage.

"Shall we meet again in the ball-room tonight?" she said. His "yes" in reply had the usual slight drawl and perfect gravity.

"You were wrong about Mr. Grandcourt, Gwendolen," said Mrs. Davilow, during their drive to the castle. "You can't find anything ridiculous in him."

"I could if I tried, but I don't want to," said Gwendolen, rather pettishly; and her mother was afraid to say more.

It was the rule on these occasions for the ladies and gentlemen to dine apart. In the ladies' dining-room it was evident that Gwendolen was not a favourite with her own sex: there was no intimacy between her and other girls, perhaps because she was not much interested in them. The exception to this aloofness from her was Miss Arrowpoint, who talked to her with quiet friendliness.

"She knows, as I do, that our friends are ready to quarrel over a husband for us," thought Gwendolen, "and she is determined not to enter into the quarrel."

"I think Miss Arrowpoint has the best manners I ever saw," said Mrs. Davilow, when she and Gwendolen had retired to a dressing-room.

"I wish I were like her," said Gwendolen. "I am discontented with things. She seems contented."

"I am sure you ought to be satisfied to-day. You must have enjoyed the shooting."

"Oh, that is over now, and I don't know what will come next," said Gwendolen, stretching and throwing up her arms. They were bare now; it was the fashion to dance in the archery dress, without the jacket; and her simple white cashmere with its border of pale green set off her form. A thin line of gold round her neck, and the gold star on her breast, were her only ornaments.

"The dancing will come next," said Mrs. Davilow. "You are sure to enjoy that."

"I shall only dance in the quadrille. I told Mr. Clintock so. I shall not waltz or polk with anyone. I can't bear having ugly people so near me."

"Whom do you mean by ugly people?"

"Oh, plenty."

"Mr. Clintock is not ugly." Mrs. Davilow dared not mention Grandcourt.

"I hate woollen cloth touching me."

Apparently something had changed Gwendolen's mood since the hour of exulting enjoyment in the archery-ground. But she did not look the worse for it under the chandeliers in the ball-room, where the soft splendour of the scene and the pleasant odours from the conservatory soothed her temper, as did the consciousness of being

sought after. Almost every man was anxious to have her for a partner, and was in a state of melancholy remonstrance that she would not waltz or polk.

Among the remonstrant dancing men, however, Mr. Grandcourt was not numbered. After standing up for a quadrille with Miss Arrowpoint, it seemed that he meant to ask for no other partner. Gwendolen saw him frequently with the Arrowpoints, but he never approached her.

She thought that she would probably not have the least trouble about him after all: probably he meant to marry Miss Arrowpoint. Whatever might come, she, Gwendolen, was not going to be disappointed: for she had never committed herself even by a silent confidence in anything Mr. Grandcourt would do. Still, she noticed that he did sometimes quietly and gradually change his position according to hers, so that he could see her whenever she was dancing.

This movement for the sake of watching her was more direct than usual late in the evening, when Gwendolen had Klesmer as a partner; and that wide-glancing personage said to her, "Mr. Grandcourt is a man of taste. He likes to see you dancing."

"Perhaps he likes to look at what is against his taste," said Gwendolen, with a light laugh; she was quite courageous with Klesmer now. "He may be so tired of admiring that he likes disgust for variety."

"Those words are not suitable to your lips," said Klesmer, quickly, with one of his grand frowns.

"Are you as critical of words as of music?"

"Certainly. I should require your words to be as noble as your face and form."

"That is a compliment as well as a correction. I am obliged for both. Pray, who is that standing near the card-room door?" she went on, seeing there the same stranger with whom Klesmer had been in animated talk on the archery ground. "A friend of yours?"

"No, an amateur I have seen in town – too fond of popular operas – a Mr. Lush."

Three minutes afterward, when she was back with her mamma, Grandcourt made his way up to her.

"May I ask if you are tired of dancing, Miss Harleth?" he began.

"Not in the least."

"Will you do me the honour – the next – or another quadrille?"

"I should have been very happy," said Gwendolen looking at her card, "but I am engaged for the next to Mr. Clintock – and indeed I have not one quadrille left to dispose of." She was not sorry to punish Mr. Grandcourt's tardiness, yet at the same time she would have liked to dance with him. She gave him a charming smile, and he stood looking down at her with no smile at all.

"I am unfortunate in being too late," he said, after a moment's pause.

"It seemed to me that you did not care for dancing," said Gwendolen. "I thought it might be one of the things you had left off."

"Yes, but I have not begun to dance with you," said Grandcourt. Always there was the same pause before he took up his cue. "You make dancing a new thing, as you make archery."

"But once you had danced with me there would be no more novelty in it."

"On the contrary, there would probably be much more."

"That is deep. I don't understand."

"It is difficult to make Miss Harleth understand her power?" Here Grandcourt had turned to Mrs. Davilow, who, smiling gently at her daughter, said–



“I think she does not generally strike people as slow to understand.”

“Mamma,” said Gwendolen, in a deprecating tone, “I am adorably stupid, and want everything explained to me – when the meaning is pleasant.”

“If you are stupid, I admit that stupidity is adorable,” returned Grandcourt, after the usual pause, and without change of tone. But clearly he knew what to say.

“I begin to think that Mr Clintock has forgotten me,” Gwendolen observed, looking round for her partner. “I see the quadrille is being formed.”

But just then Lady Brackenshaw came up and said, “Miss Harleth, Mr. Clintock has charged me to express to you his deep regret that he was obliged to leave without having the pleasure of dancing with you again.”

“I am sorry he was called away,” said Gwendolen, politely.

“May I hope that you will let me take his place?” said Grandcourt.

“I shall be very happy.”

It seemed an augury, and as Gwendolen stood up for the quadrille with Grandcourt, her earlier exultation revived. No man could have walked through the dance with more irreproachable ease; and the absence of all eagerness in his attention suited her taste. She was now convinced that he meant to distinguish her; and it began to appear probable that she would have it in her power to reject him. It was agreeable to know that his selecting her to dance with, from all the ladies present, attracted observation; though she studiously avoided seeing this, and at the end of the quadrille walked away on Grandcourt’s arm as if she had been the shortest sighted of mortals.

They joined Miss Arrowpoint and Lady Brackenshaw amongst a group who were discussing a project: a picnic archery meeting to be held in Cardell Chase.

Gwendolen thought the scheme delightful, and Mr. Grandcourt said it was a thing to be done. Mr. Lush, who stood behind Lady Brackenshaw, said with a familiar tone to Grandcourt, “Diplow would be a good place for the meeting, and more convenient.”

Although Grandcourt looked totally unconscious of being addressed, Gwendolen took a new survey of the speaker, deciding, first, that he must be on intimate terms with Grandcourt, and, secondly, that she would never let him come within a yard of her. Mr. Lush’s prominent eyes, fat though not clumsy figure, and strong black grey-besprinkled frizzy hair, created in her a strong antipathy. She murmured to Grandcourt, “I should like to continue walking.”

He obeyed immediately; but spoke no word for several minutes, and she, out of a half-amused inclination for experiment, would not speak first. They turned into the large conservatory, beautifully lit up with Chinese lamps. The other couples were at a distance, but still they walked in silence until they had reached the farther end where there was a second wide opening into the ball-room. Grandcourt paused and said languidly–

“Do you like this kind of thing?”

Half an hour before, Gwendolen could only have imagined herself returning a playful, satirical answer. But for some mysterious reason she dared not be satirical: she had begun to feel a wand over her that made her afraid of offending Grandcourt.

“Yes,” she said, quietly, without considering what “kind of thing” was meant – whether the flowers, the scents, the ball in general, or walking with Mr. Grandcourt in particular. And they returned along the conservatory without farther interpretation.

She proposed to go and sit down in her old place by Mrs. Davilow; but as they approached, she saw, to her shuddering annoyance, that Mr. Lush stood at her mother’s elbow. There was no avoiding the confrontation: her mamma said

innocently, "Gwendolen, dear, let me present Mr. Lush to you." Having just made the acquaintance of this intimate companion of Mr. Grandcourt's, Mrs. Davilow imagined it altogether desirable that her daughter also should meet him.

It was hardly a bow that Gwendolen gave – rather, it was the slightest sweep of the head away from him. She immediately moved toward her seat, saying, "I want to put on my cloak." No sooner had she reached it, than Mr. Lush was there with the cloak in his hand, willing to risk forestalling Grandcourt for the sake of annoying this supercilious young lady. Holding up the garment, he said, "Pray, permit me?" But she wheeled away, saying, "No, thank you."

A man who forgave this would have much Christian feeling, supposing he had intended to be agreeable to the young lady; but Mr. Lush had no such intention. Grandcourt quietly took the cloak from him, and Mr. Lush, with a slight bow, moved away. "You had perhaps better put it on," said Mr. Grandcourt, looking down on her without change of expression.

"Thanks; perhaps it would be wise," said Gwendolen, rising, and submitting very gracefully.

In taking leave, Mr. Grandcourt asked permission to call at Offendene the next day, evidently not offended by the insult to his friend. Certainly Gwendolen's refusal of the cloak from Mr. Lush was open to the interpretation that she wished to receive it from Mr. Grandcourt. But she, poor child, was simply following her antipathy, without any such design. Gwendolen had no sense that these men were dark enigmas to her – Mr. Grandcourt at least. The chief question was, how far he might answer her wishes; and unless she were satisfied about that, she would not accept his offer.

## Chapter Twelve

On the second day after the Archery Meeting, Mr. Henleigh Mallinger Grandcourt was at his breakfast-table with Mr. Lush. Everything around them was agreeable: the summer air through the open windows, at which the dogs could walk in from the lawn; the park beyond; the still room, with its sober antiquated elegance, as if it kept a conscious, well-bred silence, unlike the restlessness of vulgar furniture.

Whether the gentlemen were agreeable to each other was less evident. Mr. Grandcourt had drawn his chair aside to face the lawn, and with his left leg over another chair, was smoking a large cigar, while his companion was eating. Half a dozen dogs were moving lazily in and out; except for Fetch, the water-spaniel, which sat with its forepaws firmly planted and its face turned upward, watching Grandcourt with unshaken constancy. He held in his lap a tiny Maltese dog, and his hand rested on this small parcel of animal warmth. I fear that Fetch was jealous; at last she could bear this neglect no longer, and she gently put her large silky paw on her master's leg.

Grandcourt looked at her with unchanged face, and then laid down his cigar while he lifted the unimpassioned Fluff close to his chin and gave it caressing pats, all the while gravely watching Fetch, who, poor thing, whimpered and looked up with piteous beseeching. So, at least, a lover of dogs must have interpreted Fetch, and Grandcourt kept so many dogs that he was reputed to love them.

But when the amusing anguish burst forth in a howling bark, Grandcourt pushed Fetch down without speaking, and, depositing Fluff carelessly on the table, looked to his cigar. Fetch, having begun to wail, found, like others of her sex, that it was not easy to stop.

"Turn out that brute, will you?" said Grandcourt quietly to Lush.

Lush immediately rose, lifted Fetch, and carried her out. On returning he lit a cigar, and looking at Grandcourt said—

"Shall you ride or drive to Quetcham today?"

"I am not going to Quetcham."

"You did not go yesterday."

Grandcourt smoked in silence for half a minute, and then said—

"I suppose you sent my card."

"I went at four, and said you were sure to be there shortly. They would suppose some accident prevented you from going. Especially if you go to-day."

Silence for a couple of minutes. Then Grandcourt said, "Who is invited here?"

Lush drew out a note-book. "The Captain and Mrs. Torrington come next week. Mr. Hollis and Lady Flora, and the Cushats and the Gogoffs."

"Rather a ragged lot," remarked Grandcourt, after a while. "Why did you ask the Gogoffs? When you write invitations in my name, be good enough to give me a list, instead of bringing down a giantess on me without my knowledge. She spoils the look of the room."

"You invited the Gogoffs yourself when you met them in Paris."

"What has that to do with it? I told you to give me a list."

Hitherto we have heard Grandcourt speaking in an interrupted drawl suggestive of languor and boredom. But this last brief speech was uttered in subdued, yet distinct, tones, which Lush had long recognized as the expression of a peremptory will.

"Are there any other couples you would like to invite?"

“Yes; think of some decent people, with a daughter or two. And one of your damned musicians.”

“I wonder if Klesmer would come to us when he leaves Quetcham. Nothing but first-class music will go down with Miss Arrowpoint.”

Lush spoke carelessly, but he was really seizing an opportunity and observing Grandcourt, who now for the first time turned his eyes toward his companion, while he gave two long luxuriant puffs on his cigar. Then he said, with a perceptible edge of contempt—

“What in the name of nonsense have I to do with Miss Arrowpoint and her music?”

“Well, something,” said Lush, jocosely. “You need not give yourself much trouble, perhaps. But some forms must be gone through before a man can marry a million.”

“Very likely. But I am not going to marry a million.”

“That’s a pity – to fling away an opportunity of this sort, and knock down your plans.”

“*Your* plans, you mean.”

“You have some debts, you know, and the heirship is not absolutely certain. It really is a fine opportunity. The father and mother ask for nothing better, I can see, and the daughter is equal to carrying any rank. She is not likely to refuse.”

“Perhaps not.”

“The father and mother would let you do anything you like with them.”

“But I should not like to do anything with them.”

Here it was Lush who paused before remonstrating. “Good God, Grandcourt! after your experience, will you let a whim interfere with your comfortable settlement in life?”

“Spare your oratory. I know what I am going to do.”

“What?” Lush thrust his hands into his side pockets, as if he had to face something exasperating, but meant to keep his temper.

“I am going to marry the other girl.”

“Have you fallen in love?” This question carried a strong sneer.

“I am going to marry her.”

“You have made her an offer, then?”

“No.”

“She has a will of her own, I fancy. Extremely well fitted to make a rumpus. She would know what she liked.”

“She doesn’t like you,” said Grandcourt, with the ghost of a smile.

“Perfectly true,” said Lush, with another sneer. “However, if you and she are devoted to each other, that will be enough.”

Grandcourt took no notice, but sipped his coffee, rose, and strolled out on the lawn, all the dogs following him.

Lush glanced after him, then took up his cigar and smoked slowly, till he finally said—

“Check, old boy!”

Lush had not known Grandcourt for fifteen years without learning what sort of measures were useless with him, though what sort might be useful remained often doubtful. In the beginning of his career Lush held a fellowship, and nearly took orders for the sake of a college living, but not being fond of that prospect accepted instead the office of travelling companion to young Grandcourt, who had lost his father early,

and who found Lush so convenient that he had allowed him to become prime minister in all his more personal affairs.

The habit of fifteen years had made Grandcourt more and more in need of Lush's handiness, and Lush more and more in need of the lazy luxury which his life with Grandcourt allowed. I cannot say that time increased Grandcourt's lack of respect for his companion, since that lack had been absolute from the start, but it had confirmed his sense that he might kick Lush if he chose – only he never did choose to kick any animal, because a gentleman's dogs should be kicked for him. He only said things which might have exposed himself to be kicked if his companion had been a man of independent spirit.

But Mr. Lush's liking of comfort had overtaken any sense of independence. He was conscious of being held kickable, but he preferred calling that one of the peculiarities of Grandcourt's incalculable character. Lush's love of ease was well-satisfied in his position, and if his puddings were rolled toward him in the dust, he took the inside bits and found them relishing.

This morning, for example, though he had encountered more annoyance than usual, he went to his private sitting-room and played a good hour on the cello.

## Chapter Thirteen

Grandcourt, having made up his mind to marry Miss Harleth, let hardly a day go by in the next fortnight without seeing her by some arrangement or other. Mrs. Davilow and Gwendolen were invited to a large party at Diplow where many witnessed how the host distinguished the dowerless beauty, and showed no care for the heiress.

Indeed the wonder to Mr. Gascoigne and Mrs. Davilow was that Grandcourt's offer had not been already made; and in this wonder Grandcourt had a share himself. When he had told his resolution to Lush he had thought that the affair would be concluded quickly, and to his own surprise he had repeatedly promised himself in a morning that he would today give Gwendolen the opportunity of accepting him, and found in the evening that it was still unaccomplished. He had never admitted to himself that Gwendolen might refuse him, but we are often unable to act on our assumptions; our objection to a contrary result is so strong that it rises like a spectre between us and our certainty.

He had arranged to have a beautiful horse of his brought for Gwendolen to ride. Mrs. Davilow was to accompany her in the carriage, and they were to go to Diplow for lunch. It was a fine mid-harvest time; the poppies glowed on the borders of the fields, the breeze moved gently among the ears of uncut corn, and winged the shadow of a cloud across the soft grey downs. The green pasture and the corn-fields made a setting of peace and permanence, where the cattle took their rest under wide branches.

But the spirit of peace did not overcome Mrs. Davilow's uneasy foreboding. Gwendolen and Grandcourt riding together in front of her made a gratifying sight; but it served chiefly to keep up the conflict of hopes and fears about her daughter's lot. Here was an irresistible opportunity for a lover to speak, and Mrs. Davilow could only hope with trembling that Gwendolen would be favourable. That Mr. Grandcourt had produced some quite novel impression on her daughter was shown by her marked abstinence from satirical observations, nay, her total silence about him, a silence which Mrs. Davilow did not dare to break.

"Would she be happy with him?" was a question that inevitably arose in the mother's mind. "Well, perhaps as happy as she would be with anyone, or as most women are," was the answer with which she tried to quiet herself.

Grandcourt too wanted an end to the uncertainty that came from his not having spoken. As to any uncertainty about her answer – well, it was without any reasonable basis.

Gwendolen enjoyed the riding, but her pleasure did not break forth in chat and laughter as it had with Rex. She spoke a little, and even laughed, but with a lightness as of a far-off echo: for her too there was some peculiar quality in the air – not due to any subjugation of her will by Mr. Grandcourt, for Gwendolen desired everyone to understand that she was going to do just as she liked. If she chose to take this husband, she was not going to renounce her freedom: "she would not do as other women did."

Grandcourt's speeches this morning were of his usual brief sort, always giving signs of a suppressed and formidable ability to say more.

"How do you like Criterion's paces?" he said, after they had entered the park.

"He is delightful to ride. I should like to have a leap with him, if it would not frighten mamma. There was a good wide channel we passed five minutes ago. I should like to have a gallop back and take it."

“Pray do. We can take it together.”

“No, thanks. Mamma is so timid – it would alarm her too much. I dare take any leap when she is not near; but I do it and don’t tell her about it.”

“We can let the carriage pass and then set off.”

“No, no, pray don’t think of it any more: I spoke quite randomly,” said Gwendolen; she began to feel a new objection to carrying out her own proposition.

“But Mrs. Davilow knows I shall take care of you.”

“Yes, but she would think of you as having to take care of my broken neck.”

There was a considerable pause before Grandcourt said, looking toward her, “I should like to have the right always to take care of you.”

Gwendolen did not turn her eyes on him; it seemed to her a long while that she was first blushing, and then turning pale, before she answered, with the lightest flute-tone and a careless movement of the head, “Oh, I am not sure that I want to be taken care of: if I chose to risk breaking my neck, I should like to be free to do it.”

She slowed her horse as she spoke, looking toward the advancing carriage. She was aware that she was risking something – not her neck, but the possibility of finally stopping Grandcourt’s advances, and she did not feel contented with the possibility.

“Damn her!” thought Grandcourt, as he too checked his horse. He was not a wordy thinker, and this explosive phrase stood for mixed impressions: that he was being mystified, and was determined that this girl should not make a fool of him. Did she want him to throw himself at her feet and declare that he was dying for her? That would not happen. Or did she expect him to write his proposals? Equally a delusion. He would not make his offer in any way that could place him definitely in the position of being rejected. But as to her accepting him, she had done it already in accepting his marked attentions. She was merely coquetting, then?

However, the carriage came up, and no further tête-à-tête could occur before their arrival at the house, where there was abundant company, to whom Gwendolen was naturally a centre of observation. Since the objectionable Mr. Lush was not there to look at her, this admiring attention heightened her spirits, and dispersed some of her uneasiness at her own indecision. Grandcourt’s manners were unchanged, but Gwendolen had learnt that his manners were no clue for her, and she was not the less afraid of him.

She had not been at Diploew before except to dine; and since certain views from the windows and the garden were worth showing, it was proposed after luncheon that the party should make a little exploration. Here came frequent opportunities when Grandcourt might have kept Gwendolen apart, and have spoken to her unheard. But no! He indeed spoke to no one else, but his words were no more eager or intimate than in their first interview. He looked at her as much as usual; and some of her defiance returning, she looked full at him, not caring – rather preferring – that his eyes had no expression in them.

But at last it seemed he planned to speak. After the tour of the grounds, the whole party stopped by the pool to be amused by Fetch’s bringing a water lily to the bank.

Here Grandcourt, who stood with Gwendolen outside the group, turned deliberately, and fixing his eyes on a knoll with a winding path up it, said languidly–

“This is a bore. Shall we go up there?”

“Oh, certainly – since we are exploring,” said Gwendolen. She was rather pleased, and yet afraid.

The path was too narrow for him to offer his arm, and they walked up in silence. When they were at the summit, Grandcourt said–

“There is nothing to be seen here: the thing was not worth climbing.”

How was it that Gwendolen did not laugh? She was perfectly silent, holding up her robe like a statue, and grasping the handle of her whip, which she had snatched up automatically when they had first set off.

“What sort of a place do you prefer?” said Grandcourt.

“I think I prefer places that are open and cheerful. I am not fond of anything sombre.”

“Your place at Offendene is too sombre.”

“It is, rather.”

“You will not remain there long, I hope.”

“Oh, yes, I think so. Mamma likes to be near her sister.”

Silence for a short space.

“It is not to be supposed that *you* will always live there, though Mrs. Davilow may.”

“I don’t know. We women can’t go in search of adventures – to find the North-West Passage or the source of the Nile, or hunt tigers in the East. We must stay where we grow, like flowers, brought up to look pretty, and be dull without complaining. That is my notion about plants; they are often bored, and that is why some of them become poisonous. What do you think?” Gwendolen had run on rather nervously, lightly whipping the rhododendron bush in front of her.

“I quite agree. Most things are bores,” said Grandcourt. After a moment’s pause, he continued in his refined drawl–

“But a woman can be married.”

“Some women can.”

“You, certainly, unless you are obstinately cruel.”

“I am not sure that I am not both cruel and obstinate.” Here Gwendolen suddenly turned her head and looked full at Grandcourt. She was wondering what the effect of looking at him would be on herself, rather than on him.

He stood perfectly still; and it flashed through her mind what a sort of lotos-eater’s stupor had begun in him and was taking possession of her. Then he said–

“Are you as uncertain about yourself as you make others about you?”

“I am quite uncertain about myself; I don’t know how uncertain others may be.”

“And you wish them to understand that you don’t care?” said Grandcourt, with a new hardness in his tone.

“I did not say that,” Gwendolen replied hesitatingly, and turning her eyes away whipped the rhododendron bush again. She wished she were on horseback that she might set off on a canter. It was impossible to set off running down the knoll.

“You do care, then,” said Grandcourt, with a softened drawl.

“Ha! my whip!” said Gwendolen, in a little scream of distress. She had let it go – what could be more natural in a slight agitation? – and it had gone with some force over the immediate shrubs, and had lodged itself in some branches half-way down the knoll. She could run down now, laughing prettily, and Grandcourt was obliged to follow; but rescuing the whip, she continued on her way to level ground, where she paused and looked at him with an exasperating brightness in her glance and a heightened, triumphant colour, which Mrs. Davilow noticed when they rejoined the party.

“It is all coquetting,” thought Grandcourt; “the next time I beckon she will come down.”



He thought that this final beckoning might happen the very next day, when there was to be a picnic archery meeting in Cardell Chase, according to the plan suggested on the day of the ball.

Gwendolen felt herself being hurried towards two alternative likelihoods; two decisions, like two sides of a boundary-line, and she did not know on which side she should fall. This powerlessness to predict her own behaviour caused her some astonishment and terror; her favourite idea of doing as she liked seemed to fail her, and she could not foresee what she might choose to do. The prospect of marrying Grandcourt really seemed attractive to her: the dignities, the luxuries, which had now come within her reach, took hold of her nature.

And Grandcourt himself? He seemed to have as little flaw as a lover and husband could. Gwendolen wished to mount the chariot and drive the plunging horses herself, with a spouse by her side who would fold his arms and give her his countenance without looking ridiculous. Grandcourt was adorably quiet and free from absurdities.

But what else was he? He had been everywhere, and seen everything. *That* was desirable, and a gratifying preamble to his supreme preference for Gwendolen Harleth. He did not appear to enjoy anything much. That was not necessary: the less he had of particular desires, the more freedom his wife was likely to have in following hers. Gwendolen conceived that after marriage she would most probably be able to manage him thoroughly.

How was it that he caused her unusual constraint now? – that she was less daring and playful in her talk with him than with any other admirer she had known? His lack of demonstrativeness acted as a charm in more senses than one, and was slightly numbing. Grandcourt after all was formidable: a handsome lizard of a hitherto unknown species, not the lively, darting kind. But Gwendolen knew hardly anything about lizards. This splendid specimen was probably gentle, suitable as a boudoir pet: what may not a lizard be, if you know nothing to the contrary?

It hardly occurred to her to think how his life of thirty-six years had been passed: she imagined him always cold and dignified, not likely ever to have committed himself. He had hunted the tiger – had he ever been in love? Both experiences seemed remote from the Mr. Grandcourt who had come to Diplow in order to change her destiny. On the whole she wished to marry him; he suited her purpose; her prevailing, deliberate intention was to accept him.

But was she going to fulfil her deliberate intention? She began to be afraid of herself. Already her assertion of independence in evading his advances had been carried farther than was necessary, and she was thinking with some anxiety of what she might do on the next occasion.

On their drive homeward, she was observed by her mamma, who took the excitement in her eyes and her total silence as signs that something had occurred between her and Grandcourt. Mrs. Davilow's uneasiness determined her to risk a question.

“Something has happened, dear?” she began.

Gwendolen looked round, roused to consciousness of herself. She took off her gloves and then her hat, so that the soft breeze might blow on her head, but did not speak.

“Mr. Grandcourt has been saying something?– Tell me, dear.”

“What am I to tell you, mamma?” was the perverse answer.

“I am sure something has agitated you. You ought to confide in me, Gwen. You ought not to leave me in doubt and anxiety.” Mrs. Davilow's eyes filled with tears.

“Mamma, dear, please don’t be miserable,” said Gwendolen, with pettish remonstrance. “It only makes me more so. I am in doubt myself.”

“About Mr. Grandcourt’s intentions?”

“No; not at all,” said Gwendolen, with a pretty toss of the head.

“About whether you will accept him, then?”

“Precisely.”

“Have you given him a doubtful answer?”

“I have given him no answer at all.”

“He has spoken so that you could not misunderstand him?”

“As far as I would let him speak.”

“You expect him to persevere?” Mrs. Davilow put this question rather anxiously. “You don’t consider that you have discouraged him?”

“I dare say not.”

“I thought you liked him, dear,” said Mrs. Davilow, timidly.

“So I do, mamma, as liking goes. There is less to dislike about him than about most men. He is quiet and distinguished.” Gwendolen spoke with gravity; but suddenly added with a smile— “Indeed he has all the qualities that would make a husband tolerable – battlement, veranda, stable, etc., and no glass in his eye.”

“Do be serious, dear. Am I to understand that you mean to accept him?”

“Oh, pray, mamma, leave me to myself,” said Gwendolen, with pettish distress. Mrs. Davilow said no more.

When they got home Gwendolen declared that she would not dine: she was tired, and would come down in the evening to see her uncle.

Mr. Gascoigne heard a softened account of this conversation. The mother hinted that Gwendolen was in some uncertainty about her own mind, but inclined to acceptance. The result was that the uncle felt himself called on to interfere; his duty was to guide his niece in a momentous crisis of this kind.

To the rector, aristocratic heirship excused its possessor from ordinary moral standards. Grandcourt, the almost certain baronet, the probable peer, was the sort of public personage an ancient community may feel proud of; though privately these great persons must often be inconvenient and even unpleasant. But Mr. Gascoigne was disposed to think the best, and set aside the gossip he had heard. If Grandcourt had really made any deeper experiments in folly than were common in young men of high prospects, he was of an age to have finished them. All accounts can be suitably wound up when a man has not ruined himself, and the expense may be taken as an insurance against future error. There was every reason to believe that a woman of well-regulated mind would be happy with Grandcourt.

When Gwendolen came down to tea, her uncle greeted her with his usual kindness.

“My dear,” he said, in a fatherly way, “I want to speak to you on a momentous subject. You will guess what I mean. In such matters I consider myself bound to act as your father. You have no objection, I hope?”

“Oh dear, no, uncle. You have always been very kind to me,” said Gwendolen frankly. This evening she was willing to be fortified against her troublesome self. The rector always conveyed authority: he seemed to take for granted that his audience was going to be rationally obedient.

“It is naturally a satisfaction to me that the prospect of an advantageous marriage for you has presented itself so early. I do not know exactly what has passed between you and Mr. Grandcourt, but I presume there can be little doubt, from the way in

which he has distinguished you, that he desires to make you his wife. Have you any doubt of that yourself, my dear?"

"I suppose that is what he has been thinking of. But he may have changed his mind tomorrow," said Gwendolen.

"Why? Has he made advances which you have discouraged?"

"I think he meant – he began to make advances – but I did not encourage them."

"Will you confide in me so far as to tell me your reasons?"

"I am not sure that I had any reasons, uncle." Gwendolen laughed rather artificially.

"You are aware that this is not a trivial occasion, Gwendolen. It concerns your establishment for life under circumstances which may not occur again. You have a duty here both to yourself and your family. Have you any ground for hesitating as to your acceptance of Mr. Grandcourt?"

"I suppose I hesitate without grounds."

"Is he disagreeable to you personally?"

"No."

"Have you heard anything of him which has affected you disagreeably?" The rector thought it impossible that Gwendolen could be aware of the gossip he had heard, but in any case he must endeavour to put things in the right light for her.

"I have heard nothing about him except that he is a great match," said Gwendolen, with some sauciness; "and that affects me very agreeably."

"Then, my dear Gwendolen, I have nothing further to say than this: you hold your fortune in your own hands – a fortune such as rarely happens to a girl in your circumstances, and which makes your acceptance a duty. Your course is one of responsibility, into which caprice must not enter. A man does not like to have his attachment trifled with: he may not be at once repelled, but the trifling may be carried too far. And I must point out to you that if Mr. Grandcourt were repelled without your having intended to refuse him, your situation would be a humiliating and painful one."

Gwendolen became pale as she listened to this warning, which made her more conscious of the risks that lay within herself. She was silent.

"I mean this in kindness, my dear," said the rector, his tone softening.

"I know that, uncle," said Gwendolen, rising. "I am not foolish. I know that I must be married some time – before it is too late; and I don't see how I could do better than marry Mr. Grandcourt. I mean to accept him, if possible." She felt as if she were reinforcing herself by speaking with this decisiveness to her uncle.

But the rector was a little startled by so bare a version of his own meaning from those young lips. He wished his niece parks, carriages, and a title, but he also wished her not to be cynical: on the contrary, to be religiously dutiful, with warm domestic affections.

"My dear Gwendolen," he said with benign gravity, "I trust that you will find in marriage a new fountain of duty and affection. Marriage is the only true and satisfactory sphere of a woman, and if you marry Mr. Grandcourt, you will have an increasing power of rank and wealth, which may be used for the benefit of others. I trust that you will grace your position, not only by your natural personal gifts, but by a good and consistent life."

"I hope mamma will be happier," said Gwendolen, more cheerfully, moving toward the door. Mr. Gascoigne felt that he had come to a satisfactory understanding with his niece.

Meanwhile there was another person who believed that he, too, had done something toward bringing about a favourable decision in *his* sense – which happened to be the reverse of the rector's.

Mr. Lush's absence from Diplow during Gwendolen's visit had been due, not to any fear of meeting that supercilious young lady, but to an engagement from which he expected important consequences.

He was gone, in fact, to the station to meet a lady, with a maid and two children, whom he took to a hotel. She was an impressive woman, who would turn heads; her figure was slim and tall, her face rather emaciated, so that its sculpturesque beauty was the more pronounced; her crisp hair was perfectly black, as were the large, anxious eyes that looked around uneasily. Her dress was soberly correct, her age about seven-and-thirty. The children were lovely – a dark-haired girl of six or more, a fairer boy of five. When Lush expressed surprise at their presence, she said sharply–

“Why should I not bring all four if I liked?”

“Oh, certainly,” said Lush, with nonchalance.

He stayed an hour or so in talk with her, and then rode back to Diplow, hopeful as to the execution of his little plan. Grandcourt's marriage to Gwendolen Harleth would not, he believed, be good for either of them, and it would plainly be disagreeable to himself. But now he felt confident enough to lay odds that the marriage would never happen.

## Chapter Fourteen

Gwendolen looked as lovely and vigorous as a tall, newly-opened lily the next morning: yesterday's self-distrust seemed no more than the transient shiver on the surface of a full stream. The roving archery match in Cardell Chase was a delightful prospect: she imagined herself moving like a wood-nymph under the beeches (in appreciative company), and the scene lent a charm to any further advances by Grandcourt. Gwendolen foresaw him making slow conversational approaches to a declaration, and foresaw herself encouraging it.

When she came down to breakfast there were letters on her plate. One of them she read with a gathering smile, and then handed it to her mamma, who, on returning it, said—

“You don't feel inclined to go a thousand miles away?”

“Not exactly so far.”

“It was a sad omission not to have answered their invitation before this. Can't you write this morning?”

“It is not so pressing. Tomorrow will do. They leave town today; I will write to Dover. They will be there till Monday.”

“Shall I write for you, dear – if it teases you?”

Gwendolen did not speak immediately, but after sipping her coffee, answered brusquely, “No, I will write tomorrow.” Then, feeling compunction, she said with playful tenderness, “Dear, old, beautiful mamma!”

“Old, child, truly.”

“Please don't, mamma! You are hardly twenty-five years older than I am. When you talk in that way my life shrivels up before me.”

“One can have a great deal of happiness in twenty-five years, my dear.”

“I must lose no time,” said Gwendolen, merrily. “The sooner I get my palaces and coaches the better.”

“And a good husband who adores you, Gwen,” said Mrs. Davilow, encouragingly.

Gwendolen put out her lips saucily and said nothing. Today's decision began to be formidable. Still, there was the reassuring thought that marriage would be the gate into a larger freedom.

The meeting place was a grassy spot called Green Arbour. It was here that the servants would prepare the picnic meal; while the warden of the Chase would guide the roving archers so as to keep them from wandering too far. The plan was to take only a stroll before luncheon, keeping the main roving expedition for the afternoon. When the groups began to scatter themselves through the light and shadow made by beeches and oaks, a painter would have been glad to look on.

This roving archery was far prettier than the stationary game, but more difficult. Gwendolen did not distinguish herself in her first experiments, except by her lively grace. Grandcourt was continually by her side, yet it would have been hard to tell from mere looks and manners that their relation to each other had changed at all since their first conversation. Still most persons concluded them to be, if not engaged already, on the eve of being so. And she believed this herself.

As the groups returned toward Green Arbour, Grandcourt said, “Do you know how long it is since I first saw you in this dress?”

“The archery meeting was on the 25th, and this is the 13th,” said Gwendolen, laughingly. “Nearly three weeks.”

A little pause, and then he said, "That is a great loss of time."

"That your knowing me has caused you? Pray don't be uncomplimentary."

Pause again. "It is because of the gain that I feel the loss."

Here Gwendolen herself paused, thinking, "He is really very ingenious. He never speaks stupidly."

He continued: "The gain of knowing you makes me feel the time I lose in uncertainty. Do *you* like uncertainty?"

"I think I do, rather," said Gwendolen, with a playful smile. "There is more in it."

Grandcourt met her laughing eyes with a slow, steady look right into them, and said, "Do you mean more torment for me?"

There was something so strange to Gwendolen in this moment that she was quite shaken. Blushing and looking away, she said, "No, that would make me sorry."

Grandcourt would have followed up this favourable answer; but he was aware that they were now within sight of everybody, descending a steep slope into Green Arbour. He offered his hand to help her, and they came down in silence, observed by many.

I am not concerned to tell of the food that was eaten in that green refectory: it will be understood that it was of the best – the talk and laughter too, in the sense of belonging to the best society. Some of the gentlemen strolled and indulged in a cigar, there being an interval before four o'clock – the time to rove again. Among these, strange to say, was Grandcourt; but not Mr. Lush, who was making himself serviceable to everybody, and becoming more than ever a blot on the scene to Gwendolen, though he kept himself amiably aloof from her.

When there was a general move to start, Mr. Lush offered to fetch the ladies' bows from the charge of Mr Brackenshaw's valet; but Gwendolen hurried to fetch hers herself. The valet, on her approach, gave her the bow and also a letter addressed to her.

She perceived at a glance that the address was in a lady's handwriting. Mr. Lush was coming to fetch other bows: to avoid meeting him she walked away, opening the letter. It contained these words–

*'If Miss Harleth is in doubt whether to accept Mr. Grandcourt, let her leave her party after they have passed the Whispering Stones and return to that spot. She will then hear something to decide her; but only by keeping this letter a strict secret from everyone. If she does not act according to this letter, she will repent, as the woman who writes it has repented. The secrecy Miss Harleth will feel herself bound in honour to guard.'*

Gwendolen felt an inward shock; but her immediate thought was, "It is come in time." Her youthfulness meant that she was absorbed by the idea of the revelation to be made, and did not even think of showing the letter to anyone. She at once resolved that she would manage to go unobserved to the Whispering Stones; and thrusting the letter into her pocket she turned back to rejoin the company.

It was a surprise to everyone that Grandcourt was not there in time to set out roving with the rest. "We shall find him by-and-by," said Lord Brackenshaw. No man could be waited for. This apparent forgetfulness might be taken for the distraction of a lover so absorbed in thinking of his beloved as to forget an appointment which would bring him into her actual presence. But Gwendolen thought, "Can he too be starting away from a decision?"

It was not exactly a pleasant thought; but it was near the truth. "Starting away," however, was not the right expression for the languor that came over Grandcourt, like a fit of diseased numbness, when an end seemed within easy reach. At that moment he had begun a second large cigar in a vague, hazy obstinacy; if anyone had interrupted him to request his return, he would have said in a slow undertone, "You'll be kind enough to go to the devil, will you?"

But he was not interrupted, and the rovers set off, leaving behind only a few ladies, including Mrs. Davilow, who preferred a quiet stroll. The enjoyment of the day was soon at its highest pitch, the archery getting more spirited and the changing scenes of the forest growing lovelier with the lengthening shadows of the mellowing afternoon. Gwendolen felt an excitement – a sense of adventure rather than alarm.

The roving had lasted nearly an hour before the arrival at the Whispering Stones, two tall blocks that leaned toward each other like gigantic grey-mantled figures. They were soon passed by, on the way to a fine grove of beeches, where the archers found plenty of marks.

Suddenly the group seemed to be hurrying forward under the guidance of Mr. Lush, and Gwendolen perceived her opportunity of slipping away. Soon she was out of sight, and without running she seemed to fly along the ground till she was back at the Whispering Stones. They turned their blank grey sides to her: what was on the other side?

Walking round the right-hand stone, she found herself in front of some one whose large dark eyes met hers. Startled, she shrank back, but at the same time perceived that the stranger was a lady, and one who must have been exceedingly handsome. She perceived, also, that a few yards away were two children seated on the grass.

"Miss Harleth?" said the lady.

"Yes." All Gwendolen's consciousness was wonder.

"Have you accepted Mr. Grandcourt?"

"No."

"I have promised to tell you something. And you will promise to keep my secret. You will not tell Mr. Grandcourt, or anyone else, that you have seen me?"

"I promise."

"My name is Lydia Glasher. Mr. Grandcourt ought not to marry anyone but me. I left my husband and child for him nine years ago. Those two children are his, and we have two more, older girls. My husband is dead, and Mr. Grandcourt ought to marry me. He ought to make that boy his heir."

Gwendolen's eyes followed hers to the boy. The handsome, curly-haired little fellow was puffing out his cheeks in trying to blow a tiny trumpet. He was a cherub.

The two women's eyes met again, and Gwendolen said proudly, "I will not interfere with your wishes." She was shivering, and her lips were pale.

"You are very attractive, Miss Harleth. But when he first knew me, I too was young. Since then my life has been broken and embittered. It is not fair that he should be happy and I miserable, and my boy thrust out of sight for another."

These words were uttered biting. Gwendolen felt a sort of terror, as if some ghastly vision had come to her in a dream and said, "I am a woman's life."

"Have you anything more to say to me?" she asked, still proudly and coldly. The revulsion within her did not soften her. Everyone seemed hateful.

"Nothing. You know what I wished you to know. You can inquire about me if you like. My husband was Colonel Glasher."

"Then I will go," said Gwendolen, moving away ceremoniously.

In a few minutes she was in the beech grove again, but her party had gone out of sight. All was solitude till she reached the avenue to Green Arbour, walking rapidly as a means of suspending her thoughts. She had already made up her mind what to do.

Mrs. Davilow was astonished to see Gwendolen returning. To her look of surprise Gwendolen said—

“Oh, I have been rather silly. I lingered behind to look at the Whispering Stones, and I lost sight of the others. I thought it best to come home by the short way. I had had enough walking.”

“Your party did not meet Mr. Grandcourt, I presume,” said Mrs. Arrowpoint.

“No,” said Gwendolen, with a light laugh. “Where can he be? I should think he has fallen into the pool.”

Despite Gwendolen’s resolve not to betray any agitation, her tone was unusually high and hard. Mrs. Arrowpoint thought that the young lady was much piqued, and that Mr. Grandcourt was probably seeing reason to change his mind.

“If you have no objection, mamma, I will order the carriage,” said Gwendolen. By the time the carriage was ready, the roving party reappeared, and with them Mr. Grandcourt.

“Ah, there you are!” said Lord Brackenshaw to Gwendolen. “We thought at first you had met Grandcourt and he had taken you home. Lush said so. But after that we met Grandcourt.”

“You are going?” said Grandcourt, coming up with his usual air.

“Yes,” said Gwendolen, busily arranging her scarf across her shoulders.

“May I call at Offendene tomorrow?”

“Oh yes, if you like,” said Gwendolen, her voice as light and sharp as the first touch of frost.

Before he could lead them to the carriage, she swiftly sprang into it on her own.

“I wished to be on this side, mamma,” she said, apologetically. But she had avoided Grandcourt’s touch: he lifted his hat and walked away, with the not unsatisfactory impression that she was offended by his neglect.

The mother and daughter drove for five minutes in silence. Then Gwendolen said, “I intend to join the Langens at Dover, mamma. I shall pack immediately on getting home, and set off by the early train. We can let them know by telegraph.”

“Good heavens, child! what can be your reason for saying so?”

“My reason for saying it, mamma, is that I mean to do it.”

“But why do you mean to do it?”

“I wish to go away.”

“Is it because you are offended with Mr. Grandcourt’s odd behaviour in walking off to-day?”

“It is useless to ask. I am not going to marry Mr. Grandcourt.”

“What can I tell your uncle, Gwendolen? You led him to believe last night that you had made up your mind in favour of Mr. Grandcourt.”

“I am very sorry, mamma, dear, but I can’t help it,” said Gwendolen, with still harder resistance in her tone. “Whatever you or my uncle think, I shall not alter my resolve, and I shall not tell my reason. I don’t care if I never marry anyone. All men are bad, and I hate them. Don’t interfere with me. If I am to be miserable, let it be by my own choice.”

The helpless mother was reduced to trembling silence. She began to see that the difficulty would be lessened if Gwendolen went away.



And she did go. The packing was done that evening, and early the next day Mrs. Davilow accompanied her daughter to the railway station, whose dingy torpor seemed very melancholy. Gwendolen had hardened in the last twenty-four hours: her reading had somehow not prepared her for this encounter with reality. Mrs. Davilow felt Gwendolen's indifference keenly, and as she drove back alone, the brightening morning was sadder to her than before.

Mr. Grandcourt called that day at Offendene, but nobody was at home.

## Chapter Fifteen

Gwendolen, we have seen, passed her time abroad in the new excitement of gambling, and in imagining herself an empress of luck, having brought from her late experience an impression that in this confused world nothing mattered but to enjoy oneself. We have seen, too, that Grapnell & Co, being also bent on amusing themselves, no matter how, had brought about a painful change in her family circumstances; whence she had returned home – carrying with her a necklace which she had pawned and someone else had redeemed.

While she was going back to England, Grandcourt was coming to find her at Leubronn; coming so entirely without hurry that he was induced to linger at Baden-Baden. Grandcourt's passions were of the intermittent, flickering kind, never flaming out strongly. But a great deal of life goes on without strong passion, and a man may be obstinate at the same low rate, and even show sudden impulses which have an air of daemonic strength because they seem inexplicable.

Grandcourt had not been altogether displeased by Gwendolen's running away. The act had some piquancy for him. He liked to think that it was due to resentment of his cool and careless behaviour in Cardell Chase. To have brought her so near a tender admission, and then to have walked away, was enough to provoke a girl of spirit; and to be worth his mastering it was proper that she should have some spirit. Doubtless she meant him to follow her, and it was what he meant too.

But for a whole week he took no measures toward starting, and did not even inquire where Miss Harleth was gone. Mr. Lush felt a triumph mingled with distrust; for Grandcourt said no word to him about her, and looked as neutral as an alligator; there was no telling what might turn up in the slowly-churning chances of his mind.

The guests at Diplow were curious. How was it that nothing more was heard of Miss Harleth? Was it credible that she had refused Mr. Grandcourt? Lady Flora Hollis, a lively middle-aged woman, learnt that Miss Harleth was gone to Leubronn with some old friends, and mentioned this to Mr. Grandcourt. The next day Grandcourt ordered Lush to break up the party at Diplow by the end of another week, as he meant to go yachting to the Baltic or somewhere.

Lush needed no clearer announcement that Grandcourt was going to Leubronn; but he might go in the manner of a creeping billiard-ball, and stick on the way. Mr. Lush intended to make himself indispensable in order to go too, and he succeeded; Gwendolen's repulsion for him being a fact that merely amused his patron, and made him none the less willing to have Lush always at hand.

This was how it happened that Grandcourt arrived at the *Czarina* Hotel on the fifth day after Gwendolen had left Leubronn, and found there his uncle, Sir Hugo Mallinger, with his family, including Deronda. The meeting was not necessarily a pleasure to either. Sir Hugo was an easy-tempered, tolerant man, but Grandcourt was not a nephew after his own heart; and as the presumptive heir to the Mallinger estates he was the embodiment of Sir Hugo's chief grievance – the lack of a son. For Diplow would not go to his wife and daughters after his death.

This grievance had naturally grown as the years advanced, and Lady Mallinger, after having had three daughters in quick succession, was now over forty. Sir Hugo, almost twenty years older, had begun to despair of a son. Therefore Grandcourt's presence was unwelcome; but Sir Hugo wanted the relation between them to be kept as friendly as possible. He had a plan to secure Diplow as a future residence for Lady

Mallinger and her daughters, and keep this bit of the family inheritance for his own offspring. He hoped that Grandcourt might consent to take a good sum of money in exchange for his interest in Diplow and its land; and this aim made him careful to avoid any quarrel with Grandcourt. They did not hate each other more than was compatible with perfect politeness.

Grandcourt, on his side, thought his uncle a superfluous bore. But Lush had made him aware of the baronet's plans concerning Diplow, and he was gratified to have the possibility of the money in his mind: even if he did not choose to accept it, his sense of power would be flattered by his being able to refuse.

This was one reason why he had asked for a year's tenancy of Diplow, which had rather annoyed Sir Hugo, because the excellent hunting might make Grandcourt decide not to part with it. Also, Lush had hinted to Sir Hugo that Grandcourt would woo and win Miss Arrowpoint, which would free him from the need for ready money. So the baronet felt much curiosity to know how things had been going on at Diplow, was bent on being civil to his nephew, and looked forward to some private chat with Lush.

Between Deronda and Grandcourt there was a peculiar relation, due to circumstances which have yet to be made known. But no one showed any sign of annoyance on the first meeting. The quartet of gentlemen sauntered through the rooms, Sir Hugo saying—

“Did you play much at Baden, Grandcourt?”

“No; I looked on and betted a little.”

“Had you luck?”

“What did I win, Lush?”

“You brought away about two hundred,” said Lush.

“You are not here for the play, then?” said Sir Hugo.

“No; I don't care about play now. It's a confounded strain,” said Grandcourt, whose diamond ring and demeanour were being a good deal stared at by foreigners interested in a new milord.

“I agree with you, my dear fellow,” said Sir Hugo; “I never cared for play. It knits the brain up into meshes. I never stay here more than ten minutes. But where's your gambling beauty, Deronda? Have you seen her lately?”

“She's gone,” said Deronda, curtly.

“An uncommonly fine girl, a perfect Diana,” said Sir Hugo, turning to Grandcourt again. “I saw her winning, as coolly as if she had foreseen it. Deronda happened to see her losing like wildfire, and she bore it with immense pluck. I suppose she was cleaned out, or was wise enough to stop in time. How do you know she's gone?”

“Oh, by the Visitor-list,” said Deronda, with a shrug. “Vandernoodt told me her name was Harleth, and she was with the Baron and Baroness von Langen.”

Lush had already looked at the list, and learnt that Gwendolen had gone, but he had no intention of telling Grandcourt before he asked; and he had not asked.

But now Grandcourt had heard what was rather piquant. After a moment's pause he said to Deronda—

“Do you know the Langens?”

“I have talked with them a little since Miss Harleth left.”

“Where is she gone – do you know?”

“She is gone home,” said Deronda, coldly. But then, from a fresh impulse, he added, “It is possible you know her. Her home is not far from Diplow, at Offendene.”

Deronda, looking straight at Grandcourt, might have been a subject for those old painters who liked contrasts of temperament. His richly-tinted face had a calm intensity that was rather startling, and often made him seem to have spoken, so that servants asked him automatically, "What did you say, sir?" when he had been quite silent. Grandcourt felt an irritation, which he did not show except by a slight movement of the eyelids. But he answered, with his usual drawl, "Yes, I know her," and paused to look at the gambling.

"What of her, eh?" asked Sir Hugo of Lush, as the other three men moved out of the salon.

"He has been on the brink of marrying her," said Lush. "But I hope it's off now. She's a niece of the clergyman at Pennicote. Her mother is a widow with a brood of daughters. This girl will have nothing, and is as dangerous as gunpowder. It would be a foolish marriage. But she has taken a freak against him, for she ran off here without notice. The fact is, he's here after her; although he was in no great hurry, and they are not likely to get together again. But he has lost his chance with the heiress."

When Lush and Grandcourt had departed, Sir Hugo began to Deronda—

"Rather a pretty story. That girl has something in her. She must be worth running after, whether the marriage comes off or not."

"I should hope a marriage like that would not come off," said Deronda, in a tone of disgust.

"What! are you inclined to run after her?" said Sir Hugo.

"On the contrary," said Deronda, "I should rather be inclined to run away from her."

"Why, you would easily cut out Grandcourt. A girl with her spirit would think you the finer match of the two. You won't run after the pretty gambler, then?"

"Decidedly not."

This answer was perfectly truthful; nevertheless it had passed through Deronda's mind that under other circumstances he should have given way to his interest in this girl, and have tried to know more of her. But his history had given him a stronger bias in another direction. He felt himself in no sense free.

## Chapter Sixteen

Deronda's circumstances, indeed, had been exceptional. One early moment had been burned into his life – a moment full of July sunshine and large pink roses shedding petals on a grassy court enclosed on three sides by a Gothic cloister. Imagine him: a boy of thirteen, stretched on the grass, his curly head propped on his arms over a book, while his tutor, also reading, sat on a camp-stool. Deronda's book was Sismondi's "History of the Italian Republics"; the lad had a passion for history. Suddenly he looked at his tutor, saying–

"Mr. Fraser, how was it that the popes and cardinals always had so many nephews?"

The tutor, an able young Scotsman who acted as Sir Hugo Mallinger's secretary, answered with his clear-cut emphatic chant–

"Their own children were called nephews."

"Why?" said Deronda.

"For propriety; because, as you know, priests don't marry, and the children were illegitimate."

Mr. Fraser had already turned his eyes on his book again, while Deronda, as if something had stung him, sat up abruptly.

He had always called Sir Hugo Mallinger his uncle, and when he once asked about his parents, the baronet had answered, "You lost your father and mother when you were quite little; that is why I take care of you." Daniel, trying to remember, had a dim sense of having been kissed very much, and surrounded by thin, scented drapery. Every other memory was of the world in which he lived now.

At that time he did not mind, for he was too fond of Sir Hugo to be sorry for the loss of unknown parents. His uncle was always indulgent and cheerful; Daniel thought him absolutely perfect, and his place was one of the finest in England, a picturesque outgrowth from an abbey. Diplo lay in another county, and was a comparatively landless place; whereas the Mallingers had the grant of Monk's Topping and its land under Henry the Eighth. Two rows of Mallinger ancestors looked down on Daniel as he walked in the gallery: men in armour with pointed beards and arched eyebrows, pinched ladies in hoops and ruffs with no face to speak of; smiling politicians in magnificent wigs, and ladies of the prize-animal kind, till the line ended with Sir Hugo and his younger brother Henleigh.

This last had married Miss Grandcourt, taking her name along with her estates: thus joining two old families, and uniting their advantages in the prospects of that Henleigh Mallinger Grandcourt whom we have already met.

Grandcourt's portrait was one of these; but the other nephew, Daniel Deronda, found in the family faces on the walls no reflection of his own. Still he was handsomer than any of them, and at thirteen appeared the most memorable of boys, whose face would make you believe in the innate nobility of humankind.

But at this moment on the grass among the rose-petals, Daniel Deronda was making a first acquaintance with grief. A new idea was changing his habitual feelings as happy careless voyagers are changed with the sky suddenly threatening danger. He sat perfectly still with his back to the tutor, surveying familiar facts anew.

He had not lived with other boys, and his mind showed the same blending of ignorance with surprising knowledge which is oftener seen in bright girls. Having read Shakespeare as well as a great deal of history, he could have talked with the

wisdom of a bookish child about men who were born out of wedlock and were held unfortunate in consequence. But he had never associated these ideas with his own lot – until this moment, when there darted into his mind the possibility that here was the secret of his own birth, and that the man whom he called uncle was really his father.

Daniel felt the presence of trouble like a new guest with an enigmatic veiled face. The uncle whom he loved dearly became a father who held secrets about him – and what had become of his mother?– secrets about which he, Daniel, could never inquire; for to speak about these new thoughts seemed like falling flakes of fire to his imagination. The impetuous force of these new images took possession of him, and left him no power to reflect that he might be trembling at a fiction of his own. This strong rush of feeling, and his dread of its betrayal, brought big slow tears, which fell until the voice of Mr. Fraser said:

“Daniel, you are sitting on the bent pages of your book.”

Daniel immediately moved the book without turning round, and then rose and walked away into the grounds, where he could dry his tears unobserved. After the first shock, he could remember that he was not certain how things really stood, and that he had been conjecturing about his own history. Only some memories had an obstinate reality, like the fragments of a bridge, telling you unmistakably how the arches lay. His conjectures seemed like a mean offence; for he had great delicacy of feeling.

But at this time he acquired a new sense in relation to all the elements of his life. The idea that others knew things about him which they did not mention, made him reserved and sensitive. He noticed words which before that July day would have passed him by; and round every trivial incident, newly-roused feelings were ready to cluster.

One such incident a month later wrought itself deeply into his life. Daniel had not only a thrilling boy’s soprano voice, but a fine musical instinct, and had worked out accompaniments for himself on the piano. Sir Hugo, who delighted in the boy, used to ask him to sing for guests. One morning after he had been singing “Sweet Echo” before a small party of gentlemen, the baronet said:

“Come here, Dan!”

He came forward with unusual reluctance. His rich colouring was set off by his resistant gravity, and everyone was admiring him.

“What do you say to being a great singer? Should you like to be adored by the world and take the house by storm?”

Daniel reddened instantaneously, and answered with angry decision–

“No; I should hate it!”

“Well, well!” said Sir Hugo, with surprised kindness. But Daniel turned away quickly, left the room, and going to his own chamber threw himself on the broad window-sill.

Here he could see the rain gradually subsiding over a great reach of the park, with old oaks and a green glade. This scene had always been part of his home, and his ardent nature clung to it with affection. He had never supposed that he could be shut out from the world of his uncle. The lad had been stung to the quick by the idea that his uncle – perhaps his father – thought of a career for him which was totally unlike his own, and which he knew very well was not possible for the son of an English gentleman. He had often stayed in London with Sir Hugo, and been taken to the opera to hear the great tenors, so that the image of a singer taking the house by storm was very vivid to him; but now he set himself bitterly against the notion of being dressed up to sing before fine people, who would not care about him except as a wonderful

toy. Sir Hugo's suggestion seemed to Daniel proof that there was something about his birth which meant that he was not a gentleman.

Would his uncle ever tell him everything? He shrank from the prospect, preferring ignorance. If his father had been wicked – Daniel inwardly used strong words for the injury done him – if his father had done any wrong, he wished it might never be spoken of to him: it was already a cutting thought that such knowledge might be in other minds. Daniel fancied that everyone else's mind was as active as his own on a matter which was so vital to him. Did the valet know? – and the housekeeper? – and Banks the bailiff?

He recalled a time when Banks said to his wife with a wink, "He features the mother, eh?" At that time little Daniel had merely thought that Banks made a silly face. But now that small incident became information. How could he be like his mother and not like his father? His mother must have been a Mallinger. But no! His father might have been Sir Hugo's brother and have changed his name, as Mr. Henleigh Mallinger did when he married Miss Grandcourt. But then, why had he never heard Sir Hugo speak of his brother Deronda, as he spoke of his brother Grandcourt? He wished that he could examine the family tree in the library. But he might be seen: and he would never bring himself near even a silent admission of the sore that had opened in him.

In such youthful experiences are the lines of character often laid down. If Daniel had been of a less affectionate nature, the reserve might have turned into a hard, proud antagonism. But he was a loving child, who had always trusted in his uncle.

Who cannot imagine the bitterness of a first suspicion that something in this object of complete love was not quite right? Children demand that their heroes should be flawless.

But some time after this, it appeared that Sir Hugo must have been joking about the singing. He sent for Daniel into the library, and as the boy entered said kindly, "Ah, Dan! Come and sit down here." He drew one of the old embroidered stools close to him.

Daniel obeyed, and Sir Hugo put an affectionate, gentle hand on his shoulder.

"What is it, my boy? Has anything put you out of spirits lately?"

Daniel was determined not to cry, but he could not speak.

"All changes are painful when people have been happy, you know," said Sir Hugo, rubbing the boy's curls gently. "You can't be educated exactly as I wish, without our parting. And I think you will find a great deal to like at school."

This was not what Daniel expected, and was a relief, which gave him spirit to answer–

"Am I to go to school?"

"Yes, I mean you to go to Eton. I wish you to have the education of an English gentleman; and go to a public school in preparation for the university: Cambridge, I hope; it was my own university."

Daniel's colour came and went.

"What do you say, sirrah?" said Sir Hugo, smiling.

"I should like to be a gentleman," said Daniel, with firm distinctness, "and go to school, if that is what a gentleman's son must do."

Sir Hugo watched him silently for a few moments, thinking he understood now why the lad had seemed angry at the notion of becoming a singer. Then he said tenderly–

"So you won't mind about leaving your old Nunc?"

“Yes, I shall,” said Daniel, clasping Sir Hugo’s arm. “But shan’t I come home in the holidays?”

“Oh yes,” said Sir Hugo. “But now I mean you to go to a new tutor, before you go to Eton.”

After this interview Daniel’s spirit rose. He was meant to be a gentleman, and it might be that his conjectures were all wrong. It became plain to him that there must be possibilities of which he knew nothing. He left off brooding and was merry again until he went away.

Things went on very well with Daniel at school, except that a boy with whom he was inclined to make friends talked to him a great deal about his home and parents, and seemed to expect a like expansiveness in return. Daniel shrank into reserve, and this experience checked him from forming any intimate friendship. Everyone set him down as a reserved boy, though he was so good-humoured, quick and unassuming, that nobody called his reserve disagreeable. Certainly his handsome face aided the favourable impression; but in this case, beauty told no falsehood.

A surprise came before his first vacation, strengthening the silent consciousness of a grief within. Sir Hugo wrote that he was married to Miss Raymond, a sweet lady. It would make no difference about his spending the vacation at the Abbey; he would find Lady Mallinger a new friend whom he would be sure to love.

Let Sir Hugo be excused for the mistakes in his behaviour to Deronda. Dullness toward what may be going on in children’s minds is common even in good-natured men. He was aware that Daniel was generally suspected to be his own son. But he was pleased with that suspicion; and he had never imagined how the boy himself might be affected. He was as fond of him as could be, and meant the best by him.

By the time Deronda was ready to go to Cambridge, Lady Mallinger had three daughters – charming babies, all three, but if Sir Hugo had no son the succession must go to his nephew, Grandcourt. Daniel was by now convinced that Sir Hugo was his father, and he conceived that the baronet, since he never spoke on the subject, wished him to have a silent understanding of the fact. Some youths in Deronda’s position might have resented Sir Hugo’s marriage, and scowled at the timid Lady Mallinger and her little ones; but hatred of innocent human obstacles was a moral stupidity not in Deronda’s grain.

In a rare few, sorrow takes the form of fellowship and makes the imagination tender. Deronda’s early susceptibility, charged at first with indignation and resistant pride, made him reflect on certain questions of life; it gave him a sympathy with certain ills which marked him off from other youths.

One day near the end of the long vacation, before his departure to Cambridge, he said to Sir Hugo—

“What do you intend me to be, sir?”

“Whatever your inclination leads you to, my boy. I thought it right to give you the option of the army, but you shut the door on that, and I was glad. I don’t expect you to choose just yet, until you have looked about you a little more. The university has a good wide opening into the forum. There are prizes to be won, and from what I hear, I should think you can take up anything you like. You are in deeper water with your classics than I ever got into; or at Cambridge you can go into mathematics, and disport yourself on the dry sand as much as you like. I floundered along like a carp.”

Daniel, blushing, said, “I suppose I shall have to earn my keep by-and-by.”

“Not exactly. I recommend you not to be extravagant – I know you are not inclined to that. You will have a bachelor’s income. Perhaps I had better tell you that



you will have seven hundred a year. You might make yourself a barrister – be a writer – take up politics. I confess that is what would please me best.”

Deronda looked embarrassed. He ought to express gratitude, but other feelings clogged his tongue. A question about his birth was throbbing within him, and yet it seemed more impossible than ever that the question should be asked – or answered. Sir Hugo’s generosity was the more striking because the baronet had of late cared particularly for money, and for providing for his daughters; and it flashed through Daniel’s mind that his own provision might come in some way from his mother.

Sir Hugo appeared not to notice anything peculiar in Daniel’s manner, and presently went on,

“I am glad you have done some good reading outside your classics, and have got a grip of French and German. And if you have any turn for being a Don, I say nothing against it.”

“I think there’s not much chance of that. I hope you will not be disappointed if I don’t come out with high honours.”

“No, no. I should like you to do yourself credit, but for God’s sake don’t come out as a superior expensive kind of idiot, like young Brecon, who got a Double First, and has been learning to knit braces ever since.”

Daniel had not been the hardest of workers at Eton. Though some kinds of study and reading came easily to him, he was not a first-rate Eton scholar. His yearning after wide knowledge meant he had little ardour for acquiring prizes in narrow tracks. Happily he was modest, and took any second-rateness in himself simply as a fact.

Still Daniel had a rare sympathy, an active imagination on behalf of others which was continually seen in considerate acts. It was a mistake, however, to suppose that he had no ambition. He had suffered keenly from the belief that there was a tinge of dishonour in his lot; but this bred in him a hatred of all injury. He had flashes of fierceness upon occasion, but the occasions were not always what might have been expected. For any resentful impulses had been early checked by his affectionate nature. Love has a habit of saying “Never mind” to angry self, who, sitting down in the lower place, by-and-by gets used to it.

So as Deronda approached manhood, his feeling for Sir Hugo, while it was more mixed with criticism, gained too in tenderness. The dear old beautiful home and everything within it, Lady Mallinger and her little ones included, were sacred to the youth as they had been to the boy – only with a certain difference of light. Still, he was not disposed to escape from ugly scenes; he was more inclined to sit through them and take care of the fellow least able to take care of himself. It had helped to make him popular. For his interest in learning how human miseries are made was so infused with kindness that it easily passed for comradeship.

The impression he made at Cambridge was similar to at Eton. Everyone agreed that he might have taken a high place if he had been more pushing, and if he had not hampered himself with the notion that studies were nourishers of opinion rather than instruments of success. In the beginning, his work at the university had a new zest for him: he applied himself vigorously to mathematics, and delighted to feel his strength in a fresh exercise of thought. That delight determined him to try for a mathematical scholarship in his second year: he wished to gratify Sir Hugo by some achievement.

But here came the old check. He found his inward bent for comprehension diverging more and more from the track marked out by the standards of examination: he felt discontented with the futility of a demand for excessive retention of knowledge without any insight into its connecting principles.

He was tempted to ask Sir Hugo to let him quit Cambridge and pursue a more independent line of study abroad. His old love of universal history made him want to study in foreign countries, following in imagination the travelling students of the middle ages. He longed to have the sort of apprenticeship to life which would not rob him of choice. This hesitation was encouraged because there was no need for him to get an immediate income, or to fit himself in haste for a profession. But the project might not have gone beyond the stage of ineffective brooding, if circumstances had not quickened it into action.

The circumstances arose out of an enthusiastic friendship with a youth in the same year with himself, who had come as an exhibitor from Christ's Hospital. His pinched features and long blonde hair reminded one of quaint heads by early German painters; but when his face was lit up by a joke, there came sudden creases about the mouth and eyes. His father, an engraver, had been dead eleven years, and his mother had three girls to educate and maintain on a meagre income. Hans Meyrick felt himself the pillar, or rather the twisted trunk, round which these feeble climbing plants must cling. He had ability and affection: the ease and quickness with which he studied might serve him to win prizes at Cambridge. The only danger was that his good intentions might be frustrated by his capricious impulses and fits of impish recklessness.

Hans in his right mind, however, was a lovable creature, and in Deronda he found a friend who was likely to stand by him with compassion for these brief aberrations. To Deronda Hans poured out his affairs; the poverty of his home, the itching of his fingers to draw, and his determination to fight it away for the sake of getting money for his beloved mother and sisters. He wanted no confidences in return, but seemed to take Deronda as an Olympian who needed nothing. Deronda gave Meyrick all the attention he claimed, looking after him in his erratic moments, and contriving by delicate devices to make up for his friend's lack of pence.

Such friendship easily becomes tender: the one spreads strong sheltering wings that delight in spreading, the other gets the warm protection which is also a delight. Meyrick was going in for a classical scholarship, and his success was made more probable by the steadying influence of Deronda's friendship.

But Meyrick's imprudence threatened to disappoint his hopes. He had paid too much for an old engraving, and to make up for it, had come from London in a third-class carriage with his eyes exposed to a bitter wind that carried irritating particles. The consequence was a severe inflammation of the eyes, which threatened a lasting injury. Deronda made every other task secondary to that of being companion and eyes to Hans, working with him and for him at his classics, so that if possible his chance of the scholarship might be saved. Hans, to keep the knowledge of his suffering from his mother and sisters, claimed his work as a reason for passing Christmas at Cambridge; and his friend stayed up with him.

Meanwhile Deronda relaxed his hold on his mathematics, until Hans said: "Old fellow, while you are helping me you are risking yourself."

Deronda would not admit that he cared about the risk: he was very anxious that Hans should not miss the much-needed scholarship. Still, when Hans was able to use his own eyes, Deronda tried to recover his lost ground. He failed; but he had the satisfaction of seeing Meyrick win.

The sense of having spent his time working against the grain gave him a distaste for renewing the process, and made him think seriously of quitting Cambridge,

provided Sir Hugo would agree. In speaking of his intention to Meyrick he made it appear that he was glad of the turn events had taken.

Meyrick was uneasy, feeling that in serving him Daniel had placed himself at a disadvantage, and he said mournfully, "You have spoiled your luck for my sake, and I can do nothing to amend it."

"Yes, you can; you are to be a first-rate fellow. I call that an excellent investment of my luck."

"Oh, confound it! You save an ugly mongrel from drowning, and expect him to cut a fine figure." After this, Hans secretly wrote to Sir Hugo, making it plain that but for Deronda's generous devotion he could hardly have failed to win the prize he had been working for.

The two friends went up to town together: Meyrick to rejoice with his family in their little home at Chelsea; Deronda to carry out the less easy task of opening his mind to Sir Hugo. He expected more opposition than he met with. He was received with even warmer kindness than usual, the failure was passed over lightly, and when he detailed his reasons for wishing to quit the university and study abroad, Sir Hugo was meditative rather than surprised. He said, "So you don't want to be an Englishman to the backbone after all?"

"I want to be an Englishman, but I want to understand other points of view."

"I see; you don't want to be turned out in the same mould as every other youngster. I have nothing to say against your doffing some of our national prejudices. I feel the better myself for having spent time abroad. I shall put no veto on your going."

So Deronda went; but not before he had spent some hours with Hans Meyrick, and been introduced to the mother and sisters in the Chelsea home. The shy girls registered every look of their brother's friend, declared by Hans to have been his salvation, a fellow like nobody else. They so thoroughly accepted Deronda as an ideal, that when he was gone the youngest set to work to paint him as Prince Camaralzaman from the *Arabian Nights*.

## Chapter Seventeen

On a fine evening near the end of July, Deronda was rowing on the Thames. It was over a year since he had come back to England, with the understanding that his education was finished, and that he was to take his place in English society; and he had begun to read law, though only in deference to Sir Hugo's wish, and to fence off idleness. His old love of boating had revived; he had a boat at Putney, and it was his chief holiday to row till past sunset and come in with the stars.

Rowing in his dark-blue shirt and skull-cap, his curls closely clipped, the bearded man with the lithe, powerful frame bore only traces of the seraphic boy. Still, even one who had never seen him since his boyhood might have recognised him, due perhaps to the gaze which Gwendolen called "dreadful," though it had really a very mild sort of scrutiny. With his pale-brown skin and calmly penetrating eyes, he was seraphic no longer: the firm gravity of his face was thoroughly terrestrial and manly; but still of a kind to raise belief in human dignity.

Deronda objected very strongly to the notion that his appearance might draw attention. His own face in the glass was associated with thoughts of some one whom he must be like – one about whom he continually wondered, and never dared to ask.

Near Kew Bridge, between six and seven o'clock, the river was no solitude. People were sauntering on the towing-path, and here and there a boat was plying. Deronda had been rowing fast, when, becoming aware of an approaching barge, he guided his boat aside, and paused near the river-bank. He was unconsciously continuing the low-toned chant which he had been singing all the way up the river – the gondolier's song in Rossini's "Otello":–

*"Nessun maggior dolore  
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice  
Nella miseria."*  
"There is no greater sorrow  
Than to be reminded of the happy time  
In misery."

As he rested on his oar, the melodic fall of the "nella miseria" was distinctly audible on the bank. Three or four persons had paused to watch the barge passing the bridge, but probably it was only to one ear that the low singing came with any significance. Deronda saw a few yards away a figure which might have been an impersonation of the misery in his song: a girl hardly more than eighteen, of small, slim figure, with a most delicate little face, her dark curls pushed behind her ears under a large black hat, a long woollen cloak over her shoulders. Her eyes were fixed on the river with a look of immovable, statue-like despair.

This strong arrest of his attention made him cease singing: at which she changed her attitude, and, looking round with a frightened glance, met Deronda's face. It was but a couple of moments, but that seemed a long while for two people to look straight at each other. Her look was something like a fawn's before it turns to run away: no blush, no alarm, but only some timidity. In fact, Deronda thought that she was only half conscious of her surroundings: was she hungry, or was there some other cause? He felt an outleap of interest and compassion toward her; but the next instant she had walked away to a bench under a tree. He had no right to linger and watch her: poorly-

dressed, melancholy women are common sights; it was only the delicate beauty of the image that was exceptional.

He began to row away and was soon far up the river; but he could not expel that pale image of unhappy girlhood. He began speculating on the tale behind her look of desolation; then smiled at his idea that interesting faces must have interesting adventures.

“I should not have forgotten the look of misery even if she had been ugly and vulgar,” he told himself. But there was no denying that the attractiveness of the image made it likelier to last. It was as clear to him as an onyx cameo; the brown-black drapery, the white face with small features and dark, long-lashed eyes. His mind glanced over the girl-tragedies that are going on in the world, hidden, unheeded.

He used his oars little, satisfied to go with the tide and be taken back by it. It was his habit to indulge himself in that solemn passivity which easily comes with the lengthening shadows and mellow light. By the time he had come back again with the tide past Richmond Bridge the sun was near setting: and the approach of his favourite hour – with its deepening stillness and darkening masses of tree between the double glow of the sky and the river – disposed him to linger. He looked for a solitary spot where he could lodge his boat against the bank to watch the sunset.

He chose a place in the bend of the river just opposite Kew Gardens, where he had a great breadth of water before him reflecting the glory of the sky, while he himself was in shadow. Lying with his hands behind his head, he could see all round him, but could not be seen by anyone at a few yards’ distance. He was forgetting everything but the view in front of him, when the sense of something moving on the opposite bank, in the willow bushes, made him glance that way.

At once he had a darting presentiment about the moving figure; and now he could see the small face with the dying sunlight upon it. Fearing to frighten her by a sudden movement, he watched her motionlessly. She looked round, and seeming to gather security from the solitude, hid her hat among the willows, and took off her woollen cloak. She seated herself and deliberately dipped the cloak in the water, holding it there, then taking it out with effort, and rising from her seat. By this time Deronda felt sure that she meant to wrap the wet cloak round her as a drowning shroud; there was no longer time to hesitate about frightening her.

He rose and plied his oar towards her. The poor thing, overcome with terror at this sign of discovery, sank down again, crouching and covering her face as if she kept a faint hope that she had not been seen. But soon he was close to her, steadying his boat against the bank, and speaking very gently–

“Don’t be afraid. You are unhappy. Pray, trust me. Tell me what I can do to help you.”

She raised her head and looked at him. But she did not speak for a few moments, while they renewed their former gaze at each other. At last she said in a low sweet voice, with an accent that suggested foreignness and yet was not foreign, “I saw you before,” and then added dreamily, “*nella miseria*. It was you, singing? *Nessun maggior dolore*.” The mere words uttered in her sweet undertones seemed to give the melody to Deronda’s ear.

“Yes,” he said, “I often sing that. But I fear you will injure yourself staying here. Pray let me carry you in my boat to some place of safety. And that wet cloak – let me take it.”

He would not take it without her leave. He fancied that she shrank and clutched the cloak tenaciously. But her eyes were fixed on him questioningly: she said, "You look good. Perhaps it is God's command."

"Do trust me. Let me help you. I will die before I will let any harm come to you."

She rose from her sitting posture, first dragging the saturated cloak and then letting it fall on the ground – it was too heavy for her tired arms. Her little woman's figure as she laid her delicate chilled hands together one over the other against her waist, was unspeakably touching.

"Great God!" the words escaped Deronda like an unconscious prayer. The agitating impression this forsaken girl was making on him stirred his deepest interest in the fates of women – "perhaps my mother was like this one," he thought.

His low-toned words seemed to reassure the hearer: she stepped close to the boat's side, and Deronda held out his hand, hoping she would let him help her in. She had already put her tiny hand into his when some new thought struck her, and drawing back she said –

"I have nowhere to go – nobody belonging to me in all this land."

"I will take you to a lady who has daughters," said Deronda immediately. He felt a sort of relief in gathering that the wretched home and cruel friends he imagined her to be fleeing from were not near. Still she hesitated, and said more timidly –

"Do you belong to the theatre?"

"No; I have nothing to do with the theatre," said Deronda decidedly. "I will take you to perfect safety with a good woman; I am sure she will be kind. Let us lose no time: you will make yourself ill. Life may still become sweet to you. There are good people who will take care of you."

She stepped in and sat down on the cushions.

"You had a hat," said Deronda. "I will find it."

He jumped out, found the hat, and lifted up the saturated cloak, wringing it and throwing it into the bottom of the boat.

"We must carry the cloak away, to prevent anyone who may have noticed you from thinking you have drowned," he said, cheerfully, as he got in again. "I wish I had any other garment than my coat to offer you. But shall you mind throwing it over your shoulders while we are on the water? It is quite an ordinary thing to do, when people return late and are chilly." He held out the coat with a smile, and there came a faint melancholy smile in answer, as she put it on.

"I have some biscuits – should you like them?" said Deronda.

"No; I cannot eat. I had still some money left to buy bread."

He began to ply his oar without further remark, and they went along swiftly for many minutes without speaking. She was watching the oar, leaning forward in an attitude of repose, as if she were beginning to feel the comfort of returning warmth and the prospect of life instead of death.

The twilight was deepening; the red flush was gone and the little stars were giving their answer one after another. The moon was rising, but was still entangled among the trees and buildings. The light was not such that he could distinctly discern her features, but they were distinctly before him nevertheless. Among his anxieties one was dominant: his first impression that her mind might be disordered, had not been quite dissipated: the project of suicide was unmistakable. He longed to begin a conversation, but hoped she would speak first. At last she did speak.

"I like to listen to the oar."

"So do I."

“If you had not come, I should have been dead now.”

“I cannot bear you to speak of that. I hope you will never be sorry that I came.”

“I cannot see how I shall be glad to live. The *maggior dolore* and the *miseria* have lasted longer than the *tempo felice*.”

Deronda was mute: to question her seemed an unwarrantable freedom; he shrank from appearing to treat her with less respect because she was in distress. She went on musingly—

“I thought it was not wicked. Death and life are one before the Eternal. I know our fathers slew their children and then slew themselves, to keep their souls pure. But now I am commanded to live. I cannot see how I shall live.”

“You will find friends. I will find them for you.”

She shook her head and said mournfully, “Not my mother and brother. I cannot find them.”

“You are English? You speak English perfectly.”

She did not answer immediately, but looked at Deronda again, with wondering timidity, as if she were unsure whether she was dreaming or awake.

“You want to know if I am English?” she said at last.

“I want to know nothing except what you like to tell me,” he said, still uneasy in the fear that her mind was wandering. “Perhaps it is not good for you to talk.”

“I am English-born. But I am a Jewess.”

Deronda was silent, thinking that he might have guessed this, although he could equally have guessed her to be Spanish.

“Do you despise me for it?” she said presently in low, sad tones.

“Why should I? I am not so foolish.”

“I know many Jews are bad.”

“So are many Christians. But I should not think it fair for you to despise me because of that.”

“My mother and brother were good. But I shall never find them. I am come a long way – from abroad. I ran away; but I cannot speak of it. I thought I might find my mother again – God would guide me. But then I despaired. This morning I felt as if one word kept sounding within me – Never! never! But now – I begin – to think—” her words were broken by rising sobs – “I am commanded to live – perhaps we are going to her.”

With an outburst of weeping she buried her head on her knees. He hoped that this passionate weeping might relieve her agitation. Meanwhile he was inwardly picturing in much embarrassment how he should present himself with her in Park Lane. No one kinder and more gentle than Lady Mallinger; but she might not be at home; and he had a shuddering sense of a lackey staring at this delicate, sorrowful girl, and perhaps chilling suspicion from lady’s maid and housekeeper.

But to take her to any other shelter than a home already known to him was not to be contemplated. Another resource came to mind: he could take her to Mrs. Meyrick’s – to the small house at Chelsea, where he felt sure that he could appeal to generous hearts. Hans Meyrick was safe away in Italy, and Deronda felt the comfort of presenting himself with his charge at a house where he would be met by a motherly figure of quakerish neatness, and three girls who hardly knew of any evil beyond what lay in history-books, and would at once associate a lovely Jewess with Rebecca in “Ivanhoe.” Deronda no longer hesitated.

The rumbling thither in the cab after the stillness of the water seemed long. His charge had been quiet since her fit of weeping, and submitted like a tired child. In the cab, she dozed, her sweet head hanging helpless, first on one side, then the other.

“They are too good to have any fear about taking her in,” thought Deronda. Yet what had brought her to this desolation? He was going on a strange errand, to ask shelter for this waif. Deronda felt himself growing older this evening, and entering on a new phase in finding a life to which his own had come: perhaps as rescue; but how to make sure of that? The moment of finding a fellow-creature is often as full of mingled doubt and exultation as the moment of finding an idea.



## Chapter Eighteen

Mrs. Meyrick's house was not noisy: the front parlour looked on the river, and the back on gardens, so that though she was reading aloud to her daughters, the window could be left open to freshen the air of the small double room where a lamp and two candles were burning. The candles were on a table for Kate, who was drawing illustrations for a publisher; Amy and Mab were embroidering satin cushions for "the great world."

Outside, the house looked very narrow and shabby, but many such grim-walled slices of our foggy London are the homes of a culture where poverty has put anything like vulgar display out of the question.

The Meyricks' was a home of that kind: its interior was filled with objects which, for the mother, held memories of her marriage, and for the young ones seemed as necessary and uncriticised a part of their world as the stars. Mrs. Meyrick had stinted on other things so that she might keep some engravings specially cherished by her husband; and the narrow spaces of wall held a world history which the children had early learned by heart. The chairs and tables were also old friends. But in these two little parlours with cheap furniture, there was space for a wide-glancing life, opened to the highest things in music, painting and poetry.

The Meyricks had their little oddities, streaks of eccentricity from the mother's blood as well as the father's, their minds being like mediaeval houses with unexpected recesses and openings. But mother and daughters were all united by a triple bond – family love; admiration for the finest work; and industry. Hans's desire to spend his money in making their lives more luxurious had been resisted by all of them, saving him from regrets over his yearning for art that would by-and-by oblige him to give up his fellowship. It was enough for them to have only a grand treat of opera-going (to the gallery) when Hans came home on a visit.

They were all small, and so in due proportion to their miniature rooms. Mrs. Meyrick was reading aloud from a French book; she was a lively little woman, half French, half Scotch, with a pretty articulateness of speech. Though she was not yet fifty, her rippling hair, covered by a quakerish net cap, was grey; her black dress suited a neat figure hardly five feet high.

The daughters matched the mother. Everything about them was compact, from the firm coils of their hair, to their grey skirts in Puritan nonconformity with the fashion, which at that time would have demanded that four feminine circumferences should fill all the free space in the front parlour. The only large thing of its kind in the room was Hafiz, the Persian cat, comfortably poised on a chair, and opening his eyes now and then to see that the lower animals were not in any mischief.

The book Mrs. Meyrick had before her was Erckmann-Chatrian's *Historie d'un Conscrit*. She had just finished reading aloud, and Mab exclaimed–

"I think that is the finest story in the world."

"Of course, Mab!" said Amy, "it is the last you have heard. Everything that pleases you is the best in its turn."

"It is hardly to be called a story," said Kate. "It is a bit of history brought near us with a strong telescope, so that we can see the soldiers' faces."

"I don't care what you call it," said Mab. "It makes me want to do something good, something grand. I want to take the world in my arms and kiss it. I must kiss you instead, little mother!" She threw her arms round her mother's neck.

“Whenever you are in that mood, Mab, down goes your work,” said Amy.

“Oh!” groaned Mab, stooping to pick it up. “I wish I had three wounded conscripts to take care of.”

“You would spill their beef-tea while you were talking,” said Amy.

“Poor Mab! don’t be hard on her,” said the mother. “Give me the embroidery now, child.”

“Oh!” cried Mab again, rising and stretching her arms. “I wish something wonderful would happen. I feel like the deluge. The waters of the great deep are broken up, and the windows of heaven are opened. I must sit down and play the scales.”

Mab was opening the piano when a cab stopped before the house, and there came a rap of the knocker.

“Dear me!” said Mrs. Meyrick, “it is after ten!” She hastened out, leaving the parlour door open.

“Mr. Deronda!” the girls heard her exclaim. Mab clasped her hands, saying in a whisper, “There now! Something *is* going to happen.” But they could not hear Deronda’s low reply, and Mrs. Meyrick immediately closed the parlour door.

“I know I am trusting to your goodness in an extraordinary way,” Deronda was saying, after giving his brief narrative; “but you can imagine how helpless I feel with this young creature on my hands. I could not take her among strangers, and in her nervous state I should dread taking her into a house full of servants. I have trusted to your mercy.”

“You have honoured me by trusting me. I see your difficulty. Pray bring her in.”

While Deronda went back to the cab, Mrs. Meyrick turned into the parlour and said: “Here is somebody to take care of instead of your wounded conscripts, Mab: a poor girl who was going to drown herself in despair. Mr. Deronda found her just in time to save her. He did not know what else it would be safe to do with her, so he has trusted us and brought her here. It seems she is a Jewess, but quite refined, he says – knowing Italian and music.”

The three girls were wondering and expectant: Mab looked rather awe-stricken at this answer to her wish.

Meanwhile Deronda, returning to the cab where the pale face was gazing out, said, “I have brought you to some of the kindest people in the world: there are daughters like you. It is a happy home. Will you let me take you to them?”

She stepped out obediently, putting her hand in his and forgetting her hat; and when Deronda led her into the light of the parlour, she made a picture that would have stirred much duller sensibilities than the Meyricks’. He put her hand into the mother’s, inwardly rejoicing that the Meyricks were so small: the dark-curved head was the highest among them. The poor wanderer could not be afraid of these gentle faces: and now she was looking at each of them in turn while the mother said, “You must be weary, poor child.”

“We will take care of you – we will comfort you,” cried Mab, caressing the small hand with both her own. This welcoming warmth was penetrating the bewildered one: she said to Mrs. Meyrick, with more collectedness in her sweet tones than he had heard before—

“I am a stranger. I am a Jewess. You might have thought I was wicked.”

“No, we are sure you are good,” burst out Mab.

“We think no evil of you, poor child. You shall be safe with us,” said Mrs. Meyrick. “Come now and sit down. You must have some food, and then you must rest.”

The stranger looked up again at Deronda, who said—

“You will have no more fears with these friends?”

“Oh, I should not fear. I think these are the ministering angels.”

Mrs. Meyrick wanted to lead her to a seat, but hanging back gently, the poor weary thing spoke as if needing to give a further account of herself.

“My name is Mirah Lapidoth. I am come a long way, all the way from Prague by myself. I ran away from dreadful things. I came to find my mother and brother in London. I had been taken from my mother when I was little, but I thought I could find her again. But the houses were all gone – I could not find her. It has been a long while, and I had not much money. That is why I am in distress.”

“Our mother will be good to you,” cried Mab. “See what a nice little mother she is!”

“Do sit down now,” said Kate, moving a chair forward, while Amy ran to get some tea.

Mirah resisted no longer, but seated herself with perfect grace; whereupon Hafiz came forward with tail erect and rubbed himself against her ankles. Deronda felt it was time to go.

“Will you allow me to come and inquire – perhaps at five tomorrow?” he asked Mrs. Meyrick.

“Yes; we shall have had time to make acquaintance then.”

“Good-bye,” said Deronda, looking down at Mirah, and putting out his hand. She rose as she took it, and the moment brought back to them both strongly the other moment when she had first taken that outstretched hand. She said with reverential fervour,

“The God of our fathers bless you and deliver you from all evil as you have delivered me. I did not believe there was any man so good. None before have thought me worthy of the best. You found me poor and miserable, yet you have given me the best.”

Deronda could not speak, but with silent adieux to the Meyricks, hurried away.

### Book III: MAIDENS CHOOSING

#### Chapter Nineteen

To say that Deronda was romantic would be to misrepresent him; but under his calm and somewhat self-repressed exterior there was a fervour which easily found poetry and romance among the events of everyday life. To him this event of finding Mirah was heart-stirring. He sat up half the night, living again the moments since he had first seen Mirah on the river-brink, with the fresh vividness of emotive memory.

When he took up a book, the printed words were no more than a network through which he saw and heard everything as clearly as before – not only the actual events, but possibilities of what had been and what might be, imagined with hope and fear. Something in his own experience caused Mirah's search for her mother to grip his imagination. His first sympathetic instinct was to aid her in her search: there were ways of finding people in London. But here the mixed feelings of Deronda's own experience naturally transfused themselves into his anxiety for Mirah.

His desire to know his own mother, or to know about her, was constantly haunted with dread; and in imagining Mirah's mother and brother, it quickly occurred to him that finding them might turn out to be a calamity. In the boat, she had said that her mother and brother were good; but the goodness might have been chiefly in her own ignorant innocence and longing; and it was ten or twelve years since she had seen them.

Despite his strong tendency to side with the objects of prejudice, Deronda's interest had never been drawn toward Jews, and the facts he knew about them were chiefly of a sort repugnant to him. Of learned and accomplished Jews he took it for granted that they had dropped their religion to merge in with the people of their native lands. Scorn flung at a Jew as such would have roused all his sympathy; but Deronda could not escape (who can?) knowing ugly stories of Jewish characteristics and occupations; and he had never cared to reach any more special conclusions about actual Jews than that they retained the virtues and vices of a long-oppressed race.

But now that Mirah's longing roused his mind, very disagreeable images urged themselves of what this middle-aged Jewess and her son might be. To be sure, Mirah's refinement and charm were in their favour, but – he must wait to know more: perhaps through Mrs. Meyrick. Mirah's voice, her accent, her looks – all the sweet purity that clothed her like a consecrating garment made him shrink from associating her with anything hateful or contaminating. In his mind's eye flashed rapid images of what might be: he saw himself guided down a dingy street; entering through a dim doorway, he saw a hawk-eyed woman, unwashed, cheapening a hungry girl's last bit of finery; or in some other quarter he saw a young Jew talkative and familiar, willing to show his acquaintance with gentlemen's tastes, and not fastidious about any business – and so on, through his brief experience of this kind.

Excuse him: his mind was not apt to run spontaneously into insulting ideas; but he was just now governed by dread, and if Mirah's parents had been Christian, the chief difference would have been that his forebodings would have been fed with wider knowledge. It was the habit of his mind to connect dread with unknown parentage, and in this case as well as his own there was enough uncertainty to make the connection reasonable.

But what was to be done with Mirah? She needed shelter and protection in the fullest sense, and his chivalrous nature felt that the sooner he could engage for her the interest of others besides himself, the better. He had no right to provide for her entirely, though he might be able to do so; he wished that she should understand herself to be entirely independent of him; and vague visions of the future which he tried to dispel as fantastic made him anxious that his friends should be acquainted from the first with the history of his relation to Mirah. He had learned to hate secrecy about the ties and obligations of his life – to hate it the more because he felt unable to break such secrecy.

At one moment he resolved to tell the whole adventure to Sir Hugo and Lady Mallinger the next morning, but the possibility that something new might reveal itself on his next visit to Mrs. Meyrick's checked this impulse. He finally went to sleep having decided that he would wait until that visit had been made.

## Chapter Twenty

Mirah said that she had slept well that night; and when she came down in Mab's black dress, her dark hair curling as it gradually dried after its bath, she looked like one who was beginning to take comfort after the long sorrow which had paled her cheek and made blue semicircles under her eyes. Mab ushered her down – with some pride in the pair of tiny felt slippers which she had rushed out to buy because there were no shoes in the house small enough for Mirah.

“Oh, if you please, mamma!” cried Mab, as Mirah entered the parlour; “look at the slippers, how beautifully they fit!”

Mirah looked down at her own feet in a childlike way and then smiled at Mrs. Meyrick, who said inwardly, “One could hardly imagine this creature having an evil thought. But I should be cautious.” Returning Mirah's smile, she said, “I fear the feet have had to sustain their burden too often lately. But to-day she will rest and be my companion.”

“And she will tell you so many things and I shall not hear them,” grumbled Mab, who had to go to pupils. Kate was already gone to make sketches along the river, and Amy was away on business errands. It was what the mother wished, to be alone with this stranger, whose story must be sorrowful, yet needed to be told.

Soft air came in through the open window of the small front parlour; the walls showed a glorious silent cloud of witnesses – the Virgin soaring amid her cherubic escort; Prophets and Sibyls; the Last Supper; grave Holbein and Rembrandt heads; the Tragic Muse; Italian poets – all there in black and white. The neat mother who had weathered her troubles cheerfully was sorting wool for her embroidery. Hafiz purred on the window-ledge, the clock on the mantelpiece ticked without hurry, and the room was peaceful. Mrs. Meyrick thought that this quiet might invite her companion to speak, and chose not to disturb it. Mirah sat opposite, her hands clasped on her lap, her ankles crossed, her eyes travelling slowly over the objects around her, but finally resting with a sort of reverence on Mrs. Meyrick. At length she began to speak softly.

“I remember my mother's face better than anything; yet I was not seven when I was taken away, and I am nineteen now.”

“I can understand that,” said Mrs. Meyrick. “The earliest things last the longest.”

“Oh, yes, it was the earliest. I think my life began with waking up and loving my mother's face: it was so near to me, and her arms were round me, and she sang to me. One hymn she sang so often: and she taught it me. It was the first I ever sang. They were always Hebrew hymns; and because I never knew the meaning of the words they seemed full of our love and happiness. When I lay in my little bed, she used to bend over me, and sing in a sweet, low voice. I can dream myself back into that time when I am awake, and it often comes back to me in my sleep – my hand is very little, I put it up to her face and she kisses it. Sometimes in my dreams I begin to tremble and think we are both dead; but then I wake up and my hand lies like this, and for a moment I hardly know myself. But if I could see my mother again I should know her.”

“You must expect some change after twelve years,” said Mrs. Meyrick, gently.

“I am sure her heart has been heavy for want of me. But to feel her joy if we could meet again, and I could give her comfort after all her mourning! If that could be, I should be glad that I have lived through my trouble. I did despair. The world seemed miserable and wicked; nobody helped me, I felt that my mother was dead, and death

was the only way to her. But then in the last moment, when I longed for the water to close over me, then goodness came to me, and I felt trust in the living. And – it is strange – but I began to hope that she was living too. And now this morning, peace and hope have come into me like a flood. I can wait; because I hope and believe and am grateful – oh, so grateful! You have not thought evil of me – you have not despised me.”

Mirah spoke with low-toned fervour.

“Many others would have felt as we do, my dear,” said Mrs. Meyrick, feeling a mist come over her eyes as she looked at her work.

“But I did not meet them.”

“How was it that you were taken from your mother?”

“It is dreadful to speak of, yet I must tell you everything. My father took me away. I thought we were only going on a little journey; but we went on board a ship, and got farther and farther away from the land. Then I was ill; and I thought it would never end. But at last we landed. I knew nothing then, and believed my father when he said I should soon go back to my mother. But it was America we had reached, and it was long years before we came back to Europe.

“At first I often asked my father when we were going back; and I tried to learn writing fast, because I wanted to write to my mother; but one day when he found me writing a letter, he took me on his knee and told me that my mother and brother were dead; that was why we did not go back. I remember my brother a little; he carried me once; but he was not always at home. I believed my father when he said that they were dead. I saw them under the earth, with their eyes forever closed. I never thought of its not being true; and I used to cry every night in my bed. Then when she came so often to me, in my sleep, I thought she must be living around me though I could not always see her, and that comforted me. Very often I used to shut my eyes and try to see her and to hear her singing. I came to do that at last without shutting my eyes.”

Mirah paused with a sweet content in her face, while she looked out toward the river.

“Still your father was not unkind to you, I hope,” said Mrs. Meyrick anxiously.

“No; he petted me, and took pains to teach me. He was an actor. He had not always been an actor; he had been a teacher, and knew many languages. His acting was not very good, I think; but he managed the stage, and wrote and translated plays. An Italian Signora, a singer, lived with us a long time. They both taught me, and I had a master besides, who made me learn by heart and recite. I worked hard, though I was so little; I was not nine when I first went on the stage. I could easily learn things, and I was not afraid. But I hated our way of life. My father had money, and we had finery in a disorderly way; always there were men and women coming and going; laughing and disputing, strutting, snapping fingers, jeering – though many petted and caressed me. But I remembered my mother and shrank away into my thoughts; I read plays and poetry, Shakespeare and Schiller, and learned evil and good.

“My father began to believe that I might be a great singer: my voice was considered wonderful for a child; and he had the best teaching for me. But it was painful that he boasted of me, and made me sing for show as if I had been a musical box. I did it without any trouble; but the clapping was hateful to me; and the praise I had seemed hard and unloving: I missed the love and trust I had been born into. I made a life in my own thoughts quite different from everything about me: I chose what seemed to me beautiful out of the plays, and made my world out of it; and it was

like a sharp knife that the two sorts of life jarred so with each other – women seeming good and gentle on the stage, and directly afterwards using coarse, ugly manners.

“Signora said one day, ‘She will never be an artist: she has no notion of being anybody but herself. That does very well now, but by-and-by she will have no more face and action than a singing-bird.’ My father was angry, and they quarrelled. I sat alone and cried, because I saw a long unhappy future before me. I did not want to be an artist; but my father expected it.

“Then Signora left us, and a governess came, but I still acted from time to time. I wished to get away; but I could not tell where to go, and I was afraid of the world. Besides, I felt it would be wrong to leave my father: I dreaded doing wrong and getting wicked. For so long, I had never felt my outside world happy; and if I got wicked I should lose my world of happy thoughts where my mother lived with me. That was my childish notion all through those years. Oh, how long they were!”

Mirah fell to musing again.

“Had you no teaching about your duty?” said Mrs. Meyrick. She did not like to say “religion” – finding herself rather vague as to what the Hebrew religion involved.

“No – only that I ought to do what my father wished. He did not follow our religion at New York. But because my mother used to take me to the synagogue, and I remembered sitting on her knee and looking through the railing and hearing the chanting and singing, I longed to go. Once when I was small I slipped out and tried to find the synagogue, but I lost myself till a peddler questioned me and took me home. My father was very angry, and I had been so frightened that it was long before I thought of venturing out again.

“After Signora left, we went to rooms where our landlady was a practising Jewess. I asked her to take me to the synagogue; and I read in her prayer-books and Bible, and asked her to buy me books of my own, for they seemed a closer companionship with my mother: I knew that she must have looked at the very words and said them. In that way I have come to know a little of our religion, and the history of our people.

“I was sure my mother obeyed her religion, but I had stopped asking my father about her. It is dreadful to say it, but I began to disbelieve him. I found that he did not always tell the truth or keep his promises; and I suspected that my mother and brother were still alive. For in going over the past, I felt sure that my mother had been deceived, and had expected to see us again after a very little while; and my father had told me a falsehood. The cruelty of it sank into me, and I hated all untruth because of it.

“I wrote to my mother secretly: I knew the street, Colman Street, where we lived, and that our name was Cohen then, though my father called us Lapidoth, which was a name of his forefathers in Poland. I sent my letter secretly; but no answer came, and I lost hope. Then my father suddenly told me we were to go to Hamburg, and I was glad. I hoped we might get among a different sort of people, and I knew German quite well. I was thirteen then, and I felt old – I knew so much, and yet so little. But I set myself to obey and suffer: what else could I do?

“One day on our voyage, a new thought came to me. My father sang and joked to amuse people on board, and I overheard a gentleman say, ‘Oh, he is one of those clever Jews – a rascal, I shouldn’t wonder. I wonder what market he means that daughter for.’ Then it darted into my mind that the unhappiness in my life came from my being a Jewess, and that always the world would think little of me and judge me by that name; and it comforted me to believe that my suffering was part of the affliction of my people, my part in the long song of mourning that has been going on



through ages and ages. But you have not rejected me.” Mirah said this last sentence in a different tone of voice.

“And we will try to save you from being judged unjustly by others, my poor child,” said Mrs. Meyrick. “Go on: tell me all.”

“After that we lived in Hamburg and Vienna. I began to study singing again: and my father made money in theatres. He made me rehearse continually, and looked forward to my coming out in the opera. But it seemed that my voice would never be strong enough. My master at Vienna said, ‘Don’t strain it further: it will never do for the public:— it is gold, but a thread of gold dust.’ My father was bitterly disappointed. I knew he was fond of me, and that made me afraid of hurting him; but he always mistook what would please me and give me happiness. It was his nature to take everything lightly; and I soon stopped asking him questions about things that I cared for, because he always turned them off with a joke. He would even ridicule our own people, imitating them to make others laugh.

“Once, I said, ‘Father, you ought not to mimic our own people before Christians who mock them: would it not be bad if I mimicked you, so that they might mock you?’ But he only shrugged and laughed, and said, ‘You couldn’t do it, my dear.’ This mockery made a great wall between me and my father. Is this world like a farce, with no great meanings? Why then are there tragedies and grand operas? I think it is silly to speak of all things as a joke. And I saw that his wishing me to sing the greatest music, was only to fetch the greatest price.

“I did sometimes pity him. He had aged; he was no longer so lively. I thought he seemed less good to others than to me. Sometimes he would sit at home silent and gloomy; or fling himself down and sob. If I asked him what was the matter, he would not answer, but would put his arm round me and go on crying. Oh, I was sorry for him then. I knew he must feel his life bitter, and I pressed my cheek against his head and prayed. Those moments bound me to him; and I used to think how much my mother must have once loved him.

“But soon there came the dreadful time. My father got me singing parts at a theatre in Vienna. I think he spent his own time at a gambling house. I was very miserable. The plays I acted in were detestable to me: it was like a fiery furnace. The glare and the faces, and having to go on and act and sing what I hated, and then to see people who came to stare at me behind the scenes – it was all much worse than when I was little. I went through with it; I had set my mind to obey my father and work. But I felt that my voice was getting weaker.

“Then, in the midst of all this, news came to me that my father had been taken to prison, and had sent for me. He did not tell me why he was there, but he ordered me to go to an address he gave me, to see a Count who would get him released. The address was to some public rooms; I found the Count, and recognized him as a gentleman whom I had seen the other night for the first time behind the scenes. That agitated me, for I remembered his way of looking at me and kissing my hand. But I delivered my errand, and he promised to go immediately to my father, who came home that very evening, bringing the Count.

“I now began to feel a horrible dread of this man, for he worried me with his attentions. His eyes were always on me: when he came to the theatre the next day and wanted to put my shawl around me, a terror took hold of me. The Count walked heavily, and his face was heavy and grave except when he looked at me. He smiled at me, and his smile went through me with horror: I could not tell why. My father praised him to me, saying what a good friend he had been, and when the Count came

again, my father left the room. The Count asked me if I liked being on stage. I said No, I only acted in obedience to my father. Then he told me that I need not act any longer; he wished me to visit him at his beautiful place, where I might be queen of everything. It was difficult for me to speak, I felt so shaken with anger: I could only say, 'I would rather stay on the stage forever.' I hurried out of the room and saw my father sauntering in the passage. My heart was crushed. I went past him and locked myself up.

"Next day my father persuaded me to come out: he said that I had mistaken everything: if I did not come out and act and fulfil my engagement, we should be ruined and he must starve. So I went on acting, and for a week the Count never came near me. My father changed our lodgings, and stayed at home. He began one day to say, I could never go on singing in public – I should lose my voice – I ought to think of my future, and not put nonsensical feelings between me and my fortune. He said, 'You have had a splendid offer and ought to accept it.' I could not speak: a horror took possession of me. I felt for the first time that I should not do wrong to leave him.

"But the next day he told me that we were to go to Prague. It took us two days to get ready; and I thought that I might be obliged to run away from my father, and then I would come to London and try to find my mother. I had a little money, and I sold some things to get more. I packed a few clothes in a little bag, and I kept on the watch. My father's silence about the Count's offer made me feel sure that there was a plan against me. I prayed for help. I had seen what despised women were: and my heart turned against my father, for I saw always behind him that man who made me shudder.

"You will think I had not enough reason for my suspicions, and perhaps I had not; but it seemed to me that my mind had been lit up, and that all was clear and sharp. I could hardly sleep. Throughout our journey I was always on the watch. I feared that my father would suddenly leave me and I should find myself with the Count.

"It was dark when we reached Prague, and difficult to distinguish faces as we drove along the street. I watched everything in spite of the darkness; and when we passed before a great hotel I caught sight of a back that was passing. I knew it – before the face was turned, I knew who it was. Help came to me. I did not sleep that night. I put on my plainest things, and I sat watching for the light and the sound of the doors being unbarred. Some one rose at four o'clock, to go to the railway. That gave me courage. I slipped out, with my little bag under my cloak, and none noticed me. I had been reading the railway guide so that I might learn the way to England; and before the sun had risen I was in the train for Dresden. Then I cried for joy. I did not know whether my money would last out, but I trusted. I could sell the things in my bag, and the little rings in my ears, and I could live on bread only. My only terror was lest my father should follow me. But I never paused. I came on, and on, and on, only eating bread now and then.

"When I got to Brussels I saw that I should not have enough money, and I sold all that I could; but here a strange thing happened. Putting my hand into the pocket of my cloak, I found a half-napoleon. Wondering how it came there, I remembered that on the way from Cologne there was a young workman sitting next to me. I was frightened at everyone, and did not like to be spoken to. At first he tried to talk, but when he saw I did not like it, he left off. It was a long journey; I ate nothing but a bit of bread, and he offered me some of his food, but I refused it. I believe he put that bit of gold in my pocket. Without it I could hardly have got to Dover, and I did walk a

good deal of the way from Dover to London. I knew I should look like a miserable beggar-girl, and I felt it would grieve my mother to see me so.

“As soon as I reached London, I began to ask for Lambeth and Blackfriars Bridge, but they were a long way off, and I went wrong. At last I got to Blackfriars Bridge and asked for Colman Street. People shook their heads. None knew it. A tradesman said, ‘Oh, that’s done away with. The old streets have been pulled down; everything is new.’ I felt as if death had laid a hand on me. I felt blinded, weak and weary, and yet where could I go? I thought I was forsaken. It seemed that I had been in a fever of hope – delirious – all the way from Prague: and now I stood in a strange world. I crossed the bridge and looked along the river.

“People were going on to a steamboat; perhaps that would take me where I could soon find solitude. I bought a loaf when I went on the boat. I wanted to have a little time and strength to think of life and death. How could I live? It seemed that death was the way to find my mother. The boat set me down at a place along the river. I sat down under some trees that I might rest through the night. When I awoke the birds were singing, and the dew was white about me. I felt chill and oh, so lonely!

“I got up and walked along the river. There was no reason why I should go anywhere. The world about me seemed like a vision that was hurrying by while I stood still with my pain. I saw all my life from the beginning; ever since I was carried away from my mother I had felt myself a lost child and used by strangers, who did not care what my life was to me, but only what I could do for them. And now I was lost again, and I dreaded lest any stranger should notice me. I had a terror of the world. What could I do? This life seemed to be closing in upon me with a scorching wall of fire that made me shrink.

“I began to think that my despair was the voice of God telling me to die. Then I thought of my people, how they had been driven from land to land and been afflicted, and multitudes had died of misery in their wandering; and in the wars when Christians were cruellest, our fathers had sometimes slain their children and afterward themselves. That seemed to make it right for me to put an end to my life; but I knew that some held it wrong to hasten their own death, and while I had some strength left I ought to bear it – else where was the good of all my life? It had not been happy since the first years: every morning I used to think, ‘I will bear it.’ But always before I had some hope; now it was gone.

“With these thoughts I wandered, inwardly crying to the Most High, though I had no strong faith that He cared for me. The strength seemed departing from my soul. The more I thought the wearier I got, till it seemed I was not thinking at all, but only the sky and the river and the Eternal God were in my soul. And what was it whether I died or lived? If I lay down to die in the river, was it more than lying down to sleep? I gave myself up to it. I could not bear memories any more; I could only feel a longing to cease from my weary life, and enter the great peace. That was how it was. When the evening came and the sun was gone, a new strength came into me to decide what I would do. You know what I did. You know what happened – did he not tell you? Faith came to me again; I was not forsaken. He told you how he found me?”

Mrs. Meyrick gave no audible answer, but pressed her lips against Mirah’s forehead.

\* \* \*

“She’s just a pearl; the mud has only washed her,” was her closing comment to Deronda that evening, after she had related Mirah’s story with much vividness.

“What is your feeling about a search for this mother?” said Deronda. “Have you no fears? I have, I confess.”

“Oh, I believe the mother’s good,” said Mrs. Meyrick decisively; “or *was* good. She may be dead – that’s my fear. You may know she was good by the scoundrel the father is. Where did the child get her goodness from?”

Deronda was disappointed at this answer, for he had wanted a confirmation of his own judgment; but Mrs. Meyrick admitted that the brother might be an ugly likeness of the father. Then, as to advertising, if the name was Cohen, you might as well advertise for two undescribed terriers. The idea of an advertisement, already mentioned to Mirah, had roused the poor child’s terror; she was convinced that her father would see it. Men might be set to work whose business it was to find missing persons; but Deronda wished to wait before seeking a dubious result; especially as he was soon to go abroad for a couple of months. If a search were made, he would like to be at hand, to help Mrs. Meyrick in meeting any consequences – supposing that she would generously continue to watch over Mirah.

“Of course she will stay here,” said Mrs. Meyrick; “there is Hans’s old room for her.”

“Will she be content to wait?”

“Yes; it is her nature to submit. See how she submitted to that father! It was a wonder to herself how she found the will to run away from him. As to finding her mother, since you were sent to save her, she trusts that her mother will be found in the same unsought way.”

Deronda gave her some money for Mirah’s wants; but she expressed her hope that after a little while Mirah would perhaps like to work as the other girls did, and make herself independent. “We will hurry nothing,” she said. “We will take tender care of her. I will write to let you know how we get on.”

They joined the girls in the other room, where Mirah was seated placidly while the others were telling her about Mr. Deronda’s goodness to Hans.

“Amy says the multiplication-table in his name,” said Mab. “We must all do something in his honour, now he has brought you to us.”

“He is perhaps very high in the world?” asked Mirah.

“He is very much above us in rank,” said Amy.

“I am glad,” said Mirah quietly, “because I have always disliked men of high rank before.”

“Oh, Mr. Deronda is not so very high,” said Kate. “He need not hinder us from thinking ill of the whole peerage if we like.”

When he entered, Mirah rose with a look of grateful reverence, free from either embarrassment or boldness. Her theatrical training had left no trace; she had grown up in her simplicity and truthfulness like a flower. Deronda felt that she was a form of womanhood quite new to him. For Mirah was not childlike from ignorance: her experience of trouble was deeper and stranger than his own.

But he made his visit brief, shrinking from what might seem like curiosity or the assumption of a right to know as much as he pleased about her. He would have liked to hear her sing, but felt it would be rude to ask, since she could not refuse. He wished to show her due reverence.

So Deronda soon took his farewell, and in a few days he was on his way with Sir Hugo and Lady Mallinger to Leubronn. He had told them about Mirah; and the

baronet felt decidedly that the search for the mother and brother had better be let alone.

This was the history of Deronda up to that visit to Leubronn in which he saw Gwendolen Harleth at the gaming-table.

## Chapter Twenty-one

It was half-past ten in the morning when Gwendolen Harleth, after her gloomy journey from Leubronn, arrived at the station near Offendene. No one was awaiting her, for in her impatience she had set off on an earlier train than the one her telegraph had mentioned to her family. Deposited alone on the platform with her trunks, and waiting while a vehicle was being got from the Railway Inn, Gwendolen felt that the dirty paint in the waiting-room matched the dreary prospect opened by her family troubles. The vehicle was a shabby old barouche: such trifles must tell on a fastidious lady with an Indian shawl over her arm, some twenty cubic feet of trunks, and a mortal dislike of her new consciousness of poverty. This ugliness and humiliation was the beginning of being at home again, and a sample of what she must expect.

On this theme her discontent rung its sad changes during her slow drive in the uneasy barouche. She imagined that the family would go abroad again; for of course there must be some little income left – her mamma did not mean that they would have literally nothing. To go to a dull place abroad and live poorly, was the dismal future that threatened her: she imagined herself plunged into dullness with her tedious sisters. But she did not mean to submit to her misfortune. She had not yet quite believed in it, but now it began to affect her like an uncomfortable waking.

The self-delight with which she had kissed her image in the glass had faded before the sense of futility in being anything – charming, clever, resolute – what was the good of it all? Events might turn out anyhow, and men were hateful. Gwendolen had begun to be angry with Grandcourt for being what had hindered her from marrying him, and causing her present dreary lot.

But now the house was in sight. A figure appearing under the portico brought a rush of new, less selfish feeling, and when she saw the dear beautiful face with fresh lines of sadness, she threw her arms round her mother's neck, and for the moment felt only her mother's sorrow.

Behind were the sad faces of the four superfluous girls, each having her own world which was of no importance to anyone else, but all of them feeling Gwendolen's presence to be somehow a relenting of misfortune: where Gwendolen was, something interesting would happen. Even her hurried submission to their kisses, and "Now go away, girls," carried the comfort which weakness finds in decision and authoritativeness. Miss Merry busied herself with the trunks, while Mrs. Davilow and Gwendolen hastened upstairs and shut themselves in the bedroom.

"Never mind, mamma dear," said Gwendolen, tenderly pressing her handkerchief against Mrs. Davilow's tearful cheeks. "Never mind. I don't mind. I will do something. I will be something. Things will come right. It seemed worse because I was away. Come now! you must be glad because I am here."

Gwendolen felt every word of that speech. A rush of tenderness stirred her into generous resolution; and the self-confident projects which had vaguely occurred to her during her journey acquired new definiteness. She seemed to perceive how she could be "something." Her fond mother looked at her with adoration, saying,

"Bless you, my good darling! I can be happy, if you can!"

But later in the day there was an ebb; the old slippery rocks reappeared as Gwendolen's courage shrank. At first, her surroundings still ensured her personal ease: the roomy stillness of the house while she rested; her little luxuries supplied without trouble to her; and a tray of her favourite food brought to her in private. For

she had said, "Keep them all away from us today, mamma. Let you and me be alone together."

When Gwendolen came down into the drawing-room, fresh as a newly-dipped swan, she sat on the settee beside her mamma, prepared to hear everything, and began—

"What have you thought of doing, exactly, mamma?"

"Oh, my dear, we must leave this house. Mr. Haynes most fortunately is glad to rent it. Lord Brackenshaw's agent is to arrange everything."

"I cannot help thinking that Lord Brackenshaw would let you stay here rent-free, mamma," said Gwendolen, who had paid less attention to business than to the admiration excited by her charms.

"My dear child, Lord Brackenshaw is in Scotland, and knows nothing about us. Neither your uncle nor I would choose to apply to him. Besides, what could we do in this house without servants, and without money to warm it? The sooner we are out the better."

"I suppose you mean to go abroad, then?"

"Oh, no, dear, no. How could we travel? You never did learn anything about income and expenses," said Mrs. Davilow, trying to smile.

"But where are we to go?" said Gwendolen, with a trace of sharpness and fear.

"It is all decided. A little furniture is to be got from the rectory – all that can be spared." Mrs. Davilow hesitated, dreading the shock she must give to Gwendolen. "It is Sawyer's Cottage we are to go to."

Gwendolen was silent, paling with anger. Then she said haughtily,

"That is impossible. My uncle ought not to allow that. I will not submit to it."

"My sweet child, your uncle is as kind as he can be: but he is suffering with losses himself; he has his family to bring up. You must remember – we have absolutely nothing except what he and my sister give us. They have been as wise and active as possible, and we must try to earn something. I and the girls are going to work a table-cloth border for the Ladies' Charity at Winchester." Mrs. Davilow said this timidly.

"But surely somewhere else than Sawyer's Cottage might have been found," Gwendolen persisted.

"No, indeed, dear. Houses are scarce. It is not so very bad. There are two little parlours and four bedrooms. You shall sit alone whenever you like."

The ebb of sympathy for her mamma had gone so low just now, that Gwendolen took no notice of these words.

"I cannot conceive that all your property is gone at once, mamma. How can you be sure in so short a time? It is not a week since you wrote to me."

"The first news came much earlier, dear. But I would not spoil your pleasure till it was quite necessary."

"Oh, how vexatious!" said Gwendolen, colouring with fresh anger. "If I had known, I could have brought home the money I had won, instead of staying to lose it. I had nearly two hundred pounds, and we could have lived on it a little while, till I could carry out some plan. Everything has gone against me. People have come near me only to blight me."

Among "people" she was including Deronda. If he had not interfered in her life she would have gone to the gaming-table again, and might have won back her losses.

"We must resign ourselves to the will of Providence, my child," said poor Mrs. Davilow, startled by this revelation of gambling, but not daring to say more. She felt sure that "people" meant Grandcourt, about whom her lips were sealed.

“I don’t call other people’s wickedness Providence. Can’t we go to law and recover our fortune? My uncle ought to take action. We ought to go to law.”

“My dear child, law can never bring back money lost in speculation in that way. Your uncle says it is milk spilled upon the ground. Besides, one must have a fortune to get any law. And we are not the only sufferers: others have to resign themselves besides us.”

“But I don’t resign myself to live at Sawyer’s Cottage and see you working for sixpences. I shall not do it. I shall do what is more befitting our rank and education.”

“I am sure your uncle will approve of that, dear,” said Mrs. Davilow, glad of an unexpected opening for speaking on a difficult subject. “Your uncle and aunt have already heard of something that, with your education, is within your reach.”

“What is that, mamma?” Gwendolen’s anger gave way to interest and romantic conjectures.

“Two situations offer themselves. One is in a bishop’s family, where there are three daughters, and the other is in quite a high class of school; and in both, your French, and music, and dancing – and your manners as a lady, are exactly what is wanted. Each is a hundred a year – and – just for the present,” Mrs. Davilow had become frightened and hesitating – “perhaps you would accept one of the two.”

“What! be a teacher? No.”

“I think, myself, that Dr. Monpert’s would be more suitable. There could be no hardship in a bishop’s family.”

“Excuse me, mamma. There are hardships everywhere for a governess. I don’t see that it would be pleasanter to be looked down on in a bishop’s family than anywhere else. Besides, you know I hate teaching. Fancy me shut up with three awkward girls like Alice! I would rather emigrate.”

What it precisely was to emigrate, Gwendolen was not called on to explain. Mrs. Davilow was mute, thinking with dread of the collision that might happen when Gwendolen met her aunt and uncle. Her daughter’s haughty, resistant speeches implied that she had a plan in reserve, and Mrs. Davilow could not help believing in the force of her will.

“I could sell some ornaments, mamma,” said Gwendolen. “I want a little sum – just to go on with. I dare say Marshall, at Wanchester, would take them: Jocosa might go and ask him. Jocosa is going to leave us, of course. But she might do that first.”

“She would do anything she could, poor, dear soul. She wanted me to take all her savings – her three hundred pounds. I told her to set up a little school with it.”

“Oh, recommend her for the bishop’s daughters,” said Gwendolen, with a sudden laugh. “I am sure she will do better than I should.”

“Do not say such things to your uncle,” said Mrs. Davilow. “He will be hurt at your despising the post he has found. But I dare say you have something else in your mind that he might not disapprove, if you consulted him.”

“There is some one else I want to consult first. Are the Arrowpoints at Quetcham still, and is Herr Klesmer there?”

“The Arrowpoints are at Quetcham. But I don’t know about Herr Klesmer.”

“I will write a note,” said Gwendolen, rising.

“What can you be thinking of, Gwen?” said Mrs. Davilow, relieved by signs of her better humour.

“Don’t mind what, there’s a dear, good mamma, until it is all settled. And then you shall be comforted. Now, now! don’t cry.” Gwendolen kissed the trembling eyelids. “But don’t hinder me. I cannot be dictated to. My life is my own affair. And I



think” – her tone took an edge of scorn – “I think I can do better for you than Sawyer’s Cottage.”

With this, Gwendolen went to a desk where she wrote this note to Klesmer:

‘Miss Harleth presents her compliments to Herr Klesmer, and ventures to request that he will call upon her tomorrow. Unfortunate family circumstances have obliged her to take a course in which she can only turn for advice to the great knowledge of Herr Klesmer.’

“Pray get this sent to Quetcham at once, mamma,” said Gwendolen.

She was in a state of uneasy excitement. If Klesmer was not at Quetcham, what could she do next? Gwendolen’s belief in her star had had some bruises. Things had gone against her. A prospective splendid marriage had shown a hideous flaw. The chances of roulette had not adjusted themselves to her claims; and a strange man had thrust himself between her and her intentions. Gwendolen Harleth, with all her beauty and conscious force, felt the threats of humiliation. If Klesmer were not at Quetcham, that would be all of a piece with the rest.

Still Klesmer might be there, and Gwendolen thought of the result in that case with hope, as if her present troubles were only such as might enter the biography of celebrities and remarkable people. And if she had heard her acquaintances being asked whether they thought her remarkable, a “No” would have surprised her.

## Chapter Twenty-two

Gwendolen's note was put into Klesmer's hands just when he was leaving Quetcham. With some inconvenience to himself, he arranged to spend the night at Wanchester. There were reasons why he would not remain at Quetcham.

That magnificent mansion had in fact become too hot for him, its owners having been astonished at an insurrection against the established order of things, which had been prepared under their very noses.

There were many guests in the house, including one in whom Miss Arrowpoint foresaw a new pretender to her hand: a political man of good family who confidently expected a peerage, and felt that he required a larger fortune to support the title properly. It is taken for granted that an heiress will consider herself an appendage to her fortune, and marry where others think her fortunes ought to go; however, Nature now and then endows her with a clear head and a strong will. The Arrowpoints had already felt some anxiety about their Catherine, and were uneasy at her persistence in declining suitable offers. As to the possibility of her being in love with Klesmer they were not at all uneasy: for the habitual lazy assumptions begotten by our wishes often blind us to the truth.

When there is a passion between an heiress and a proud independent-spirited man, it is difficult for them to come to an understanding; but frequent companionship, with sympathy in taste, has the power to bring them together; especially where the one is a teacher and the other is delightedly conscious of receptive ability which also gives the teacher delight.

But this did not occur to the Arrowpoints when they first engaged Klesmer. Catherine's musical talent demanded every advantage; and she desired to use her time in the country for study. Klesmer was not yet a Liszt, and seemed as safe an inmate as a footman. That Catherine might fall in love with him was as inconceivable as that they could marry.

She was not an acknowledged beauty; but the most powerful beauty is that which reveals itself in sympathy; the word or smile that shows a heart awake to others. What adorableness is there in a mind that can flash out comprehension and hands that can execute finely!

Catherine Arrowpoint had no restlessness to clash with Klesmer's: for all her native kindness, she was coolly firm and self-sustained. The two soon became aware that each was interesting to the other; but the "how far" remained a matter of doubt. Klesmer did not conceive that Miss Arrowpoint was likely to think of him as a possible lover, and she thought herself unlikely to stir more than a friendly regard in any man who was not enamoured of her fortune. Klesmer knew that if Miss Arrowpoint had been poor he would have made ardent love to her instead of sending a storm through the piano. He began to think that he would not visit Quetcham again. Meanwhile Catherine was aware that if it were possible for Klesmer to wish for her hand, she would give it to him.

Enter the expectant peer, Mr. Bult, an esteemed party man of solidity and healthy pinkness. Catherine had nothing to say against him except that he was thoroughly tiresome. Mr. Bult was amiably confident, and had no idea that his insensibility to music could be reckoned against him. Klesmer he hardly regarded in the light of a serious human being; and he was consequently a little amazed at an after-dinner outburst of Klesmer's on the lack of idealism in English politics. Mr. Bult was not

surprised that Klesmer's opinions should be flighty, but was astonished at his command of English idiom, and assumed Klesmer must be a Pole or Czech refugee, or something of that sort. That evening he went up to Klesmer at the piano, and said—

“I had no idea that you were a political man.”

Klesmer folded his arms and stared at Mr. Bult.

“You speak uncommonly well,” continued Mr Bult, “though I don't agree with you. From what you said, I fancy you are a Panslavist.”

“No; my name is Elijah. I am the Wandering Jew,” said Klesmer, flashing a smile at Miss Arrowpoint, and suddenly making a mysterious rush backward and forward on the piano. Mr. Bult felt this buffoonery rather offensive and Polish.

“Herr Klesmer has cosmopolitan ideas,” said Miss Arrowpoint. “He looks forward to a fusion of races.”

“Indeed,” said Mr. Bult graciously. “I was sure he had too much talent to be a mere musician.”

“Sir, you are under some mistake,” said Klesmer, firing up. “No man has too much talent to be a musician. Most men have too little. A creative artist is no more a mere musician than a great statesman is a mere politician. To speak effectively through music is more difficult than parliamentary eloquence.”

With that Klesmer wheeled from the piano and walked away.

Miss Arrowpoint coloured, and Mr. Bult observed, “Your pianist thinks highly of himself.”

“Herr Klesmer is something more than a pianist,” said Miss Arrowpoint apologetically. “He is a great musician, who will rank with Schubert and Mendelssohn.”

“Ah, you ladies understand these things.”

Catherine, always sorry when Klesmer gave himself airs, said to him next day, “Why were you so heated last night with Mr. Bult? He meant no harm.”

“You find no difficulty in tolerating him, then? – you respect a man full of platitudes and as insensible as an ox?”

“I did not say that.”

“You mean that I acted without dignity, and you are offended with me.”

“Now you are slightly nearer the truth,” said Catherine, smiling.

“Then I had better pack my burial-clothes and set off at once.”

“If I have to bear your criticism of my operetta, you should not mind my criticism of your impatience.”

“But I do mind it. You would have wished me to take his ignorant impertinence about a ‘mere musician’ without letting him know his place. I am to hear my gods blasphemed as well as myself insulted. Even you can't understand the wrath of the artist: he is of another caste for you.”

“That is true,” said Catherine, with some betrayal of feeling. “He is of a caste to which I look up – a caste above mine.”

Klesmer started up and walked a little distance, before saying—

“That is finely felt. I am grateful. But I have made up my mind to go, all the same. You can get on exceedingly well without me. I am neglecting my engagements. I must go to St. Petersburg.”

“Certainly. I only wonder that you have given us so much of your time. I have never thought of your consenting to come here as anything other than a sacrifice.”

“Why should I make the sacrifice?” said Klesmer, seating himself at the piano and delicately touching the keys.

“That is the mystery,” said Catherine, in agitation. She was tearing a piece of paper into minute morsels, as if at a task imposed by a cruel fairy.

“You can conceive no motive?”

“None that seems in the least probable.”

“Then I shall tell you. It is because you are to me the chief woman in the world – the throned lady whose colours I carry between my heart and my armour.”

Catherine’s hands trembled so much that she could no longer tear the paper: still less could she speak. Klesmer went on–

“You once said it was your doom to suspect every man who courted you of being an adventurer, and that what made you angriest was men’s assuming you would believe that they courted you for your own sake. Well, at least one man has lingered for your own sake. And since he is one whom you can never marry, you may believe him. I shall go now and pack.” Klesmer rose and walked quickly toward the door.

“You must take this heap of manuscript,” said Catherine, in sudden desperation, rising to fetch the folio sheets. Klesmer turned back, and they stood with the sheets between them.

“Why should I not marry the man who loves me, if I love him?” said Catherine, with an effort something like the leap from the deck into the lifeboat.

“It would be too hard – impossible – you could not carry it through. I am not worth what you would have to encounter. We should be liable to the worst accusations.”

“Is it the accusations you are afraid of? I am afraid of nothing but that we should miss the passing of our lives together.”

The decisive word had been spoken: there was no doubt concerning the end willed by each: there only remained the way of arriving at it, and Catherine determined to take the straightest possible. She went to her father and mother in the library, and told them that she had promised to marry Klesmer.

Mrs. Arrowpoint’s state of mind was pitiable. While Klesmer was seen in the light of a patronized musician, his peculiarities were picturesque: but to see him in the light of her son-in-law gave her a burning sense of what the world would say. Under the first shock she snatched angrily at any phrase that would serve as a weapon.

“If Klesmer has presumed to offer himself to you, your father shall horsewhip him off the premises. Speak, Mr. Arrowpoint.”

The father took his cigar from his mouth, and rose to the occasion by saying, “This will never do, Cath.”

“Do!” cried Mrs. Arrowpoint; “who in their senses ever thought it would do? You might as well say poisoning and strangling will not do. You are mad, Catherine.”

“I am quite sane, mamma, and Herr Klesmer is not to blame. He never thought of marrying me. I found out that he loved me, and told him I would marry him.”

“Leave that unsaid, Catherine,” said Mrs. Arrowpoint, bitterly. “Everyone will say that you have made an offer to a man who has been paid to come to the house – who is nobody knows what – a gypsy, a Jew.”

“No, mamma,” said Catherine, indignant in her turn. “We all know he is a genius, as Tasso was. I am sorry to hurt you; but I will not give up the happiness of my life.”

“You have lost all sense of duty, then? You have forgotten that as our only child, it lies with you to place a great property in the right hands?”

“What are the right hands? My grandfather gained the property in trade.”

“Mr. Arrowpoint, will you sit by and hear this?”

“We expect you to marry a gentleman, Cath,” said the father, exerting himself.

“A woman in your position has serious duties,” said the mother. “Where duty and inclination clash, she must follow duty.”

“I don’t deny that,” said Catherine, getting colder in proportion to her mother’s heat. “But people can easily use the word duty as a name for what they desire anyone else to do. Before I give up my happiness—”

“It will not be your happiness,” said Mrs. Arrowpoint, in her most raven-like tones.

“Before I give it up, I must see some better reason than the wish that I should marry a nobleman. I feel at liberty to marry the man I love, unless some higher duty forbids.”

“And so it does, Catherine, though you are blinded and cannot see it. It is a woman’s duty not to lower herself. Mr. Arrowpoint, will you tell your daughter what is her duty?”

“You must see, Catherine, that Klesmer is not the man for you,” said Mr. Arrowpoint. “He has a deuced foreign look.”

“I really can’t see what that has to do with it, papa.”

“We must do as other people do. We must think of the nation and the public good.”

“I can’t see any public good concerned here, papa,” said Catherine.

“Because you don’t wish to marry a nobleman,” said Mrs Arrowpoint, “you are not obliged to marry a mountebank.”

“I cannot understand the application of such words, mamma.”

“No, I dare say not,” rejoined Mrs. Arrowpoint, with significant scorn. “You have got to a pitch at which we are not likely to understand each other.”

“It can’t be done, Cath,” said Mr. Arrowpoint, more good-humouredly. “A man like Klesmer can’t marry such a property as yours. It can’t be done.”

“It certainly will not be done,” said Mrs. Arrowpoint, imperiously. “Where is the man? Let him be fetched.”

“I cannot fetch him to be insulted,” said Catherine. “Nothing will be achieved by that.”

“I suppose you would wish him to know that in marrying you he will not marry your fortune,” said Mrs. Arrowpoint.

“Certainly; if it were so, I should wish him to know it.”

“Then you had better fetch him.”

Catherine only went into the music-room and said, “Come.” She felt no need to prepare Klesmer.

“Herr Klesmer,” said Mrs. Arrowpoint, with a rather contemptuous stateliness, “it is unnecessary to repeat what has passed between us and our daughter. Mr. Arrowpoint will tell you our resolution.”

“Your marrying is out of the question,” said Mr. Arrowpoint, rather too heavily weighted with his task. “It is a wild scheme altogether.”

“You have taken a base advantage of our confidence,” burst in Mrs. Arrowpoint.

Klesmer made a low bow in silent irony.

“The pretension is ridiculous. You had better give it up and leave the house at once,” continued Mr. Arrowpoint. He wished to do without mentioning the money.

“I can give up nothing without reference to your daughter’s wish,” said Klesmer. “My engagement is to her.”

“We shall never consent to the marriage,” said Mrs Arrowpoint. “If Catherine disobeys us we shall disinherit her.”

“Madam, her fortune has been the only thing I have had to regret about her. But I must ask her if she will not think the sacrifice greater than I am worthy of.”

“It is no sacrifice to me,” said Catherine, “except that I am sorry to hurt my father and mother.”

“You mean to defy us, then?” said Mrs. Arrowpoint.

“I mean to marry Herr Klesmer,” said Catherine firmly.

“He had better not count on our relenting,” said Mrs. Arrowpoint.

“Madam,” said Klesmer, “I consider it out of your power to confer on me anything that I value. My rank as an artist is of my own winning, and I would not exchange it for any other. I am able to maintain your daughter, and I ask for no change in my life but her companionship.”

“You will leave the house,” said Mrs. Arrowpoint.

“I go at once,” said Klesmer, bowing and quitting the room.

“Let there be no misunderstanding, mamma,” said Catherine; “I consider myself engaged to Herr Klesmer, and I intend to marry him.”

The mother turned away and waved her hand in sign of dismissal.

And thus, with nothing settled but the determination of the lovers, Klesmer had left Quetcham.

## Chapter Twenty-three

“Pray go to church, mamma,” said Gwendolen the next morning. “I prefer seeing Herr Klesmer alone. He will be here at eleven.”

“That is hardly correct, I think,” said Mrs. Davilow anxiously. “You would not mind Isabel? She could be reading in a corner.”

“No; she could not: she would bite her nails and stare. It would be too irritating. Trust my judgment, mamma; I must be alone. Take them all to church.”

Gwendolen had her way, of course; only Miss Merry and two of the girls stayed at home, to give the house a look of habitation by sitting at the dining-room windows.

It was a delicious Sunday morning. The melancholy waning sunshine of autumn came mildly through the windows in slanting bands of brightness over the old furniture, the organ at which Gwendolen had acted Saint Cecilia, the antechamber where she wore her Greek dress as Hermione. This last memory was just now very busy in her; for had not Klesmer been struck with admiration of her pose and expression? His reaction was at this moment of the keenest interest for her: perhaps she had never before in her life felt so in need of another person’s opinion. Still she told herself that Klesmer had seen little of her, and any unfavourable conclusion of his must have too narrow a foundation. She really felt clever enough for anything.

The sound of wheels and opening doors increased her inward flutter. In spite of her self-confidence, she dreaded Klesmer as part of that unmanageable world which was independent of her wishes.

Klesmer made his most deferential bow. Gwendolen met him with unusual gravity, saying, “It is most kind of you to come, Herr Klesmer. I hope you have not thought me presumptuous.”

“I took your wish as a command that did me honour,” said Klesmer, with answering gravity. He was really putting aside his own affairs to give his utmost attention to Gwendolen; but he was still in a state of excitation from the events of yesterday.

Gwendolen was under too great a strain to remember formalities. She began without delay.

“I wish to consult you, Herr Klesmer. We have lost all our fortune; we have nothing. I must get my own bread, and I desire to provide for my mamma. The only way I can think of – and I should like it better than anything – is to be an actress on the stage. But, of course, I should like to take a high position, and I thought – if you thought I could” – here Gwendolen became a little more nervous – “it would be better for me to study singing also.”

Klesmer put down his hat upon the piano, and folded his arms as if to concentrate himself.

“I know,” Gwendolen resumed, turning from pale to pink, “I know that my singing is very defective; but I have been ill taught. I could be better taught. And you will understand my wish: to sing and act too, is a much higher position. Naturally, I should wish to take as high rank as I can. And I can rely on your judgment. I am sure you will tell me the truth.”

Gwendolen somehow had the conviction that now she had made this serious appeal the truth would be favourable.

Still Klesmer did not speak. He drew off his gloves, tossed them into his hat, and walked to the other end of the room, filled with compassion for this girl: he wanted to

guard his speech. When he turned again, he looked at her with a mild frown of inquiry, and said gently, "You have never seen anything, I think, of actors and their lives?"

"Oh, no," said Gwendolen.

"You are – pardon me," said Klesmer, "but you are perhaps twenty?"

"I am twenty-one," said Gwendolen, a slight fear rising in her. "Do you think I am too old? Many persons begin later than others."

Klesmer said with more studied gentleness than ever, "You have probably not thought of an artistic career until now: you did not wish yourself an actress, till the present trouble?"

"Not exactly: but I was fond of acting. You saw me, if you remember, in charades, and as Hermione," said Gwendolen, really fearing that Klesmer had forgotten.

"Yes, yes," he answered quickly, "I remember perfectly," and again walked to the other end of the room.

Gwendolen felt that she was being weighed. The delay was unpleasant. But she did not yet conceive that the scale could dip on the wrong side, when she said, "I shall be very much obliged to you for your advice, whatever it may be."

"Miss Harleth," said Klesmer with a slight increase of accent, "I will veil nothing from you in this matter. I should reckon myself guilty if I put you on the wrong road. And if I misled one who is so young, so beautiful – who, I trust, will find her happiness along the right road, I should regard myself as a villain."

Gwendolen felt a sinking of heart under this unexpected solemnity as he went on.

"You are a beautiful young lady – you have been brought up in ease. You have not been called upon to be anything but a charming young lady, whom it is impolite to find fault with."

He paused; then thrusting out his powerful chin, he said,

"With that preparation, you wish to try the life of an artist; a life of arduous, unceasing work, and uncertain praise. Your praise would have to be earned, like your bread; and both would come slowly, scantily. They may hardly come at all."

This discouragement, which Klesmer had hoped might suffice without anything more unpleasant, roused some resistance in Gwendolen. With an air of pique, she said–

"I thought that you, being an artist, would consider the life one of the most honourable and delightful. And if I can do nothing better, I suppose I can put up with the same risks as other people."

"Do nothing better?" said Klesmer, a little fired. "No, my dear Miss Harleth, you could do nothing better. I am not decrying the life of the artist. I am exalting it. An honourable life? Yes. But the honour comes from the inward vocation and the hard-won achievement: there is no honour in donning the life as a livery."

Some excitement of yesterday had revived in Klesmer and hurried him into sterner speech than he had intended. Conscious of this, he paused suddenly. But Gwendolen's impression was that he had not yet denied that she could succeed. Klesmer was prone to fervour; and she wished to assure him that she was not afraid of some preliminary hardships. She believed that on the stage she must produce an effect such as she had been used to feel certain of in private life: and the belief would not be peeled off easily, but with blood and pain. She insisted–

"I am quite prepared to bear hardships at first. Of course no one can become famous all at once. And it is not necessary that every actress or singer should be first–



rate. If you would be so kind as to tell me what steps you would recommend, I shall have the courage to take them.”

Klesmer was convinced now that he must speak plainly.

“I will tell you the steps that will be forced upon you. You must go to town under the protection of your mother. You must put yourself under training – musical, dramatic, theatrical” – here Gwendolen looked as if she were going to speak, but Klesmer lifted up his hand and said, decisively, “I know. You recite and sing for the drawing-room. You must unlearn all that. You have not yet conceived what excellence is: you must unlearn your mistakes. You must know what you have to strive for, and then subdue your mind and body to unbroken discipline. For you must not be thinking of celebrity: put that candle out of your eyes, and look only at excellence. You would of course earn nothing – you could get no engagement for a long while. You would need money. But that could perhaps be found.”

Gwendolen turned pink and then pale during this speech. Her pride had felt a terrible knife-edge. She wished that she had not sent for him: this first experience of being taken on some other ground than that of her social rank and her beauty was becoming bitter. Klesmer went on.

“Now, what sort of result might be fairly expected from this self-denial? I will tell you truthfully. The result would be uncertain, and probably would not be worth much.”

Gwendolen’s eyes began to burn, but the dread of showing weakness urged her to self-control. She said in a hard tone –

“You think I want talent, or am too old to begin.”

“Yes! The desire and the training should have begun seven years ago, or earlier. A mountebank’s child who helps her father to earn shillings when she is six – a child that learns to sing as it learns to talk, has a likelier beginning. Genius at first is little more than a great capacity for receiving discipline, and patient practice. Singing and acting require a shaping of the organs toward a finer certainty of effect. Your muscles – your whole frame – must go like a watch, true to a hair. That is the work of youth.”

“I did not pretend to genius,” said Gwendolen, still feeling that she might somehow do what he said was impossible. “I only suppose that I might have a little talent – enough to improve.”

“I don’t deny that,” said Klesmer. “If you had been put in the right track some years ago and had worked well, you might now have made a public singer, though I don’t think your voice would have counted for much. For the stage your personal charms and intelligence might then have told.”

Klesmer seemed cruel, but his feeling was the reverse of cruel. He was directed by compassion for poor Gwendolen, so ignorantly eager to enter on a course of which he saw all the miserable details.

Gwendolen, however, was not convinced. Her self-opinion rallied, and since her counsellor was so severe, she was tempted to think that his judgment was fallible and biased. It occurred to her that it would have been simpler and wiser for her to have written to the manager of a London theatre, asking to make an appointment. Klesmer, she saw, had set himself against her singing. But she felt equal to arguing about her acting, and she answered in a resistant tone –

“I understood, of course, that no one can be a finished actress at once. It may be impossible to tell beforehand whether I should succeed; but I could try. I could take an engagement at a theatre meanwhile, so as to earn money and study at the same time.”

“Can’t be done, my dear Miss Harleth. I must clear your mind of these notions which have no more resemblance to reality than a pantomime. With all your grace and charm, if you were to present yourself as an aspirant to the stage, a manager would either require you to pay as an amateur for being allowed to perform, or he would tell you to go and be taught. An actor must study to personate a character consistently, and animate it with the natural language of face, gesture, and tone. For you to get an engagement fit for you straight away is out of the question.”

“I really cannot understand that,” said Gwendolen, rather haughtily. “How is it that such poor actresses get engaged? I have been to the theatre several times, and I am sure there were actresses who seemed to me to act not at all well and who were quite plain.”

“Ah, my dear Miss Harleth, excuse me; you could not at present teach one of those actresses; but there is certainly much that she could teach you. Ten to one you could not pitch your voice so as to be heard: and merely to stand and move on the stage requires practice.”

“I think I could soon learn to do it tolerably well. I am not so very stupid. And even in Paris, I saw two actresses playing important ladies’ parts who were not at all ladies and quite ugly. I suppose I have no particular talent, but I must think it is an advantage, even on the stage, to be a lady and not a perfect fright.”

“Ah, let us understand each other,” said Klesmer, with a flash of new meaning. “I was speaking of what you would have to go through if you aimed at becoming a real artist and striving after excellence. On that head, you would find mortifications: you would be subjected to tests, and judged without flattery. You would have to bear insignificance: any success must be won by the utmost patience. If you determine to face these hardships, you will have the dignity of a high purpose, even though you may have chosen unfortunately. You will have some merit, though you may win no prize. You have asked my judgment on your chances of winning. I don’t pretend to speak absolutely; but measuring probabilities, my judgment is that you will hardly achieve more than mediocrity.”

Klesmer now paused a moment. Gwendolen was motionless, looking at her hands.

“But”— he resumed— “there are certainly other ideas with which a young lady may take up an art that will bring her before the public. She may rely on the unquestioned power of her beauty as a passport. She may desire to exhibit herself to an admiration which dispenses with skill. This goes a certain way on the stage: not in music: but on the stage, beauty is taken when there is nothing more commanding to be had. Not without some drilling, however: as I have said, technicalities have to be mastered. But the woman who takes up this career is not an artist: she usually thinks of entering a luxurious life by a short and easy road – perhaps by marriage. Still, her career will not be luxurious to begin with: she can hardly earn her own bread at once, and the indignities she will be liable to are such as I will not speak of.”

“I desire to be independent,” said Gwendolen, deeply stung and confusedly apprehending some scorn for herself in Klesmer’s words. “Of course I cannot know how things go on in theatres. But I thought that I could have made myself independent. I have no money, and I will not accept help from anyone.”

“I have given you pain,” said Klesmer gently. “But I was bound to put the unvarnished truth before you. I will not say you will do wrong to choose the hard, climbing path of an artist. If you take that courageous resolve I will ask leave to shake hands with you on the strength of our freemasonry, where we are all vowed to the service of art.”

Gwendolen was silent, looking down. She felt herself very far from taking the resolve; and after a moment, Klesmer went on with deepened seriousness.

“Excuse my mentioning in confidence an affair of my own. I am expecting an event which would make it easy for me to exert myself on your behalf, by arranging for your instruction and residence in London, under the care of your family. If you resolve to study the art, you need only undertake the study at first; your bread will be found without trouble. The event I mean is my marriage with Miss Arrowpoint. Your friendship will have greatly risen in value for *her* by your having adopted that generous labour.”

Gwendolen’s face began to burn. That Klesmer was about to marry Miss Arrowpoint caused her no surprise, and at another time she would have amused herself in imagining the scenes at Quetcham. But she saw only the picture of her own future that Klesmer’s words unfolded. The suggestion of Miss Arrowpoint as a patroness, and Klesmer’s proposal to help her, were irritations after his humiliating judgment on her abilities. His words had bitten into her self-confidence; and the idea of presenting herself before other judges was now poisoned with the dread that they also might be harsh, and fail to recognize her talent. But she controlled herself, and went to the piano before answering. At last she turned toward Klesmer and said, with almost her usual air of proud equality,

“I congratulate you sincerely, Herr Klesmer. I never saw anyone so admirable as Miss Arrowpoint. And I thank you for your kindness this morning. But I can’t decide now. If I make the resolve you have spoken of, I will let you know. But I fear the obstacles are too great. In any case, I am deeply obliged to you.”

Klesmer’s inward remark was, “She will never let me know.” But with the utmost respect, he said, “Command me at any time. The address on this card will always find me.” He took up his hat.

Gwendolen’s better self, conscious of ingratitude, made a desperate effort to rise above the stifling layers of egoistic disappointment. She said with a smile, “If I take the wrong road, it will not be because of your flattery.”

“God forbid that you should take any road but one to happiness!” said Klesmer, fervently. Then he touched her fingers lightly with his lips, and left.

Gwendolen had never felt so miserable. Her eyes were burning; and she saw with dreary clearness the absence of interest from her life. All memories, all objects, the pieces of music displayed, the piano, seemed no better than the packed-up shows of a departing fair. For the first time she had lost the innate sense of her superiority. She threw herself onto the settee, and pressed her fingers over her eyelids. Every word of Klesmer’s seemed branded into her memory.

Only a few hours before, she had contentedly imagined a future suited to her wishes: in a year or so she would become the most approved Juliet of the time: or would proceed by gradual steps to her place in the opera, while she won money and applause by occasional performances. Why not? At home, at school, among acquaintances, she had been used to have her superiority admitted; and she had moved in a society where everything is of the amateur kind, only falling short of perfection because gentlemen and ladies are not obliged to do more than they like.

She had at least shown some sense in consulting the person who knew the most and had flattered her the least. In asking Klesmer’s advice, however, she had been borne up by a belief in his latent admiration rather than a wish to know anything more unfavourable than slight objections; and the truth she had asked for, expecting it to be agreeable, had come like a lacerating blow.

“Too old – should have begun seven years ago – will not achieve more than mediocrity – incessant work, uncertain praise, little earnings – mortifications, insignificance” – these phrases rankled; and even more galling was the hint that she could only be accepted on the stage as a beauty hoping for a husband. The “indignities” that she might incur had no very definite form for her, but the mere word “indignity” roused a resentful alarm. And how could she take her mamma and four sisters to London, if she were not earning money at once? As for submitting to be the protégé of Miss Arrowpoint, that was as bad as being a governess. It was over: she had entertained a mistaken hope; and there was an end of it.

“An end of it!” said Gwendolen aloud, starting up as she heard the voices of her mamma and sisters coming in from church. She hurried to the piano and began to rearrange her music.

“Well, my darling,” said gentle Mrs. Davilow, “were you satisfied with your interview with Klesmer?” She had some guesses as to its object.

“Satisfied, mamma? oh, yes,” said Gwendolen, in a high, hard tone. She had set herself resolutely to feign proud indifference, lest she fall into a passionate outburst of despair.

“Your uncle and aunt were disappointed at not seeing you,” said Mrs. Davilow. “I said that you wanted rest.”

“Quite right, mamma,” said Gwendolen, in the same tone, turning to put away some music.

“Am I not to know anything now, Gwendolen? Am I always to be in the dark?” said Mrs. Davilow, in fear that something painful had occurred.

“There is really nothing to tell, mamma,” said Gwendolen, in a still higher voice. “I had a mistaken idea about something I could do. Herr Klesmer has undeceived me. That is all.”

“Don’t look and speak in that way, my dear child: I cannot bear it,” said Mrs. Davilow, breaking down. Gwendolen looked at her a moment in silence, then, putting her hands on her mamma’s shoulders, said in an undertone, “Mamma, it is useless to cry over what can’t be altered. You will live at Sawyer’s Cottage, and I am going to the bishop’s daughters. There is no more to be said. We must try not to care. We must not give way. I dread giving way. Help me to be quiet.”

Mrs. Davilow’s tears were arrested; and she went away in silence.

## Chapter Twenty-four

Gwendolen was glad that she had got through her interview with Klesmer before meeting her uncle and aunt. She had decided that there were only disagreeables before her, and she felt able to maintain a dogged calm in the face of any humiliation that might be proposed.

She went to the rectory with her mamma. They called at Sawyer's Cottage on the way, and saw the narrow rooms unsoftened by blinds and curtains; for the furnishing to be done by gleanings from the rectory had not yet begun.

"How shall you endure it, mamma?" said Gwendolen, as they walked away. She had been silent as they looked round at the bare rooms, the little garden with the cabbage-stalks, and the dusty yew arbour. "You and the four girls in that closet of a room? And without me?"

"It will be some comfort that you have not to bear it too, dear."

"I would rather be there than be a governess."

"Don't set yourself against it beforehand, Gwendolen. At the bishop's palace you will have every luxury about you, and you have always cared for that. You will not find it so hard as going up and down those narrow stairs, with the noise carrying through the house."

"It is like a bad dream," said Gwendolen, impetuously. "I cannot believe that my uncle will let you go there. He ought to have taken some other steps."

"What could he have done?"

"That was for him to find out. It seems to me a very extraordinary world if people in our position must sink in this way all at once," said Gwendolen.

But despite the keen sense of her own bruises, she felt some compunction when her uncle and aunt received her with affection and kindness. She was struck by the dignified cheerfulness with which they talked of the economies they must make. Mr. Gascoigne's worth of character showed itself to great advantage under this sudden reduction of fortune. Prompt and methodical, he had decided not only to put down his carriage, but to reconsider his worn suits of clothes, to leave off meat for breakfast, to do without periodicals, to teach his boys himself, and to order his establishment on the sparest footing possible.

The rector's spirit had spread through the household. Mrs. Gascoigne and Anna did not miss anything they cared about, and sincerely felt that the saddest part of the family losses was the change for Mrs. Davilow and her children.

Anna submerged her resentment on behalf of Rex in her sympathy with Gwendolen; and Mrs. Gascoigne hoped privately that trouble would have a salutary effect on her niece. They had both been busy devising how to get curtains for the cottage out of the household stores; but with delicate feeling they left these matters in the background, and talked at first of Gwendolen's journey, and the comfort it was to her mamma to have her at home again.

Her uncle then began to tell her of his efforts to get her a situation with as many advantages as possible.

"I felt that there was no time to be lost, Gwendolen; for a position in a good family is not to be had at a moment's notice. And you would hardly find a better one than at Bishop Mompert's. I am known to both him and Mrs. Mompert; she wishes to see you before making an absolute engagement. She thinks of arranging for you to meet her at Wanchester."

“Do you know why she wants to see me, uncle?” said Gwendolen, whose mind had quickly gone over various disagreeable reasons.

The rector smiled. “Don’t be alarmed, my dear. She would like to have a more precise idea of you than my report can give. A mother is naturally scrupulous about a companion for her daughters. She is a woman of taste and also of strict principle, and closely supervises her daughters’ education. I feel sure that she will think your manners and accomplishments as good as she is likely to find.”

Gwendolen dared not answer, but her dislike to the whole prospect made her flush deeply. Anna tenderly put her hand into her cousin’s, and Mr. Gascoigne was too kind not to understand what a trial this sudden change must be. Bent on cheerfulness, he went on—

“I should have been tempted to try and get the position for Anna, if she had been likely to meet Mrs. Mompert’s wants. It is really a home, with a continuance of education in the highest sense. The bishop’s views are more decidedly Low Church than my own; but though privately strict, he is not by any means narrow in public matters. He has always been friendly to me, though before his promotion, we had a little controversy about the Bible Society.”

The rector’s words were too full of satisfactory meaning to himself for him to imagine the effect they produced on his niece. “Bishop’s views” – “privately strict” – “Bible Society,” – it was as if he had introduced a few snakes into the conversation. Gwendolen, shrinking from the prospect, began desperately to seek an alternative.

“There was another situation, I think, mamma spoke of?”

“Yes,” said the rector, in rather a depreciatory tone; “but that is in a school. It would be much harder work, and not so good in other respects.”

“Oh dear no,” said Mrs. Gascoigne. “You might not have a bedroom to yourself.”

Gwendolen said, apparently in acceptance, “When is Mrs. Mompert likely to send for me?”

“Within the next fortnight, probably. But I must be off now.” The rector left the room with the cheerful conviction that Gwendolen was going to act like a girl of good sense.

“What a prop Henry is to us all!” said Mrs. Gascoigne. “And Rex is just like him. We have had such comfort in a letter from him. I must read you a little bit.” She took the letter from her pocket, while Anna looked rather frightened, as she never mentioned Rex before Gwendolen.

But her mother apparently found no sentences to read aloud that were free from difficult allusions, for she folded up the letter, saying—

“He tells us that our trouble has made a man of him; he means to work for a fellowship, to take pupils, and to set one of his brothers going. The letter is full of fun, just like him. He says, ‘Tell mother she has put out an advertisement for a jolly good hard-working son, and I offer myself for the place.’ I never saw my husband so much moved by anything as this letter. It seemed a gain to balance our loss.”

This letter, in fact, was what had helped both Mrs. Gascoigne and Anna to show Gwendolen an unmixed kindness; and she herself felt glad. She had no egoistic pleasure in making men miserable. She only had an intense objection to their making her miserable.

But when the talk turned on furniture for the cottage, Gwendolen could not show even a languid interest. She thought that she had done as much as could be expected of her this morning, and indeed felt heroic in keeping her internal struggle to herself. She recoiled from the prospect of meeting Mrs. Mompert; even as a governess, she

was to be tested and was liable to rejection. After she had done herself the violence to accept the bishop and his wife, they were still to consider whether they would accept her. And when she had entered on her dismal task of edifying the three girls, there was always to be Mrs. Mompert's supervision.

Gwendolen, used to the social successes of a handsome girl, whose lively, venturesome talk has the effect of wit, saw the life before her as an entrance into a penitentiary. She felt a growing rebellion against this hard necessity which had come just to her of all people in the world – to her, who was meant for something quite different. The family troubles, she thought, were easier for everyone than for her. If she went to the Momperts', her talents would never be recognized as anything remarkable.

Some girls, who had read romances where even plain governesses are sought in marriage, might have solaced themselves a little by such pictures; but even if Gwendolen was inclined to dwell on love-making as her elysium, her heart was too much oppressed. She saw no reason why she should wish to live. No religious view of trouble helped her: her troubles had in her opinion all been caused by other people's conduct; and there was really nothing pleasant to be counted on in the world.

As to the sweetness of labour, the interest of activity, the impersonal delights of life as a perpetual discovery, the dues of fortitude and industry, the supreme worth of the teacher's vocation; – these doctrines could have barely touched her: the only fact that mattered was that for a lady to become a governess was to descend in life. We should pity a young creature who has the labyrinth of life before her and no clue as to how to navigate it.

In spite of her healthy frame, she felt a sort of numbness and could set about nothing; the least urgency was an irritation to her; the speech of others on any subject seemed unreasonable, because it did not include her feeling. It was not in her nature to busy herself with fancies of suicide: what exasperated her was the sense that there was nothing for her but to live in a way she hated. She could not exert herself to visit the Gascoignes or to show interest about the furniture of the horrible cottage. Miss Merry was staying to help; such people as Jocosa liked that sort of thing. Her mother had to make excuses for her. The calm which Gwendolen had promised herself to maintain had changed into sick motivelessness: she thought, "I suppose I shall begin to pretend by-and-by, but why should I do it now?"

Her mother watched her with silent distress, wishing only that she could make her darling less miserable.

One day when Gwendolen was in the bedroom with her mother, she suddenly roused herself to fetch the casket which contained the ornaments.

"Mamma," she began, "I had forgotten these things. Do see about getting them sold."

"I would rather keep them for you, darling," said Mrs. Davilow, relieved that Gwendolen was beginning to talk about something. "Why, how came you to put that handkerchief in here?" It was the handkerchief with the corner torn off which Gwendolen had thrust in with the turquoise necklace.

"It happened to be with the necklace – I was in a hurry. Don't sell the necklace, mamma," she said, a new feeling coming over her about that rescue of it which had formerly been so offensive.

"No, dear. And I should prefer not selling the other things. None of them are valuable. All my best ornaments were taken from me long ago." Mrs. Davilow

coloured, for she usually avoided any such reference to Gwendolen's step-father, who had disposed of his wife's jewellery. "Take these things with you," she said.

"That would be quite useless, mamma," said Gwendolen, coldly. "Governesses don't wear ornaments. You had better get me a straw poke hat, such as charity children wear."

"No, dear, don't take that view. I feel sure the Momperts will like you to be graceful and elegant."

"I am not at all sure what the Momperts will like me to be. It is enough that I am expected to be what they like," said Gwendolen bitterly.

"If there is anything you would object to less than going to the bishop's, do tell me, Gwendolen. I will try for anything you wish," beseeched her mother.

"Oh, mamma, there is nothing to tell. I must think myself fortunate if they will have me. I shall get some money for you, at least. I shall not spend any money this year: you will have all the eighty pounds. I don't know how far that will go in housekeeping; but you need not stitch your poor fingers to the bone." Gwendolen did not even look at her mother, but at the turquoise necklace as she turned it over her fingers.

"Bless you, my good darling!" said Mrs. Davilow, with tears in her eyes. "Don't despair. There may be great happiness in store for you yet."

"I don't see any reason for expecting it, mamma," said Gwendolen, in a hard tone; and Mrs. Davilow was silent, thinking as she had often thought before – "What did happen between her and Mr. Grandcourt?"

"I will keep this necklace, mamma," said Gwendolen, laying it aside. "But do get the other things sold, even if they will not bring much."

She wrapped the torn handkerchief around the necklace. Mrs. Davilow observed this with surprise, but felt unable to ask any question.

Gwendolen was possessed by a spirit of general disappointment. It was not simply that she had a distaste for what she was called on to do: the distaste spread itself over the world.

But the movement of mind which led her to keep the necklace, folded up in the handkerchief, was more peculiar. It came from that streak of superstition in her which attached itself both to her confidence and her terror – a superstition which lingers in an intense personality in spite of science. Why she should suddenly determine not to part with the necklace was not clear to her: she had a confused state of emotion about Deronda. Was it wounded pride and resentment, or a certain awe and trust? It was something vague and yet mastering, which impelled her to this action.



## Chapter Twenty-five

When Grandcourt learnt that Gwendolen had left Leubronn, he pronounced that resort a beastly hole: which Mr. Lush understood to mean that his patron intended straightway to return to Diplow. Still, Grandcourt loitered through the next day without giving any orders about leaving; he lingered on the terrace, in the gambling-rooms, in the reading-room, occupying himself in being indifferent to everybody and everything around him.

When he met Lady Mallinger, however, he took the trouble to raise his hat and make conversation. Lady Mallinger had a secret objection to Grandcourt, who she felt was a large living sign of her failure as a wife in not having presented Sir Hugo with a son.

Deronda, too, had a greeting from Grandcourt, for which he was not grateful, though he took care to return it with perfect civility. Thinking that but for his father's fault, Grandcourt's prospects might have been his, he was proudly resolute not to behave in any way that might be interpreted as irritation on that score. He was determined not to descend into rancour, but to cling to kindlier affections.

Nonetheless Grandcourt did believe that Deronda, poor devil, who he had no doubt was his cousin, inwardly winced under their mutual position; which made Deronda's presence agreeable to him. His pet dogs were not the only beings that Grandcourt liked to feel his power over by making them jealous. Hence he exchanged civil words with Deronda on the terrace about the hunting round Diplow, and even said, "You had better come over when the season begins."

Lush amused himself in gossiping with Sir Hugo and in answering his questions about Grandcourt's affairs, enjoying speaking freely of a tyrannous patron behind his back. Sir Hugo willingly inclined his ear to a little good-humoured scandal, but kept any gossip to himself. Whatever knowledge he had of his nephew's secrets, he had never told Deronda.

"Well, let me know the turn of events," said Sir Hugo to Lush, "if this marriage seems likely to come off after all, or if anything else happens to make him want money. My plan for him to rent Diplow to me would be better than burdening Ryelands."

"That's true," said Lush, "only it must not be urged on him – just placed in his way that the scent may tickle him. Grandcourt is not a man to be led by what makes for his own benefit; especially if you let him see that it benefits you too. I've kept by him for a good fifteen years now. He would not easily get anyone else to fill my place. He's a peculiar character, is Henleigh Grandcourt; however, I'm attached to him; and it would be a good deal worse for him without me."

Grandcourt's procrastination ended the next morning with his question–

"Are you making the arrangements for our starting by the Paris train?"

"I didn't know you meant to start," said Lush.

"You might have known," said Grandcourt, looking at his cigar, and speaking in that lowered tone which he used to express disgust. "Just see to everything, will you? and mind no brute gets into the same carriage with us."

In consequence they were at Paris the next day; but here Lush was gratified by the command that he should go straight on to Diplow and see that everything was right, while Grandcourt remained behind for several days.

Lush used the interim actively, not only in carrying out Grandcourt's orders about the household, but in learning all he could of Gwendolen, and how things were going on at Offendene. He felt that the effect of the news of the family misfortunes on Grandcourt was quite incalculable. The girl's poverty might make her more likely to accept him, and remove his objection to risking a repulse; on the other hand, the certainty of acceptance was just the sort of thing to make him lapse.

Lush had observed his patron for many years, and knew him well; but he was unpredictable. He might behave with apparent magnanimity, in determining to marry the penniless girl; but Lush had some general certainties about Grandcourt, and one was that generosity was most unlikely to occur in him. Of what use, however, is a general certainty, when what you need to know is the particular path that a man will take? Lush would have been happy for Grandcourt to marry an heiress, or Mrs. Glasher: one match would have brought immediate abundance, and the other the wife's gratitude, for Lush had always been Mrs. Glasher's friend. He felt himself justified in doing his utmost to hinder a marriage with a girl who was likely to bring nothing but trouble to her husband, and annoyance to her husband's old companion, whose future Mr. Lush earnestly wished to make as easy as possible.

On his first day at Diplo, Grandcourt was occupied with the stables, and ordered a groom to put a side-saddle on Criterion. This made Lush consider whether he should incur the ticklish consequences of speaking; and the next morning he had almost resolved to let drop the interesting facts about Gwendolen and her family, if Grandcourt was in a good mood, just to see how they would work.

But Grandcourt did not enter into talk: no fish could have maintained a more unwinking silence. After reading his letters he gave various orders to be executed by Lush, who accordingly rose to leave the room. Before he was out of the door Grandcourt turned his head slightly and gave a languid "Oh."

"What is it?" said Lush, who did not take his dusty puddings with a respectful air.

"Shut the door, will you? I can't speak into the corridor."

Lush closed the door.

After a little pause Grandcourt said, "Is Miss Harleth at Offendene?" He was quite certain that Lush would have inquired about her.

"I hardly know," said Lush, carelessly. "The family's utterly done up. They've lost all their money. The poor mother hasn't a penny, it seems. She and the girls have to huddle in a little cottage like a labourer's."

"Don't lie to me, if you please," said Grandcourt, in his lowest audible tone. "It's not amusing, and it answers no other purpose."

"What do you mean?" said Lush, nettled. "It's no invention of mine. I have heard the story from several."

"I don't mean that. Is Miss Harleth there, or is she not?"

"I can't tell," said Lush, rather sulkily. "She may have left; I heard she had taken a situation as governess."

"Send Hutchins to inquire whether she will be there tomorrow."

Lush did not move. Like many persons who have thought over beforehand what they shall say in given cases, he was impelled to say some of those prearranged things before the cases were given. Grandcourt was likely to get into a scrape so tremendous that it was impossible not to remonstrate; but Lush retained enough caution to use a tone of rational friendliness.

"It would be as well to remember, Grandcourt, that there can be none of the ordinary flirting now. You must make up your mind whether you wish to be accepted;

and more than that, how you would like being refused. You can't be philandering after her again for six weeks."

Grandcourt said nothing, but began to light another cigar. Lush took this as a good sign, and continued.

"Everything has a more serious look now than before. There is her family to be provided for. It will be a confoundedly hampering affair. Marriage will pin you down; and in point of money you have not much elbow-room. If there were anything to be gained by the marriage, that would be different."

Grandcourt took his cigar out of his mouth, and looking steadily at the end, said—

"I knew that you objected to my marrying Miss Harleth. But I never considered that a reason against it."

"I never supposed you did. But you couldn't make up your mind before. It's impossible you can care much about her. However, what I wished to point out to you was, that there can be no shilly-shally now."

"I don't intend that there should be," said Grandcourt, fixing him with narrow eyes. "I dare say it's disagreeable to you. But if you suppose I care a damn for that you are most stupendously mistaken."

"Oh, well," said Lush, rising with his hands in his pockets, "if you have made up your mind! only there's another aspect of the affair. I'm not so sure the young lady can be counted on. She had her reasons for running away before." Lush's temper at this moment urged him to risk a quarrel. "She had her reasons," he repeated more significantly.

"I had come to that conclusion," said Grandcourt with irony.

"Yes, but I hardly think you know what her reasons were."

"You do, apparently," said Grandcourt, not betraying by so much as an eyelash that he cared for the reasons.

"Yes, and you had better know too. I would lay odds against her accepting you. She saw Lydia in Cardell Chase and heard the whole story."

Grandcourt made no immediate answer, and only went on smoking. At length he looked at Lush again and said contemptuously, "What follows?"

Here certainly was a "checkmate" in answer to Lush's "check." He shrugged slightly and was going to walk away, when Grandcourt said, as quietly as if nothing had occurred, "Push that pen and paper over here, will you?"

No thunderous superior could have exercised the imperious spell that Grandcourt did. The pen and paper were pushed to him, and he scrawled a brief note.

"Let Hutchins take it at once, will you?" said Grandcourt.

As Lush had expected, the letter was addressed to Miss Harleth, Offendene. When his irritation had cooled, he was glad there had been no explosive quarrel; though he felt sure that somehow or other he was intended to pay. It was clear that he had only hardened Grandcourt's determination. But as to the particular movements that made this process in his baffling mind, Lush despaired of a theory.

## Chapter Twenty-six

Mr. Gascoigne brought the news that Mrs. Mompert had fixed the following Tuesday for her interview with Gwendolen. He said nothing of his having heard that Mr. Grandcourt had returned to Diplow, feeling that it would be unkind under the present reverses. He thought of his niece's caprice with regret, but considered that Grandcourt had been the first to behave oddly, in suddenly walking away. The rector felt that he should now encourage his niece to accept her lot.

"I feel sure that Mrs. Mompert will be pleased with you," he said. "You will know how to conduct yourself with a woman who holds in all senses the relation of a superior to you. This trouble has come on you young, but that makes it in some respects easier, and we will benefit from adjusting our minds to it."

This was precisely what Gwendolen was unable to do; and after her uncle was gone, the bitter tears fell slowly as she sat alone. Her heart denied that the trouble was easier because she was young. When was she to have any happiness, if not while she was young? She saw a sterile, dreary path at her feet, which she had no courage to tread. She was in that first rage of disappointment in life's morning, which older people are apt to remember dimly, intolerant of its self-enclosed unreasonableness. What passion seems more absurd than this amazed anguish that I, and no other, should be the smitten one? Gwendolen, poor, spoiled child, had lost all her illusion of her own high destiny; the lovely eyes and the majestic figure seemed now to have no magic in them.

She walked up and down the drawing-room, while a slow tear fell. She thought, "I have always felt that mamma was not a happy woman; I dare say I shall be more unhappy than she has been. Poor mamma! I can get a little money for her – that is all I shall care about now."

And then with an entirely new movement of her imagination, she saw her mother getting old and white, and herself no longer young, and their two faces meeting still with memory and love, and her mother thinking – "Poor Gwen too is sad and faded now."

Then, for the first time, she sobbed, not in anger, but with a sort of tender misery. As her mother entered and put her arms around her, she sobbed anew in spite of herself.

Mrs. Davilow had something in her hand which was causing her anxiety, and she dared not speak until her darling had become calmer. But Gwendolen, with a deep breath, drew back and looked at her tremulous mother.

"It was nothing, mamma," she said, before she perceived a letter in her mother's hand. "What is that? – worse news still?" she asked bitterly.

"You will hardly guess where it comes from, dear," said Mrs Davilow.

"Don't ask me to guess anything," said Gwendolen, rather impatiently.

"It is addressed to you, dear. It comes from Diplow," said Mrs. Davilow, giving her the letter.

Gwendolen knew Grandcourt's indistinct handwriting, and blushed deeply; but as she read, the colour died from her face. She turned the open note toward her mother. The words were few and formal:

'Mr. Grandcourt presents his compliments to Miss Harleth, and begs to know whether he may call at Offendene tomorrow after two and see her alone. Mr.

Grandcourt has just returned from Leubronn, where he had hoped to find Miss Harleth.'

Mrs. Davilow read, and then looked inquiringly at Gwendolen, who turned away. "It must be answered, darling," said Mrs. Davilow, timidly. "The man waits."

Gwendolen clasped her hands, gazing straight before her. The sudden change of the situation was bewildering. A few minutes earlier she was looking along an inescapable path of monotony; and lo, now, a moment of choice was come. Yet was it triumph she felt or terror? Impossible not to feel some triumph in her power; but then came the terror. Quick, quick, like pictures in a book, all that she had gone through in relation to Grandcourt – the allurements, the vacillations, the resolve to accept, the final repulsion; the face of that dark-eyed lady with the lovely boy: her own pledge (was it a pledge not to marry him?) – the new disbelief in the worth of men.

What was the good of choice? What did she wish? Anything different? No! And yet in the dark seed-growths of consciousness a new wish was forming itself – "I wish I had never known it!" She wished for anything to save her from the dread of letting Grandcourt come.

At last Mrs. Davilow said gently–

"You need to write an answer, dear."

Gwendolen drew a deep breath. "Please lay me out the pen and paper."

That was gaining time. Was she to decline Grandcourt's visit? Like a warm current through her terror was the notion that this would be an event – an opportunity for her to look and speak with her former effectiveness. The interest of the morrow was no longer at a deadlock.

"There is really no reason why you should be so alarmed at the man's waiting a few minutes, mamma," she said.

"No, dear," said Mrs. Davilow, in the tone of one corrected, "he can wait another quarter of an hour, if you like."

At once Gwendolen felt a contradictory desire to be hastened: hurry would save her from deliberate choice.

"I must decide," she said, walking to the writing-table. There was a busy undercurrent of thought in her. Why should she not let him come? It bound her to nothing. He had followed her to Leubronn: he meant a renewal of his suit. What then? She could reject him. Why deny herself the freedom of doing this?

"I wonder whether Mr. Grandcourt has heard of our misfortunes?" said Mrs. Davilow.

"That could make no difference to a man in his position," said Gwendolen, rather contemptuously,

"It would to some men. If Mr. Grandcourt did know, I think it a strong proof of his attachment to you."

Mrs. Davilow spoke with unusual emphasis: it was the first time she had ventured to say anything about Grandcourt which might seem to be in his favour. The effect of her words was stronger than she could imagine. They raised a new vision in Gwendolen's mind – a vision of what Grandcourt might do for her mother if she, Gwendolen, did what she was not going to do. At once, in a hurry, she began to write. To act in a hurry was to keep away from an absolute decision, and to leave open as many issues as possible.

She wrote:

‘Miss Harleth presents her compliments to Mr. Grandcourt. She will be at home after two o’clock tomorrow.’

Then she said, “Pray ring the bell, mamma, if there is anyone to answer it.” She really did not know who did the work of the house.

It was not till after the letter had been taken away that Mrs. Davilow ventured to ask—

“What did you write, Gwen?”

“I said that I should be at home,” answered Gwendolen, rather loftily. “You must not expect anything to happen, mamma.”

“But Mr. Grandcourt will consider that you have already accepted him, in allowing him to come. His note plainly means that he is coming to make you an offer.”

“Very well; and I wish to have the pleasure of refusing him.” And Gwendolen implied her wish not to be questioned by saying— “Put down that detestable needle-work, and let us walk in the avenue. I am stifled.”

## Chapter Twenty-seven

While Grandcourt was riding to Offendene on his beautiful black Yarico, with the groom behind him on Criterion, Gwendolen was seated before the mirror while her mother carefully brushed her light-brown hair.

“Just gather it up easily and make a coil, mamma,” said Gwendolen.

“Let me bring you some ear-rings, Gwen,” said Mrs. Davilow, when the hair was adjusted, and they were both looking at the reflection in the glass. The eyes looked brighter than they had done of late; there seemed to be a shadow lifted from the face.

“No, mamma; no ornaments, and I shall put on my black silk. Black is the only colour to wear when one is going to refuse an offer,” said Gwendolen, with one of her old smiles.

“Suppose the offer is not made?”

“Then that will be because I refuse it beforehand,” said Gwendolen. “It comes to the same thing.”

There was a proud toss of the head as she said this; and when she walked downstairs in her black robes, there was just that firm poise of head and elasticity of form which had lately been missing, as in a parched plant. Her mother thought, “She is quite herself again. It must be pleasure in his coming. Can her mind be really made up against him?”

Gwendolen had been so occupied with perpetually alternating arguments for and against her marrying Grandcourt, that the conclusion which she had determined on ceased to have any hold on her mind. She was in a state in which no conclusion could look fixed to her. She would have expressed her resolve as before; but the blood had been sucked out of it. She did not mean to accept Grandcourt; still, that only prompted her to look the unwelcome reasons full in the face until she had a little less awe of them. By looking at a dubious object with a constructive imagination, one can give it twenty different shapes. Her indistinct hesitation before the interview at the Whispering Stones now counted for nothing; if it had not been for that day in Cardell Chase, she said to herself, there would have been no obstacle to her marrying Grandcourt. On that day, she had acted with an impulse which had come partly from her dread of wrong-doing. She shrank with pride and terror from the dim region of what was called disgraceful, wrong, or guilty.

But now – did she know the exact state of the case with regard to Mrs. Glasher? She had given a sort of promise – had said, “I will not interfere with your wishes.” But might it not be just as well, nay better, that Grandcourt should marry? For what could not a woman do when she was married, if she knew how to assert herself? Here all was imagination. Gwendolen had about as accurate an idea of marriage – of its mutual influences, demands and duties – as she had of magnetic currents and the law of storms.

“Mamma managed badly,” was how she summed up her mother’s experience: she herself would manage quite differently.

“I wonder what mamma and my uncle would say if they knew about Mrs. Glasher!” thought Gwendolen. “I wonder what anybody would say!” To consider what “anybody” would say, was to be released from the difficulty of judging: “anybody” would regard illegitimate children as rightfully to be looked down on and deprived of social advantages. The verdict of “anybody” seemed to be that she had no reason to concern herself greatly on behalf of Mrs. Glasher and her children.

But this could not do away with her indignation and loathing that she should have been expected to unite herself with an outworn life, full of past secrets. True, love on her own part had hardly occupied her mind at all in relation to Grandcourt. The desirability of marriage for her had always seemed due to other feelings; and to be enamoured was the part of the man. Gwendolen had found no objection to Grandcourt's way of being enamoured before she had that glimpse of his past, which made her feel disgust for his addresses. Perhaps other men's lives were also full of secrets, and they were laughing up their sleeves at the ignorance of the women they wanted to marry.

These feelings of disgust and indignation had sunk deep, and kept her firm to her decision that she was not going to accept Grandcourt. If anything could have induced her to change, it would have been the prospect of making all things easy for "poor mamma:" that, she admitted, was a temptation. But no! she was going to refuse him.

Meanwhile, the thought that he was coming to be refused was inspiriting: she had the reins in her hands again, and felt herself reviving from the beaten-down state in which she had been left by the interview with Klesmer. She was going to exercise her power.

Was this what made her heart palpitate annoyingly when she heard the horse's footsteps on the gravel? – when Miss Merry came to tell her that Grandcourt was in the drawing-room? Walking into the drawing-room, she had to concentrate all her energy in self-control, which made her appear gravely gracious as she answered his greeting in a voice as low and languid as his own.

When they were both seated – Gwendolen upright with downcast eyelids, Grandcourt about two yards distant, leaning one arm over the back of his chair while he looked at her – anyone seeing them would have concluded that they were in some stage of love-making suspense. And she already felt herself being wooed by this silent man seated at an agreeable distance, with his attention bent wholly on her. And he also considered himself to be wooing: he felt the utmost piquancy in a girl whom he had not found quite calculable.

"I was disappointed not to find you at Leubronn," he began, his usual broken drawl having just a shade of amorous languor in it. "The place was intolerable without you. A mere kennel of a place. Don't you think so?"

"I can't judge what it would be without myself," said Gwendolen, with some recovered sense of mischief. "*With* myself I liked it well enough. But I was obliged to come home on account of family troubles."

"It was very cruel of you to go to Leubronn," said Grandcourt, taking no notice of the troubles, on which Gwendolen – she hardly knew why – wished that there should be a clear understanding at once. "You knew you were the heart and soul of everything that went on. Are you quite reckless about me?"

It was impossible to say "yes"; equally impossible to say "no;" but what else could she say? In her difficulty, she looked down, blushing. Grandcourt believed that she was showing her inclination. But he was determined that she should show it more decidedly.

"Perhaps there is some deeper interest? Some attraction – some engagement? Is there any man who stands between us?"

Inwardly the answer framed itself. "No; but there is a woman." Yet how could she utter this? Even if she had not promised that woman to be silent, it would have been impossible for her to enter on the subject with Grandcourt. Gwendolen felt compelled to silence, and after a pause, Grandcourt said–



“Am I to understand that some one else is preferred?”

Gwendolen, now impatient of her own embarrassment, determined to rush at the difficulty and free herself. She raised her eyes again and said with her former clearness and defiance, “No,” wishing him to understand that she might not be ready to take him.

“The last thing I would do, is to importune you. I should not hope to win you by making myself a bore. If there were no hope for me, I would ask you to tell me so at once, that I might just ride away to – no matter where.”

Almost to her own astonishment, Gwendolen felt a sudden alarm at the image of Grandcourt finally riding away. What would be left her then? Nothing but the former dreariness. She liked him to be there. She snatched at the subject that would defer any decisive answer.

“I fear you are not aware of what has happened to us. I have lately had to think so much of my mamma’s troubles, that other matters have been quite thrown into the background. She has lost all her fortune, and we are going to leave this place. I must ask you to excuse my seeming preoccupied.”

In eluding a direct appeal Gwendolen recovered some of her self-possession. She spoke with dignity and looked straight at Grandcourt, whose long, narrow, impenetrable eyes met hers, and mysteriously arrested them. It would be hard to tell on which side – Gwendolen’s or Grandcourt’s – the effect of that look was more mixed. At that moment his strongest wish was to be completely master of this creature – this piquant combination of maidenliness and mischief. The fact that she knew things which had repelled her, spurred him to triumph over that repugnance; and he believed that he should triumph.

And she – ah, piteous equality in the need to dominate! – she was overcome like the thirsty one who is drawn toward the seeming water in the desert, overcome by the sense that this man offered rescue from helpless subjection to an oppressive lot.

All the while they were looking at each other; and Grandcourt said, slowly and languidly, as if it were of no importance,

“You will tell me now, I hope, that Mrs. Davilow’s loss of fortune will not trouble you further. You will trust me to prevent it from weighing upon her. You will give me the claim to provide against that.”

The pauses and refined drawlings with which this speech was uttered, gave time for Gwendolen to go through the dream of a life. The words had the effect of a draught of wine, which suddenly makes all things easier. She had a momentary phantasmal love for this man who chose his words so well, and paid her such delicate homage. Repugnance, dread, scruples – these were dim as remembered pains. She imagined herself already springing to her mother. Yet when Grandcourt had ceased to speak, there was an instant in which she was conscious of being at the turning of the ways.

“You are very generous,” she said, not moving her eyes, and speaking gently.

“You accept this provision?” said Grandcourt, without any new eagerness. “You consent to become my wife?”

Something made her rise from her seat and walk a little distance. Then she turned and with her hands folded stood in silence.

Grandcourt immediately rose too. The hesitation of this destitute girl to take his splendid offer stung him into a keenness of interest such as he had not known for years; none the less because he attributed her hesitation entirely to her knowledge about Mrs. Glasher.

“Do you command me to go?” he said.

“No,” said Gwendolen. She could not let him go: that no clutched at his presence. She seemed to herself to be drifting toward the tremendous decision – but drifting depends not only on the currents but on how the sails have been set beforehand.

“You accept my devotion?” said Grandcourt, looking straight into her eyes, without other movement. Their eyes meeting in that way seemed to allow any length of pause: but how could she contradict herself? What had she detained him for? He had shut out any explanation.

“Yes,” came as gravely from Gwendolen’s lips as if she had been answering to her name in a court of justice. He received it gravely, and they still looked at each other in the same attitude. Was there ever such a way of accepting the bliss-giving “Yes”? Grandcourt liked better to be at that distance from her, and to feel under a ceremony imposed by an indefinable prohibition that breathed from Gwendolen’s bearing.

But he did at length advance to take her hand, just pressing his lips upon it and letting it go again. She thought his behaviour perfect, and gained a sense of freedom which made her almost ready to be mischievous. Her “Yes” entailed so little at this moment that there was nothing to screen the reversal of her gloomy prospects; her vision was filled by her own release from the Momperts, and her mother’s release from Sawyer’s Cottage. With a happy curl of the lips, she said–

“Will you not see mamma? I will fetch her.”

“Let us wait a little,” said Grandcourt, in his favourite attitude, having his left forefinger and thumb in his waist-coat pocket, and with his right hand caressing his whisker, while he looked at Gwendolen.

“Have you anything else to say to me?” she said, playfully.

“I know having things said to you is a great bore,” said Grandcourt, rather sympathetically.

“Not when they are things I like to hear.”

“Will it bother you to be asked how soon we can be married?”

“I think it will, today,” said Gwendolen, putting up her chin saucily.

“Not today, then, but tomorrow. Think of it before I come tomorrow. In a fortnight – or three weeks – as soon as possible.”

“Ah, you think you will be tired of my company,” said Gwendolen. “I notice when people are married the husband is not so much with his wife as when they are engaged. But perhaps I shall like that better, too.”

She laughed charmingly.

“You shall have whatever you like,” said Grandcourt.

“And nothing that I don’t like – please say that; because I think I dislike what I don’t like more than I like what I like,” said Gwendolen, finding herself in the woman’s paradise, where all her nonsense is adorable.

Grandcourt paused; these were subtleties in which he had much experience of his own. “I don’t know. This is such a brute of a world, things are always turning up that one doesn’t like. If you like to ride Criterion, I can’t prevent his coming down by some chance or other.”

“Ah, my friend Criterion, how is he?”

“He is outside: I made the groom ride him, that you might see him. Come to the window and look at him.”

They could see the two horses being taken slowly round the sweep, and the beautiful creatures sent a thrill of exultation through Gwendolen. They were symbols

of command and luxury, in delightful contrast with the ugliness of poverty and humiliation at which she had lately been looking.

“Will you ride Criterion tomorrow?” said Grandcourt. “If you will, everything shall be arranged.”

“I should like it of all things,” said Gwendolen. “I want to lose myself in a gallop again. But now I must go and fetch mamma.”

“Take my arm to the door, then,” said Grandcourt, and she accepted. Their faces were very near each other, almost on a level. She thought his manners as a lover more agreeable than any she had seen described. She had no alarm lest he meant to kiss her, and was so much at her ease, that she suddenly paused and said half archly, half earnestly—

“Oh, while I think of it, there is something I dislike that you can save me from. I do not like Mr. Lush’s company.”

“You shall not have it. I’ll get rid of him.”

“You are not fond of him yourself?”

“Not in the least. I let him hang on me because he has always been a poor devil,” said Grandcourt, in utter indifference. “A coarse-haired kind of brute – sort of cross between a hog and a *dilettante*.”

Gwendolen laughed. When they reached the door, his way of opening it for her was the perfection of easy homage. Really, she thought, he was likely to be the least disagreeable of husbands.

Mrs. Davilow was waiting anxiously in her bedroom when Gwendolen entered, and kissing her, said, “Come down, mamma, and see Mr. Grandcourt. I am engaged to him.”

“My darling child,” said Mrs. Davilow, with surprise.

“Yes,” said Gwendolen. “Everything is settled. You are not going to Sawyer’s Cottage, I am not going to be inspected by Mrs. Mompert, and everything is to be as I like. So come down with me immediately.”

## BOOK IV: GWENDOLEN GETS HER CHOICE

### Chapter Twenty-eight

The news of Gwendolen's engagement was soon known at the rectory, and the Gascoignes spent the evening at Offendene.

"My dear, let me congratulate you," said the rector. "You look serious, and I don't wonder: a lifelong union is a solemn thing. But from the way Mr. Grandcourt has spoken we may already see some good arising out of our adversity, in showing you your future husband's delicate liberality." For Gwendolen had told her mother of Mr. Grandcourt's offer to provide for her.

"No doubt he would have behaved as handsomely had you become engaged to him a month ago," said Mrs. Gascoigne, feeling that she had to discharge a duty. "But now there is no more room for caprice. A woman has a great debt of gratitude to a man who perseveres in making her such an offer. But no doubt you feel properly."

"I am not sure that I do, aunt," said Gwendolen, with saucy gravity. "I don't know everything it is proper to feel on being engaged."

The rector patted her shoulder and smiled. Anna kissed her, saying, "I do hope you will be happy," but then moved away and tried to keep the tears back. Lately she had been imagining a little romance about Rex – how Gwendolen's heart might be softened by trouble into love, so that they could marry. But now she wanted grace to rejoice in something else.

"I should like to know exactly what sort of places Ryelands and Gadsmere are," said Mrs. Davilow.

"Gadsmere, I believe, is a secondary place," said Mr. Gascoigne; "But Ryelands I know to be one of our finest seats, with an extensive park. The house was built by Inigo Jones. The estate is said to be worth twelve thousand a year."

"It would be most remarkable," said Mrs. Gascoigne, "if Mr. Grandcourt were to become Lord Stannery in addition to everything else. What a position for his wife! You must lose no time in writing to Mrs. Mompert, Henry. It is a good thing that you have an engagement of marriage to offer as an excuse, else she might feel offended. She is rather a high woman."

"I am rid of that horror," thought Gwendolen, to whom the name of Mompert had become a sort of evil charm. She was silent all evening, and that night could hardly sleep. It was rare for her to be wakeful: and perhaps still rarer for her to be careful that her mother should not know of it.

But her state of mind was altogether new: she who used to feel sure of herself, had just taken a decisive step which she had thought that she would not take. She could not go backward now; she liked a great deal of what lay before her; and there was nothing for her to like if she went back. But she was dogged by the shadow of that previous, instinctive resolve. Lying awake, she was appalled by the idea that she was going to do what she had once recoiled from. A question of right or wrong in her conduct had never raised terror in her before; she had known no compunction that atoning caresses could not lay to rest.

But now something like a new consciousness was awakened. She seemed on the edge of adopting deliberately, for the rest of her life, what she had rashly said in her bitterness – that it did not signify what she did; she had only to amuse herself. That lawlessness, that casting away of all care about justification, suddenly frightened her: she glimpsed shadowy calamity behind it.

All the influences of her disregarded religious teaching, as well as the deeper impressions of something awful and inexorable enveloping her, seemed to concentrate themselves in the vague idea of avenging power. The brilliant position she had longed for, the imagined freedom of marriage, the deliverance from dull insignificance – all had come to her hunger like food with the taint of sacrilege upon it, which she must snatch with terror. That unhappy-faced woman and her children kept reappearing in her imagination, and gradually obliterated all other thought. Her long wakefulness seemed a delirium; a faint light penetrated the window-curtain; the chillness increased. She could bear it no longer, and cried “Mamma!”

“Yes, dear,” said Mrs. Davilow, immediately wakeful.

“Let me come to you.”

She soon went to sleep on her mother’s shoulder, and slept on till late, when, dreaming of a lit-up ball-room, she opened her eyes on her mother standing by the bedside with a small packet in her hand.

“I am sorry to wake you, darling, but I thought it better to give you this at once. The groom has brought Criterion for you.”

Gwendolen sat up in bed and opened the packet. It was a delicate enamelled casket, and inside was a splendid diamond ring with a letter which contained a folded paper and these words:

‘Pray wear this ring when I come at twelve in sign of our betrothal. I enclose a cheque for immediate expenses. Of course Mrs. Davilow will remain at Offendene, at least for some time. I hope, when I come, you will have granted me an early day, when you may begin to command me at a shorter distance.

‘Yours devotedly,  
H. M. GRANDCOURT.’

The cheque was for five hundred pounds.

“How very kind and delicate!” said Mrs. Davilow, with feeling. “But I should prefer not to be dependent on a son-in-law. I and the girls could get along very well.”

“Mamma, if you say that again, I will not marry him,” said Gwendolen, angrily.

“My dear child, I trust you are not going to marry only for my sake,” said Mrs. Davilow, deprecatingly.

Gwendolen tossed her head, irritated at this attempt to take away a motive. Perhaps the deeper cause of her irritation was the consciousness that she was drawn toward the marriage for other reasons, as well as for her mamma’s sake. She had woken to the knowledge that she was irrevocably engaged, and the ugly visions of the night would probably show themselves weak by day.

“What I long for is your happiness, dear,” continued Mrs. Davilow, pleadingly. “Will you not put on the ring?”

At first Gwendolen did not answer. Then she decided to act as if she were riding on horseback: she would go on with spirit, whatever ideas might be running in her head.

“I thought the lover always put on the betrothal ring himself,” she said with a laugh, slipping the ring on her finger, and looking at it. “I know why he has sent it.”

“Why?”

“He would rather make me put it on than ask me to let him do it. Aha! he is very proud. But so am I. We shall match each other. I should hate a man who went down on his knees, and fawned on me. He really is not disgusting.”

“That is very moderate praise, Gwen.”

“No, it is not, for a man,” said Gwendolen gaily. “But now I must get up and dress. Will you do my hair, mamma, dear, and not be so naughty any more as to talk of living in poverty? You must bear to be made comfortable, even if you don’t like it. And Mr. Grandcourt behaves perfectly, now, does he not?”

“Certainly he does,” said Mrs. Davilow, encouraged, and persuaded that after all Gwendolen was fond of her betrothed. She was not anxious about Grandcourt’s character, but about Gwendolen’s mood in accepting him.

The mood was passing through a new phase this morning. Even while she dressed, she was drawing on all her knowledge to justify her marriage. And what she most dwelt on was the determination that, when she was Grandcourt’s wife, she would urge him to be generous to Mrs. Glasher’s children.

“What use would it be to her if I did not marry him? He could have married her if he liked; but he did not like. Perhaps she is to blame for that. There must be a great deal about her that I know nothing of. And he must have been good to her, else she would not want to marry him.”

But that last argument at once appeared doubtful. Mrs. Glasher naturally wished her own children to inherit, and to exclude other children.

“Perhaps we shall have no children,” thought Gwendolen. “I hope we shall not. And he might leave the estate to the pretty little boy. When Sir Hugo Mallinger dies there will be enough for two.”

This made Mrs. Glasher appear quite unreasonable in demanding that her little boy should be sole heir. Grandcourt’s marriage would her do no wrong, when the wife was Gwendolen Harleth. That maiden was accustomed to think herself blameless; other persons only were faulty.

It was striking that her repugnance to the idea of Grandcourt’s past had sunk into a subordinate feeling. She was thinking of him as a man over whom she was going to have indefinite power; and since her loving him had never been a question with her, any agreeableness he had was so much gain. Poor Gwendolen regarded matrimony as altogether a matter of management, in which she would know how to act.

By now her hair was dressed, and she went down in her riding-habit, eager to stir her blood again in riding with the daring intoxication of youth. Already a load was lifted off her; for in daylight and activity it was less oppressive to have doubts about her choice, than to feel that she had no choice but to endure insignificance and servitude.

When Grandcourt raised her left hand gently and looked at the ring, she said gravely, “It was very good of you to think of everything.”

“You will tell me if there is anything I forget?” he said, keeping the hand softly within his own. “I will do anything you wish.”

“But I am very unreasonable in my wishes,” said Gwendolen, smiling.

“Yes, I expect that. Women always are.”

“Then I will not be unreasonable,” said Gwendolen, taking away her hand and tossing her head saucily. “I will not be told that I am what women always are.”

“I did not say that,” said Grandcourt, looking at her with his usual gravity. “You are what no other woman is.”

“And what is that, pray?” said Gwendolen, moving to a distance with a little air of menace.

Grandcourt made his pause before he answered. “You are the woman I love.”

“Oh, what nice speeches!” said Gwendolen, laughing. The sense of that love which he must once have given to another woman under strange circumstances was getting familiar.

“Give me a nice speech in return. Say when we are to be married.”

“Not yet. Not till we have had a gallop over the downs. I am so thirsty for that, I can think of nothing else. I wish the hunting season had begun. It will begin in ten days!”

“Let us be married in ten days, then,” said Grandcourt, “and we shall not be bored about the stables.”

“What do women always say in answer to that?” said Gwendolen, mischievously.

“They agree to it,” said the lover, rather off his guard.

“Then I will not!” said Gwendolen, taking up her gauntlets, while she kept her eyes on him with gathering fun in them.

The scene was pleasant on both sides. A cruder lover would have lost the view of her pretty ways, and spoiled all by stupid attempts at caresses, utterly destructive of drama. Grandcourt preferred the drama; and Gwendolen, left at ease, found her spirits rising continually as she played at reigning.

When they had had a glorious gallop, she was in a state of exhilaration that made her think well of hastening the marriage and having more of this splendid kind of enjoyment. She would not debate it any longer; and she consented to fix the wedding on that day three weeks.

Lush, of course, was made aware of the engagement without being formally told. But, expecting some communication, after a few days he became rather impatient under Grandcourt’s silence; he was sure that the change would affect his personal prospects. He had no wish to annoy Grandcourt. Miss Gwendolen he would certainly not have been sorry to frustrate a little; in his freak about this girl Grandcourt struck Lush as a man who was fey – led on by an ominous fatality. Having protested against the marriage, Lush foresaw evil consequences.

Grandcourt appeared to be ignoring him, even choosing, against the habit of years, to breakfast alone in his dressing-room. But Lush found an opportunity of saying–

“And when is the marriage to take place?”

Grandcourt had left the dinner table and was lounging, while he smoked, in an easy chair near the hearth. The red-brown velvet brocade was a becoming background for his pale, well-cut features and exquisite long hands. He had a portrait’s impenetrable gaze and air of distinction; and was just as lively a companion. But he answered without unusual delay.

“On the tenth.”

“I suppose you intend to remain here.”

“We shall go to Ryelands for a little while; but we shall return here for the hunting.”

After these words there was the languid inarticulate sound frequent with Grandcourt when he meant to continue speaking, and Lush waited for something more.

“You had better make some new arrangement for yourself.”

“What! I am to cut and run?” said Lush, prepared to be good-tempered.

“Something of that kind.”

“The bride objects to me. I hope she will make up to you for the want of my services.”

“I can’t help your being so damnably disagreeable to women,” said Grandcourt, in soothing apology.

“To one woman, if you please.”

“It makes no difference, since she is the one in question.”

“I suppose I am not to be turned adrift after fifteen years without some provision.”

“You can have three hundred a year. But you must live in town and be ready to look after things when I want you. I shall be rather hard up.”

“If you are not going to be at Ryelands this winter, I might run down there.”

“If you like. I don’t care a toss where you are, so that you keep out of sight.”

“Much obliged,” said Lush, able to take the affair more easily than he had expected. He was supported by the secret belief that he should by-and-by be wanted as much as ever.

“Perhaps you will not object to packing up as soon as possible,” said Grandcourt.

“Certainly. Can’t I be of use in going to Gadsmere?”

“No. I am going myself.”

“About your being rather hard up. Have you thought of that plan—”

“Just leave me alone, will you?” said Grandcourt, in his lowest audible tone, tossing his cigar into the fire, and rising to walk away.

He spent the evening in the solitude of the smaller drawing-room, where, with various new publications on the table of the kind a gentleman may like to have on hand without reading, he employed himself in sitting meditatively on the sofa and abstaining from any literature. In this way hours may pass surprisingly soon, without the arduous chase of philosophy; not from love of thought, but from hatred of effort.

But Grandcourt’s moods were not to be explained as ebbing energy. We mortals have a strange spiritual chemistry going on within us, so that a lazy stagnation may be preparing one knows not what explosive material. Grandcourt’s thoughts this evening were like the circlets one sees in a dark pool, continually dying out and continually started again by some impulse from below the surface. The deeper central impulse came from the image of Gwendolen; but the thoughts it stirred were not the ones of love poetry. He got none of his satisfaction from the belief that Gwendolen was in love with him. On the contrary, he believed that this girl was rather exceptional in the fact that, in spite of his assiduous attention, she was not in love with him; and it seemed to him very likely that if it had not been for her family’s sudden poverty, she would not have accepted him.

From the very first there had been an exasperating fascination in the tricksiness with which she had wheeled away from him. She had been brought to accept him in spite of everything – brought to kneel down like a horse under training for the arena, though she might object to it.

On the whole, Grandcourt got more pleasure out of this notion than he could have done out of winning a girl whom he thought was attracted to him personally. And yet along with this pleasure in mastering reluctance, he was persuaded that no woman whom he favoured could be quite indifferent to him; and it seemed likely that by-and-by Gwendolen might be more enamoured of him than he of her. In any case, she would have to submit; and he enjoyed thinking of her as his future wife, whose pride and spirit were suited to command everyone but himself. He had no taste for a woman who was all tenderness and willing obedience. He meant to be master of a woman who would have liked to master him, and who perhaps would have been capable of mastering another man.



Lush thought it well to communicate with Sir Hugo, whose friendship he was anxious to cultivate, in case he should have need of future employment. He wrote the following letter, and addressed it to Park Lane, whither he knew the family had returned from Leubronn:

‘MY DEAR SIR HUGO – Since we came home the marriage has been decided on, and is to take place in less than three weeks. It is the worse for him that her mother has lately lost all her fortune. Grandcourt, I know, is feeling the want of cash; but I am leaving Diplow immediately, and I shall not be able to raise the topic with him. Therefore I advise that Mr. Deronda, who I know has your confidence, should propose to pay a short visit here (there will be other people in the house). Then he should introduce the subject to Grandcourt so as not to imply that you suspect his need of money. I have told him that you might be willing to give a good sum to rent Diplow; but if Mr. Deronda came armed with a definite offer, the proposal will get a stronger lodgement in his mind; and though at present he has a great notion of the hunting here, I see a likelihood that he will get a distaste for the neighbourhood, and will not need urging. I would bet on your ultimate success. As I am not exiled to Siberia, but am to be within call, it is possible that I may be of more service to you. But at present I can think of no medium so good as Mr. Deronda.

‘I remain, my dear Sir Hugo,  
Yours very faithfully,  
THOMAS CRANMER LUSH.’

Sir Hugo, having received this letter at breakfast, handed it to Deronda, who, though he had chambers in town, was hardly ever in them, since Sir Hugo was not contented without him. The chatty baronet’s affection for Deronda was not diminished by the differences in their ideas and tastes. Sir Hugo had a certain pride in Deronda’s differing from him, and his having strong notions of his own.

Deronda, in turn, was moved by an affectionate nature such as we are apt to call feminine, disposing him to yield in ordinary details; while he had a certain inflexibility of judgment, and independence of opinion, held to be rightfully masculine.

When he had read the letter, he returned it without speaking.

“What do you say, Dan? It would be pleasant enough for you. You have not seen the place for a good many years, and you might have a run with the harriers if you went down next week,” said Sir Hugo.

“I should not go on that account,” said Deronda, buttering his bread. He objected to this transparent kind of persuasiveness.

“I think Lush’s notion is a good one. And it would be a pity to lose the chance.”

“That is a different matter – if you think my going is important to your object,” said Deronda, still aloof.

“Why, you will see the fair gambler, the Leubronn Diana, I shouldn’t wonder,” said Sir Hugo, gaily. “We shall have to invite her to the Abbey, when they are married,” he added, turning to Lady Mallinger.

“I cannot conceive whom you mean,” said Lady Mallinger, who in fact had not been listening.

“Grandcourt is going to marry the girl you saw at Leubronn – the Miss Harleth who played at roulette.”

“Dear me! Is that a good match for him?”

“That depends on the sort of goodness he wants,” said Sir Hugo, smiling. “She has nothing: so it’s a good match for my purposes, because if I am willing to fork out a large enough sum of money, he may be willing to give up Diplow, so that we shall have it.”

“But why are we to invite them to the Abbey?” said Lady Mallinger. “I do not like women who gamble.”

“Oh, you will not mind her for a week. I want to keep Grandcourt in good humour, and to let him see plenty of this place, that he may think the less of Diplow. I don’t know yet whether I shall get him to agree. If Dan were to visit there, he might hold out the bait to him. It would be doing me a great service.” This was meant for Deronda.

“Daniel is not fond of Mr. Grandcourt, is he?” said Lady Mallinger, looking at Deronda inquiringly.

“There is no avoiding everybody one doesn’t happen to be fond of,” said Deronda. “I will go to Diplow, since Sir Hugo wishes it.”

“That’s a good fellow!” said Sir Hugo, well pleased. “And if you don’t find it very pleasant, it’s so much experience. You must see men and manners.”

“Yes; but I have seen that man, and something of his manners too,” said Deronda.

“Not nice manners, I think,” said Lady Mallinger.

“Well, they succeed with your sex,” said Sir Hugo, provokingly. “And he was an uncommonly good-looking fellow when he was two or three and twenty.”

Deronda felt more willingness than at first. The story of that girl’s marriage interested him: what he had heard through Lush, about her having run away from the man she was now going to take as a husband, had thrown a new light on her gambling. It was probably the transition into poverty which had urged her acceptance where she must have felt repulsion.

All this implied a nature liable to difficulty and struggle – elements of life which had attracted his sympathy, due perhaps to his early pain in conjecturing about his own story. People attracted him, as Hans Meyrick had done, in proportion to the possibility of his defending and rescuing them; and he had to resist an inclination to withdraw coldly from the fortunate.

But his impulse to repurchase Gwendolen’s necklace for her had been due to something beyond his habitual compassion – to the fascination of her womanhood. He was very open to that sort of charm; yet he would be more likely than many less passionate men to love a woman without telling her of it. Deronda’s imagination was much occupied with two women, to neither of whom would he have held it possible that he should ever make love. Hans Meyrick had laughed at him for having something of the knight-errant in his disposition; and he would have found his proof if he had known what was just now going on in Deronda’s mind about Mirah and Gwendolen.

Deronda wrote to announce his visit to Diplow, and received in reply a polite assurance that his coming would give great pleasure. That was not altogether untrue. Grandcourt understood the reason behind Sir Hugo’s desire to court him; and it was not disagreeable to him that this fine fellow, whom he believed to be his cousin, would witness with some jealousy Henleigh Grandcourt play the commanding part of betrothed lover to a splendid girl, whom the cousin had seen and admired.

Grandcourt himself was not jealous of anything unless it threatened his mastery – which he did not think himself likely to lose.

## Chapter Twenty-nine

“Now my cousins are at Diplow,” said Grandcourt, “will you go there? The carriage shall come for Mrs. Davilow. You can tell me what you would like done in the rooms. Things must be put in decent order while we are away at Ryelands. And tomorrow is the only day.”

He was sitting on a sofa in the drawing-room at Offendene, one elbow resting on the back, in the attitude of a man who is much interested in watching the person next to him. Gwendolen, who had always disliked needlework, had taken to it with apparent zeal since her engagement, and now held a piece of white embroidery which, on examination, would have shown many false stitches. During the last eight or nine days their hours had been chiefly spent on horseback, but some time had been left for this more difficult sort of companionship, which, however, Gwendolen had not found disagreeable. She was very well satisfied with Grandcourt. His answers to her lively questions about what he had seen and done in his life, bore drawing very well. She felt not only that he had nothing of the fool in his composition, but that by some subtle means he gave the impression that all the folly lay with other people.

And then Grandcourt’s behaviour as a lover had hardly passed the limit of an unobtrusive homage. One day, indeed, he had kissed her neck, below her ear; and Gwendolen, taken by surprise, had started up with a marked agitation which made him say, “I beg your pardon – did I annoy you?”

“Oh, it was nothing,” said Gwendolen, rather afraid of herself, “only I cannot bear – to be kissed under my ear.” She sat down again with a little playful laugh, but felt her heart beating with a vague fear: she was no longer at liberty to flout him as she had flouted poor Rex. Her agitation seemed to him to be a compliment, and he was content not to transgress again.

Today rain hindered riding; but to compensate, a package had come from London, and beautiful things (of Grandcourt’s ordering) lay scattered about on the tables for Gwendolen to enjoy. She said with a pretty air of perversity–

“Why is tomorrow the only day?”

“Because the next day is the first with the hounds,” said Grandcourt. “And after that I must go away for a couple of days – it’s a bore – but I shall go one day and come back the next.” He noticed a change in her face, and laying his hand on hers, he said, “You object to my going away?”

“It’s no use objecting,” said Gwendolen, coldly. She was resisting the temptation to tell him that she suspected to whom he was going.

Grandcourt said, enfolding her hand, “I will travel at night, so as only to be away one day.” He thought that he knew the reason of what he inwardly called this bit of temper, and she was particularly fascinating to him at this moment. “You will go to Diplow tomorrow?”

“Oh, yes, if you wish it,” said Gwendolen, in a high tone of careless assent. Her concentration on other feelings had prevented her from noticing that her hand was being held.

“How you treat us poor devils of men!” said Grandcourt. “We are always getting the worst of it.”

“Are you?” said Gwendolen. She longed to believe this commonplace statement was the truth: in that case, Mrs. Glasher would appear more blameable than Grandcourt. “*Are* you always getting the worst?”

“Yes. Are you as kind to me as I am to you?” said Grandcourt, looking into her eyes with his narrow gaze.

Gwendolen felt herself stricken. She was conscious of having received so much, that her sense of command was checked. She could not turn back: it was as if she had consented to mount a chariot where another held the reins. All she could do was to adjust herself, so that the spikes of that unwilling penance which conscience imposed should not gall her. With a sort of inward shiver, she resolutely changed her mental attitude, and smiling suddenly, she said—

“If I were as kind to you as you are to me, that would spoil your generosity: it would no longer be as great as it is.”

“Then I am not to ask for one kiss,” said Grandcourt, contented to pay a large price for this new kind of love-making, which introduced marriage by the finest contrast.

“Not one!” said Gwendolen, getting saucy.

He lifted her little left hand to his lips, and then released it respectfully. Indeed, he was almost charming; and she felt at this moment that it was not likely she could ever have loved another man better than this one. His reticence gave her some inexplicable, delightful consciousness.

“Is there anyone besides the Torringtons at Diplow?” she said, taking up her work again.

“She has a sister with her,” said Grandcourt, “and there are two men – one of them you know, I believe. You saw him at Leubronn – young Deronda – with the Mallingers.”

Gwendolen felt as if her heart made a sudden jump. “I never spoke to him,” she said, dreading to show any change. “Is he not disagreeable?”

“Not particularly,” said Grandcourt languidly. “He thinks a little too much of himself. I thought he had been introduced to you.”

“No. Some one told me his name before I came away, that’s all. What is he?”

“A ward of Sir Hugo Mallinger’s. Nothing of any consequence.”

“Oh, poor creature! How very unpleasant for him!” said Gwendolen, speaking from the lip, and not meaning any sarcasm. “I wonder if it has left off raining!” she added, rising to look out of the window.

Happily it did not rain the next day, and Gwendolen rode to Diplow on Criterion. She always felt more daring in her riding-dress; besides having the fortifying belief that she looked as well as possible in it. Her anger toward Deronda had changed to superstitious dread lest his first interference in her life might foreshadow some future influence. It is of such stuff that superstitions are made; and they carry consequences which often verify their hope or their foreboding.

She did not see Deronda until lunchtime. But from the first moment of their being in the room together, she seemed to herself to be doing nothing but notice him.

When he took his place at lunch, Grandcourt said, “Deronda, Miss Harleth tells me you were not introduced to her at Leubronn?”

“Miss Harleth hardly remembers me, I imagine,” said Deronda, looking at her as they bowed. “She was intensely occupied when I saw her.”

Now, did he suppose that she had not suspected him of being the person who redeemed her necklace?

“On the contrary. I remember you very well,” said Gwendolen, feeling rather nervous, but governing herself. “You did not approve of my playing at roulette.”

“How did you come to that conclusion?” said Deronda, gravely.

“Oh, you cast an evil eye on my play,” said Gwendolen, with a turn of her head and a smile. “I began to lose as soon as you came to look on. I had been winning till then.”

“Roulette in such a kennel as Leubronn is a horrid bore,” said Grandcourt.

“I found it a bore when I began to lose,” said Gwendolen. Her face was turned toward Grandcourt as she smiled and spoke, but she gave a sidelong glance at Deronda, and saw his eyes fixed on her with a gravely penetrating look. She wheeled her neck round as if she wanted to listen to what was being said by the rest, while she was only thinking of Deronda. His face had that disturbing expression which threatens to affect one’s opinion – as if one’s standard was somehow wrong. His voice, heard now for the first time, was to Grandcourt’s toneless drawl as the deep notes of a cello to the broken discourse of poultry. Grandcourt, she decided, was perhaps right in saying that Deronda thought too much of himself: a favourite way of explaining a superiority that humiliates.

The talk turned on the West Indies, and no more was said about roulette. Gwendolen trifled with her jelly, and looked at every speaker in turn that she might feel at ease in looking at Deronda.

“I wonder what he thinks of me, really? He must have felt interested in me, else he would not have sent me my necklace. I wonder what he thinks of my marriage? Why is he so grave? Why has he come to Diplo?”

These questions ran in her mind, and she felt an uneasy longing to be admired by Deronda – a longing which sprang from her first resentment at his critical glance. Why did she care so much about the opinion of this man who was “nothing of any consequence”? She had no time to find the reason: she was too much engaged in caring.

In the drawing-room, when something had called Grandcourt away, she went up to Deronda, and said–

“Shall you hunt tomorrow, Mr. Deronda?”

“Yes, I believe so.”

“You don’t object to hunting, then?”

“It is a sin I am inclined to, when I can’t get boating or cricket.”

“Do you object to my hunting?” said Gwendolen, with a saucy movement of the chin.

“I have no right to object to anything you choose to do.”

“You thought you had a right to object to my gambling,” persisted Gwendolen.

“I was sorry for it. I am not aware that I told you of my objection,” said Deronda, with his usual directness of gaze – a large-eyed gravity, innocent of any intention. His eyes had an intensity which seemed to express a special interest in everyone on whom he fixed them, and which might easily encourage them to ask for his help and sympathy.

“You hindered me from gambling again,” she answered. But she had no sooner spoken than she blushed over face and neck; and Deronda blushed, too, conscious that in the little affair of the necklace he had taken a questionable freedom.

It was impossible to speak further; and she turned away to a window, feeling that she had stupidly said what she had not meant to say, and yet being rather happy that she had plunged into this mutual understanding.

Deronda also did not dislike it. Gwendolen seemed more decidedly attractive than before; and certainly she had changed since Leubronn: she showed the consciousness of error rather than her former crude self-confidence.

That evening Mrs. Davilow said, "Did Mr. Deronda really spoil your play, Gwen?"

"Oh, it merely happened that he was looking on when I began to lose," said Gwendolen, carelessly. "I noticed him."

"I don't wonder: he is a striking young man. He puts me in mind of Italian paintings. One would guess, without being told, that there was foreign blood in his veins."

"Is there?"

"Mrs. Torrington says so. She told me that his mother was some foreigner of high rank."

"His mother?" said Gwendolen, rather sharply. "Then who was his father?"

"Well – everyone says he is the son of Sir Hugo Mallinger, who brought him up; though he passes for a ward. She says, if Sir Hugo could have done as he liked with his estates, he would have left them to this Mr. Deronda, since he has no legitimate son."

Gwendolen was silent; but her mother saw so marked an effect in her face that she was angry with herself for having repeated Mrs. Torrington's gossip. It seemed, on reflection, unsuited to her daughter's ear.

An image of the sad, dark-eyed, unknown mother had immediately arisen in Gwendolen's mind. A dark-eyed woman, no longer young, had become "stuff o' the conscience" to her.

That night when she was in her little bed, and only a dim light was burning, she said–

"Mamma, have men generally children before they are married?"

"No, dear," said Mrs. Davilow.

"If it were so, I ought to know," said Gwendolen indignantly.

"You are thinking of what I said about Mr. Deronda and Sir Hugo Mallinger. That is a very unusual case, dear."

"Does Lady Mallinger know?"

"She knows enough to satisfy her. That is quite clear, because Mr. Deronda has lived with them."

"And people think no worse of him?"

"Well, of course he does not inherit the property. But people are not obliged to know anything about his birth; he is very well received."

"I wonder whether he knows about it; and is angry with his father?"

"My dear child, why should you think of that?"

"Why?" said Gwendolen, impetuously, sitting up in her bed. "Haven't children reason to be angry with their parents? How can they help their parents marrying or not marrying?"

But a consciousness rushed upon her, which made her fall back again on her pillow. It was not only that she might seem to reproach her mother for her second marriage; but she had been led to a condemnation which made her own marriage a forbidden thing.

There was no further talk, and till sleep came Gwendolen lay struggling with the reasons against that marriage – reasons which pressed upon her newly, now that they were unexpectedly mirrored in the story of Deronda, whose relations with her had bitten themselves into the most permanent layers of feeling. But for all her debating, she was never troubled by the question whether it was defensible of her to marry

Grandcourt solely for convenience, without seeing him as one to whom she was to bind herself in duty.

In the morning there was a double excitement for her. She was going to hunt; and she was going again to see Deronda, in whom her interest had grown.

What sort of life and career had he before him? With only a little difference in events he might have been as important as Grandcourt, nay, might have held the very estates which Grandcourt was to have. But now, Deronda would probably some day see her bearing the title which would have been his own wife's.

She had now to see her marriage in a new light, as a hard, unfair exclusion of others. What she had heard about Deronda seemed to throw him into one group with Mrs. Glasher and her children. Perhaps Deronda himself was thinking of these things. Could he know of Mrs. Glasher? If he knew that she knew, he would despise her; but he could have no such knowledge. Would he, without that, despise her for marrying Grandcourt? His possible judgment of her actions was telling on her as strongly as Klesmer's judgment of her powers; but she felt some strength in saying—

“How can I help what other people have done? Things would not come right if I were to turn round now and declare that I would not marry Mr. Grandcourt.” And such turning round was out of the question. The horses in the chariot she had mounted were going at full speed.

And the immediate delightful fact was the hunt, where she would see Deronda, and where he would see her; for always lurking in her thoughts about him was the impression that he was very much interested in her. But today she was resolved not to repeat her folly of yesterday, as if she were anxious to say anything to him. Indeed, the hunt would be too absorbing.

So it was for a long while. Deronda was there, and within her sight; but this only added to the pleasure of the hunt. No accident happened to throw them together; and once they were within reach of home, and Gwendolen was returning with the company to Offendene, the sense of glorious excitement had gone. She was irritably disappointed that she had had no opportunity of speaking to Deronda, whom she would not see again, since he was to go away in a couple of days.

What was she going to say? That was not quite certain. She wanted to speak to him. Grandcourt was by her side, and Deronda's horse she could hear behind. The wish to speak to him was becoming imperious; and there was no chance of it unless she simply asserted her will and defied everything. Where the order of things could give way to Miss Gwendolen, it must be made to do so.

The horse-hoofs heard behind her were a growing irritation. She reined in her horse and looked back; Grandcourt also paused; but she, waving her whip with playful imperiousness, said, “Go on! I want to speak to Mr. Deronda.”

Grandcourt hesitated; it was an awkward situation for him. No gentleman, before marriage, could refuse a command delivered in this playful way. He rode on slowly, and she waited till Deronda came up. He looked at her with tacit inquiry, and she said at once, riding alongside him—

“Mr. Deronda, you must enlighten me. Why did you think it wrong for me to gamble? Is it because I am a woman?”

“Not altogether; but I regretted it the more because you were a woman,” said Deronda, with an irrepressible smile. Apparently it must be understood between them now that it was he who sent the necklace. “I think it would be better for men not to gamble. It is a taste likely to turn into a disease. And, besides, there is something revolting to me in raking a heap of money together, and chuckling over it, when

others are feeling the loss of it. There are enough events where our gain is another's loss: that is one of the ugly aspects of life. One should not get amusement out of exaggerating it." Deronda's voice had gathered some indignation.

"But you do admit that we can't help things," said Gwendolen. The answer had not been anything like what she had expected. "We can't always help it that our gain is another's loss."

"Clearly. But we should help it where we can."

Gwendolen, biting her lip, paused, and then forcing herself to speak playfully again, said—

"But why should you regret it more because I am a woman?"

"Perhaps because we need you to be better than us."

"But suppose we need men to be better than us," said Gwendolen with a little air of "check!"

"That is rather a difficulty," said Deronda, smiling. "I suppose I should have said, we each of us think it would be better for the other to be good."

"You see, I needed you to be better than I was – and you thought so," said Gwendolen, laughing, while she put her horse forward and joined Grandcourt, who made no observation.

"Don't you want to know what I had to say to Mr. Deronda?" said Gwendolen, whose pride required her to account for her conduct.

"Ah – no," said Grandcourt, coldly.

"Now that is the first impolite word you have spoken – that you don't wish to hear what I had to say," said Gwendolen, playing at a pout.

"I wish to hear what you say to me, not to other men," said Grandcourt.

"I wanted to make him tell me why he objected to my gambling, and he gave me a little sermon."

"Excuse me the sermon." If Gwendolen imagined that Grandcourt cared about her speaking to Deronda, he wished her to know that she was mistaken. But he was not fond of being told to ride on. She saw he was piqued, but did not mind. She had accomplished her object of speaking again to Deronda before he turned with the rest toward Diplow, while her lover attended her to Offendene, where he was to bid farewell before his absence on the unspecified journey. Grandcourt was going by train to Gadsmere.



## Chapter Thirty

Imagine a rambling house, built of grey stone and red-tiled, a round tower jutting at its corner: a great tree flourishing on one side, with a rookery behind it; on the other side a pool overhung with bushes, where the water-fowl fluttered and screamed: all around, a vast park, bordered by an old plantation. Outside the gate the country, once entirely rural and lovely, now black with coal mines, was chiefly peopled by men with candles stuck in their hats, whose dark faces frightened the children at Gadsmere – Mrs. Glasher’s four beautiful children, who had dwelt there for three years.

Now, in November, when the trees were leafless and the pool blackly shivering, the place was sombrely in keeping with the black roads and black mounds which seemed to put the district in mourning. But Mrs. Glasher liked Gadsmere as well as she would have liked any other abode. Its complete seclusion was to her taste. When she drove her two ponies with a waggonet full of children, there were no gentry in carriages to be met, only men of business in gigs; at church there were no eyes she needed to avoid, for to the curate she was simply a widow, the tenant of Gadsmere.

It was full ten years since the elopement of an Irish officer’s beautiful wife with young Grandcourt, and a consequent duel where the bullets wounded the air only. Most of those who remembered the affair now wondered what had become of the beautiful and brilliant Lydia Glasher after she had gone to live with young Grandcourt abroad.

That he should have disentangled himself from her seemed natural and desirable. As to her, it was thought that a woman who had forsaken her child along with her husband had probably sunk lower still. Grandcourt had of course got weary of her. He was much given to the pursuit of women: but a man in his position would in time desire to make a suitable marriage. No one talked of Mrs. Glasher now: she was a lost vessel after whom nobody would send out a search expedition; but Grandcourt was seen in harbour with his colours flying, as seaworthy as ever.

Yet, in fact, Grandcourt had never disentangled himself from Mrs. Glasher. His passion for her had been the strongest and most lasting he had ever known; and though it was now as dead as the music of a cracked flute, it had left a certain dull disposedness, which, on the death of her husband three years before, had made him consider marrying her, as he had wished to in the days of his first ardour. At that early time the husband would not oblige him by divorcing Mrs. Glasher.

In contrast, Mrs. Glasher herself was at first careless about the possibility of marriage. It was enough that she had escaped from a disagreeable husband and found bliss with a lover who had completely fascinated her – young, handsome, amorous, and living in the best style. She was an impassioned, vivacious woman, fond of adoration, exasperated by five years of marital rudeness as a disregarded wife. The one blot on her vision of her new pleasant world, was the knowledge that she left her three-year-old boy, who died two years afterward, and whose first tones saying “mamma” retained a difference from those of the children that came after.

But now, over the changes of the years, the desire that Grandcourt should marry her had become dominant. This was on behalf of her children, whom she loved with a devotion charged with the added passion of atonement. She had no repentance except in this direction. If Grandcourt married her, the children would be none the worse off for what had passed: they would be at no disadvantage with the world if her son was made his father’s heir. Her love for Grandcourt had long resolved itself into anxiety

that he should marry her, and for her children's sake she was prepared to endure anything quietly in marriage. She was acute enough to cherish Grandcourt's flickering purpose by not molesting him with passionate appeals and scene-making. His incalculable turns, and his tendency to harden under beseeching, had created dread in her. But her reticence made her bitter: the withheld sting was gathering venom.

She was absolutely dependent on Grandcourt. Though he had always been liberal in expenses for her, he had said that he would never settle anything except by will; and it often occurred to her that, even if she did not become Grandcourt's wife, he might never have a legitimate son; so in the end her boy might be made heir to his estates. No son could promise to have more of his father's physique.

But her becoming Grandcourt's wife was so far from being impossible, that even Lush had thought Grandcourt was as likely to marry Mrs. Glasher as anyone else. Indeed, when Lush thought that Grandcourt had an idea of attempting to win Miss Arrowpoint, he had supported that project instead. But both prospects had been eclipsed by Gwendolen's appearance on the scene; and Mrs. Glasher entered with eagerness into Lush's plan of hindering that new danger by setting up a barrier in Gwendolen's mind.

After that, she had heard from Lush of Gwendolen's departure, and that the danger was gone; but there had been no letter to tell her that the danger had returned and had become a certainty. She had since then written to Grandcourt, as she did habitually, and he had been longer than usual in answering. She thought that he might intend coming to see her, and she hoped that a frustrated courtship might dispose him to slip the more easily into his old track.

Grandcourt had two purposes in coming to Gadsmere: to convey the news of his approaching marriage in person; and to get from Lydia his mother's diamonds, which long ago he had handed to her. These particular diamonds were not mountains of light – they were mere peas and haricots for the ears, neck and hair; but they were worth some thousands, and Grandcourt wished to have them for his wife. Formerly when he had asked Lydia to put them into his keeping again, simply on the ground that they would be safer, she had quietly but absolutely refused, declaring that they were quite safe; and had said, "If you ever marry another woman I will give them up to her."

At that time Grandcourt had no motive which urged him to persist, and he had this grace in him, that he did not like to exercise his power of cowing or disappointing her as he did with others. A severe interpreter might say that the mere facts of their relation to each other, the melancholy position of this woman who depended on his will, made a standing banquet for his delight in dominating. But there was something more: there was the memory of the power she once had over him, which inclined him to espouse a familiar past rather than rouse himself to the expectation of novelty. But now novelty had taken hold of him.

Mrs. Glasher was seated in the pleasant room where she habitually passed her mornings with her children. The window looked out on broad gravel and grass; the old oak table was littered with the children's toys and books. The three girls, seated round their mother, were miniature portraits of her – dark-eyed, delicate-featured brunettes, the eldest being barely nine. The boy was seated on the carpet, bending his blonde head over the animals from a Noah's ark, admonishing them in a voice of threatening command, and occasionally licking them to see if the colours would hold.

Mrs. Glasher had dressed carefully, for each day now she said to herself that Grandcourt might come. Her head, which though emaciated, had an ineffaceable beauty, rose impressively above her bronze-coloured silk and velvet, and the gold

necklace which Grandcourt had first clasped round her neck years ago. Not that she had any pleasure in her looks; her chief thought when she looked in the glass was, "How changed!" But the children kissed the pale cheeks and never found them deficient. That love was now the one end of her life.

Suddenly Mrs. Glasher turned her head and listened. "Hush, dear! I think some one is coming."

Henleigh the boy jumped up and said, "Mamma, is it the miller with my donkey?"

He got no answer, and going up to his mamma's knee repeated his question insistently. But the door opened, and the servant announced Mr. Grandcourt.

Mrs. Glasher rose in some agitation. Henleigh frowned at him in disgust at his not being the miller, and the three little girls lifted up their dark eyes to him timidly. They had none of them any particular liking for this friend of mamma's – in fact, when he put his hand on Henleigh's head, the boy began to beat the arm away with his fists. The little girls submitted bashfully to be patted under the chin, but on the whole it seemed better to send them into the garden, where they were presently dancing and chatting with the dogs on the gravel.

"How far have you come?" said Mrs. Glasher.

"From Diplow," he answered slowly, seating himself opposite her. She noted his unseeing gaze.

"You are tired, then."

"No, I rested at the Junction – a hideous hole. These railway journeys are always a confounded bore."

Grandcourt rubbed his face, and looked at his crossed knee and blameless boot, as if a stranger sat opposite him, instead of a woman quivering with suspense. Imagine the difference in emotion between this woman whom the years had worn to sharper eagerness, and this man whom they were dulling into obstinacy.

"I expected to see you – it was so long since I had heard from you," said Mrs. Glasher. She had a quick, incisive way of speaking.

"Yes," drawled Grandcourt. "But you found the money paid into the bank."

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Glasher, curtly, tingling with impatience. Always before, Grandcourt had taken more notice of her and the children than he did to-day.

"Yes," he resumed, playing with his whisker, "the time has gone on at rather a rattling pace. But there has been a good deal happening, as you know." Here he turned his eyes upon her.

"What do I know?" said she, sharply.

He left a pause before he said, without change of manner, "That I was thinking of marrying. You saw Miss Harleth?"

"*She* told you that?" The pale cheeks looked even paler.

"No. Lush told me," was the slow answer. It was as if the thumb-screw was being placed by creeping hands within sight of the expectant victim.

"Good God! say at once that you are going to marry her," she burst out passionately, her hands tightly clasped.

"Of course, it must happen some time or other, Lydia," said he; really, now the thumb-screw was on, not wishing to make the pain worse.

"You didn't always see the necessity."

"Perhaps not. I see it now."

In those few words she felt as absolute a resistance as if her thin fingers had been pushing at an iron door. She knew her helplessness, and shrank from testing it by any appeal – shrank from crying in a dead ear and clinging to dead knees, only to see the

immovable face and feel the rigid limbs. She did not weep nor speak. At last she rose, with a spasmodic effort, and, unconscious of everything but her wretchedness, pressed her forehead against the hard, cold glass of the window. The children, playing on the gravel, took this as a sign that she wanted them, and, running forward, stood in front of her with their sweet faces upturned expectantly. This roused her: she shook her head at them, waved them off, and overcome, sank back in the nearest chair.

Grandcourt had risen too. He was doubly annoyed – at the scene itself, and at the sense that no imperiousness of his could save him from it; but the task had to be gone through. She looked up at him and said bitterly–

“The children and I are of no consequence to you. You wish to get away again and be with Miss Harleth.”

“Don’t make the affair more disagreeable than it need be, Lydia. It’s deucedly disagreeable to me to see you making yourself miserable. You must make your mind up to it – you and the children will be provided for as usual – and there’s an end of it.”

She dared not answer. This intense woman had the iron of a mother’s anguish in her soul, and it had made her capable of a repression harder than shrieking and struggle. But underneath the silence there was vindictive hatred: she wished that the marriage might make them wretched. He went on–

“You may go on living here. But I think of by-and-by settling a good sum on you and the children, and you can live where you like. You will have nothing to complain of. I don’t care a curse about the money.”

“If you did care about it, I suppose you would not give it us,” said Lydia.

“That’s a devilishly unfair thing to say,” Grandcourt replied, in a lower tone; “and I advise you not to say that sort of thing again.”

“Should you punish me by leaving the children in beggary?” she said in spite of herself.

“There is no question about leaving the children in beggary,” said Grandcourt, still in his low voice. “Do not say things that you will repent of.”

“I am used to repenting,” said she, bitterly. “Perhaps you will repent. You have already repented of loving me.”

“All this will only make it uncommonly difficult for us to meet again. What friend have you besides me?”

“Quite true.”

The words came like a low moan. Through her mind flashed the wish that he might feel a misery and loneliness which would drive him back to her. But no! he would go unscathed; it was she that had to suffer.

With this the scorching words were ended. Although Grandcourt still had to speak to Lydia on the second object of his visit, like a second surgical operation it seemed to require an interval. The hours had to go by; there was eating to be done; the children came in – all this mechanism of life had to be gone through with the dreary constraint which is often felt in domestic quarrels. Lydia felt a savage glory in her children’s loveliness, as if it would taunt Grandcourt with his indifference.

He acquitted himself with bored grace – nursed the little Antonia, who sat with her eyes upturned to his bald head – and propitiated Henleigh by promising him a beautiful saddle and bridle. It was only the two eldest girls who had known him as a continual presence; and the intervening years had overlaid their memories with bashfulness.

He and Lydia occasionally, in the presence of the servants, made a conventional remark; otherwise they never spoke; and the thought in Grandcourt’s mind all the

while was of his own infatuation in having given her those diamonds, which obliged him to incur the nuisance of speaking about them. He did not like to ask for anything; but he must ask for the diamonds which he had promised to Gwendolen.

At last they were alone again. Grandcourt looked at his watch, and said, in an apparently indifferent drawl, "There is one thing I had to mention, Lydia. My diamonds – you have them."

"Yes, I have them," she answered promptly, rising and standing with her fingers threaded. She had expected the topic, and made her resolve; but she meant to carry it out, if possible, without exasperating him.

"They are in this house, I suppose?"

"No; they are in the bank at Dudley."

"Get them away, will you? I must make an arrangement for your delivering them to some one."

"Make no arrangement. They shall be delivered to the person you intended them for."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. I have always told you that I would give them up to your wife. I shall keep my word. She is not your wife yet."

"This is foolery," said Grandcourt, with undertoned disgust. It was too irritating that Lydia had any sort of mastery over him in spite of her dependence. "The diamonds must be delivered to me before my marriage."

"What is your wedding-day?"

"The tenth. There is no time to be lost."

"And where do you go after the marriage?"

He did not reply except by looking more sullen. Presently he said, "You must get them from the bank before then and meet me; it's a great nuisance."

"No; I shall not do that. They shall be delivered to her safely. I shall keep my word."

"Do you mean to say," said Grandcourt, just audibly, turning to face her, "that you will not do as I tell you?"

"Yes, I mean that." The poor creature was immediately conscious that the effect of her words on her own position must be mischievous. But the words had been spoken.

He was highly irritated, but he shrank from the only sort of threat that would frighten her – if she believed it. And there was nothing he hated more than to be forced into anything like violence even in words: his will must impose itself without trouble. After a moment, he said–

"Infernal idiots that women are!"

"Why will you not tell me where you are going after the marriage? I could be at the wedding if I liked, and learn in that way," said Lydia, using the one suicidal form of threat within her power.

"Of course, if you like, you can play the mad woman," said Grandcourt, with *sotto voce* scorn. He was in a state of disgust and embitterment quite new in their relationship. This woman had a terrible power of annoyance; and the rash hurry of his proceedings had left opportunities open. He stood for several minutes in silence reviewing the situation – considering how he could act upon her. Unlike himself, she was of a direct nature, and there was one often-experienced effect which he thought he could count upon now.

He did not speak again, but looked at his watch, rang the bell, and ordered the vehicle to be brought round. Then he walked away silently without turning his eyes upon her.

She was suffering the horrible conflict of self-reproach and tenacity. She imagined Grandcourt leaving her without even looking at her again – herself left behind in lonely uncertainty – hearing nothing – not knowing whether she had done her children harm – feeling that she had perhaps made him hate her, and defeated her own motives. And yet she could not bear to give up a sweet revenge.

“Don’t let us part in anger, Henleigh,” she began: “it is a very little thing I ask. If you tell me where you are going on the wedding-day I will take care that the diamonds shall be delivered to her without scandal. Without scandal,” she repeated entreatingly.

“Such preposterous whims make a woman odious,” said Grandcourt, not giving way in look or movement. “What is the use of talking to mad people?”

“Yes, I am foolish – loneliness has made me foolish – indulge me.” Sobs rose as she spoke. “If you will indulge me in this one folly I will never trouble you.” She burst into hysterical crying, and said almost with a scream – “I will be very meek.”

There was a strange mixture of acting and reality in this passion. She kept hold of her purpose as a child might tighten its hand over a small stolen thing, crying and denying all the while. Even Grandcourt was surprised: this childish caprice was unlike the normally dignified Lydia. He came close up to her, and said, in his low imperious tone, “Be quiet. I will never forgive you if you present yourself and make a scene.”

She pressed her handkerchief against her face, and said, in a muffled voice, “If you let me have my way, I promise not to thrust myself forward again. I have never broken my word to you – how many have you broken to me? I don’t reproach you – I only ask you to let me give up the diamonds in my own way. Have I not borne it well? Everything is to be taken away from me, and when I ask for a straw, you deny it me. I will not bear to have it denied me.”

Grandcourt had a baffling sense that he had to deal with something like madness; he could only govern by giving way. He said sullenly, “We are going to Ryelands.”

“They shall be delivered to her there,” said Lydia. Now that she had gained her point, she was prepared to humble herself. “Forgive me; I will never vex you again,” she said beseechingly.

“You had better keep that promise. You have made me feel uncommonly ill with your folly,” said Grandcourt, apparently choosing this statement as the strongest possible use of language.

“Poor thing!” cried Lydia, with a faint smile. She was now ready to coax him if he would let her, so that they might part in some degree reconciled. She ventured to lay her hand on his shoulder, and he did not move away. She had so far succeeded in alarming him, that he was not sorry for these proofs of returned subjection.

“Light a cigar,” she said, soothingly, taking the case from his breast-pocket.

Amidst such caressing signs of mutual fear they parted. The effect that clung and gnawed within Grandcourt was a sense of his imperfect mastery.

## Chapter Thirty-one

On the day Gwendolen Harleth married Mr. Grandcourt, the morning was clear and bright, and a slight frost crisped the leaves. Half Pennicote turned out to see the bridal party, lining the pathway to the church. An old friend of the rector's performed the marriage ceremony, the rector himself acting as the father of the bride.

Only two faces showed signs of sadness – Mrs. Davilow's and Anna's. The mother's delicate eyelids were pink, as if she had been crying half the night; and no one was surprised that, splendid as the match was, she should feel the parting from a daughter who was the flower of her children. It was less understood why Anna should be troubled. Everyone else seemed to reflect the brilliancy of the occasion – the bride most of all. It was agreed that as to figure she was worthy to be a "lady o' title": as to face, perhaps she might be a little more rosy, but she matched her husband's complexion. Anyhow he must be very fond of her; and it was to be hoped that he would never cast it up to her that she had been going out to service as a governess.

Gwendolen, in fact, never showed more spring in her step, more lustre in her eyes: she had the brilliancy of strong excitement. She had wrought herself up to much the same condition as that in which she stood at the gambling-table when Deronda was looking at her, and she began to lose. There was an enjoyment in it: the uneasiness of her growing conscience was disregarded, amidst the gratification of her ambitious vanity and desire for luxury. This morning she could not have said truly that she repented her acceptance of Grandcourt, or that any hazy fears marred the glowing scene in which she was the central object.

That she was doing something wrong – that a punishment might be hanging over her – that Deronda very likely despised her for marrying Grandcourt, as he had despised her for gambling – above all, that the cord which united her with this lover and which she had until now held by the hand, was now being flung over her neck – all these dimly understood facts and vague impressions had been disturbing her during the weeks of her engagement. But this morning that agitation was thrust down with exulting defiance as she felt herself standing at the game of life with many eyes upon her, daring everything to win – or if to lose, to lose with *éclat* and importance.

But this morning she did not fear a losing destiny: she thought that she was entering on a fuller power of managing circumstances. The youthful egoism out of which she had been shaken by trouble, humiliation, and a sense of culpability, had returned to her with newly-fed strength. She did not in the least appear a tearful, tremulous bride. With erect head and elastic footstep, she was walking among illusions; and yet, too, she was conscious that she was a little intoxicated.

"Thank God you bear it so well, my darling!" said Mrs. Davilow, when she helped Gwendolen to doff her bridal white and put on her travelling dress.

"Why, you might have said that, if I had been going to Mrs. Mompert's, you dear, sad, mamma!" said Gwendolen, putting her hands to her mother's cheeks with laughing tenderness. "Here am I – Mrs. Grandcourt! what else would you have me? You were ready to die with vexation when you thought that I would not be Mrs. Grandcourt."

"Hush, my child, for heaven's sake!" said Mrs. Davilow. "How can I help feeling it when I am parting from you? But I can bear anything gladly if you are happy."

"Not gladly, mamma, no!" said Gwendolen, shaking her head, and smiling. "Willingly you would bear it, but always sorrowfully. Sorrowing is your sauce; you can take nothing without it." Then, kissing her, she said, gaily, "And you shall sorrow

over my having everything glorious – splendid houses, horses – and diamonds, I shall have diamonds – and being Lady Perhaps – and grand here – and tantivy there – and always loving you better than anybody else in the world.”

“My sweet child! But I shall not be jealous if you love your husband better; and he will expect to be first.”

Gwendolen thrust out her lips and chin with a pretty grimace, saying, “Rather a ridiculous expectation. However, I don’t mean to treat him ill, unless he deserves it.”

Then the two fell into a clinging embrace, and Gwendolen could not hinder a rising sob when she said, “I wish you were going with me, mamma.”

But the slight dew on her long eyelashes only made her the more charming when she gave her hand to Grandcourt to be led to the carriage.

\* \* \*

There was a railway journey of some fifty miles before the new husband and wife reached the station near Ryelands. It was hardly more than twilight when they entered the park-gates, but still Gwendolen, looking out of the carriage-window, could see the grand outlines of the scene – the long winding drive bordered with evergreens: then the opening of wide grassy spaces; till at last the white house appeared, with a wood for a background, and a terrace in front.

Gwendolen had been at her liveliest during the journey, chatting incessantly, ignoring any change in their position since yesterday; and Grandcourt had been rather ecstatically quiescent, while she turned his gentle seizure of her hand into a grasp of his hand by both hers, vivacious as a kitten that will not sit quiet to be petted.

She was really somewhat feverish in her excitement; and now in this drive through the park her heart palpitated newly. Was it at the novelty, or the almost incredible fulfilment about to be given to her girlish dreams of being “somebody” – walking through her own furlong of corridor, while her servants were as nought in her presence – being in short the heroine of an admired play without the pains of art? Was it the closeness of this fulfilment which made her heart flutter? or was it some dim forecast, the insistent penetration of suppressed experience, creating the dread of a crisis?

She fell silent as they approached the gates, and when her husband said, “Here we are at home!” and for the first time kissed her on the lips, she hardly knew of it: it was no more than the passive acceptance of a greeting in the midst of an absorbing show. Was not all her hurrying life of the last three months a show, in which her consciousness was a wondering spectator? After the excitement of the day, a numbness had come over her.

But there was a brilliant light in the hall – warmth, carpets, full-length portraits, Olympian statues, assiduous servants. Not many servants, however: and Gwendolen’s new maid, who had come with her, was taken under guidance by the housekeeper. Gwendolen was led by Grandcourt along a subtly-scented corridor, into an ante-room where she saw an open doorway sending out a rich glow of light and colour.

“These are our dens,” said Grandcourt. “You will like to be quiet here till dinner. We shall dine early.”

He pressed her hand to his lips and moved away, more in love than he had ever expected to be.

Gwendolen took off her hat and cloak, threw herself into a chair by the glowing hearth, and saw herself repeated in glass panels with all her faint-green satin surroundings.



The housekeeper had entered and seemed disposed to linger; from curiosity, Gwendolen thought, and she said, "Will you tell Hudson I shall not want her again, unless I ring?"

Coming forward, the housekeeper said, "Here is a packet, madam, which I was ordered to give into nobody's hands but yours, when you were alone. The person who brought it said it was a present particularly ordered by Mr. Grandcourt; but he was not to know of its arrival till he saw you wear it. Excuse me, madam; I felt it right to obey orders."

Gwendolen took the packet and let it lie on her lap till she heard the doors close. It came into her mind that the packet might contain the diamonds which Grandcourt had mentioned as being deposited somewhere and to be given to her on her marriage. In this moment of confused feeling and creeping luxurious languor she was glad of this diversion, of having her own diamonds to try on.

Within the sealed paper coverings was a box: within the box there was a jewel-case; and now she felt no doubt that she had the diamonds. But on opening the case, she saw a letter lying above them. She knew the handwriting. It was as if an adder had lain on them. Her heart gave a leap; and as she opened the paper, it shook in her trembling hands. It thrust its words upon her.

'These diamonds, which were once given with ardent love to Lydia Glasher, she passes on to you. You have broken your word to her, so that you might possess what was hers. Perhaps you think of being happy; but the man you have married has a withered heart. His best young love was mine. It is dead: but I am the grave in which your chance of happiness is buried. You had your warning. You have chosen to injure me and my children. He had meant to marry me. He would have married me at last, if you had not broken your word. You will have your punishment. I desire it with all my soul.

'Will you give him this letter to set him against me and ruin us – me and my children? Shall you like to stand before your husband with these diamonds on you, and these words in his thoughts and yours? Will he think you have any right to complain when he has made you miserable? You took him with your eyes open. The wrong you have done me will be your curse.'

It seemed at first as if Gwendolen's eyes were spell-bound in reading the horrible words of the letter over and over again; but a sudden spasm of terror made her lean forward and stretch out the paper toward the fire. It flew like a feather from her trembling fingers and was caught up in a great draught of flame. The casket fell on the floor and the diamonds rolled out. She took no notice, but fell back in her chair again helpless. She sat so for a long while, knowing little more than that she was feeling ill, and that those written words kept repeating themselves to her.

Truly here were poisoned gems, and the poison had entered this poor young creature.

After that long while, there was a tap at the door and Grandcourt entered, dressed for dinner. The sight of him brought a new nervous shock, and Gwendolen screamed again and again with hysterical violence. He had expected to see her dressed and smiling, ready to be led down. He saw her pallid, shrieking as it seemed with terror, the jewels scattered around her on the floor. Was it a fit of madness?

In some form or other the Furies had crossed his threshold.

## Chapter Thirty-two

Deronda, on his return to town, assured Sir Hugo of his having lodged in Grandcourt's mind an understanding that he could get fifty thousand pounds by giving up Diplow; and that Grandcourt appeared inclined to keep up friendly communications.

"And what did you think of the future bride?" said Sir Hugo.

"I thought better of her than I did in Leubronn. Roulette was not a good setting for her; it brought out something of the demon. At Diplow she seemed much more womanly and attractive – less hard and self-possessed."

"Don't flirt with her too much, Dan," said Sir Hugo, meaning to be agreeably playful. "If you make Grandcourt savage when they come to the Abbey at Christmas, it will interfere with my affairs."

"I can stay in town, sir."

"No, no. Lady Mallinger and the children can't do without you at Christmas. Only don't make mischief – unless you can get up a duel, and manage to shoot Grandcourt, which might be worth a little inconvenience."

"I don't think you ever saw me flirt," said Deronda, not amused.

"Oh, haven't I, though?" said Sir Hugo, provokingly. "You are always looking tenderly at the women, and talking to them in a Jesuitical way. You are a dangerous young fellow."

What was the use of being exasperated at a tasteless joke? Sir Hugo's notion of flirting, it was to be hoped, was rather peculiar; for his own part, Deronda was sure that he had never flirted. But he was glad that the baronet had no knowledge about the repurchase of Gwendolen's necklace to feed his taste for this kind of joking.

He would be on his guard in future; for example, in his behaviour at Mrs. Meyrick's, where he was about to pay his first visit since his arrival from Leubronn. For Mirah was certainly a creature in whom it was difficult not to show a tender interest.

Mrs. Meyrick had sent Deronda a report of Mirah's well-being. "We are getting fonder of her every day," she had written. "At breakfast-time we all look forward to seeing her come in; and we listen to her as if she were a native from a new country. I have not heard a word from her lips that gives me a doubt about her. She is quite contented and full of gratitude. My daughters are learning singing from her, and they hope to get her other pupils; for she is anxious to work, like my girls. Mab says our life has become like a fairy tale, and she is afraid that Mirah will turn into a nightingale again and fly away. Her voice is just perfect: not loud and strong, but searching and melting."

But Mrs. Meyrick did not tell him how Amy and Mab had accompanied Mirah to the synagogue, and found the Jewish faith less reconcilable with their wishes. They kept silence out of delicacy to Mirah, with whom her religion was a tender subject; but after a while Amy could not restrain a question.

"Excuse me, Mirah, but does it seem quite right to you that the women should sit behind rails in a gallery apart?"

"Yes, I never thought of anything else," said Mirah, with mild surprise.

"And you like better to see the men with their hats on?" said Mab, cautiously proposing the smallest item of difference.

“Oh, yes. I like what I have always seen there, because it brings back to me feelings I would not part with for anything else in the world.”

After this, any criticism would have seemed to these generous little people an inhospitable cruelty. Mirah’s religion was of one fibre with her affections.

“She says she is a very bad Jewess, and does not know half her people’s religion,” said Amy, when Mirah was gone to bed. “Perhaps it would gradually melt away from her, and she would pass into Christianity like the rest of the world, if she got to love us very much, and never found her mother.”

“Oh!” cried Mab. “I wish I were not such a hideous Christian. How can an ugly Christian, who is always dropping her work, convert a beautiful Jewess, who has not a fault?”

“It may be wicked of me,” said shrewd Kate, “but I cannot help wishing that her mother may not be found. There might be something unpleasant.”

“I don’t think it, my dear,” said Mrs. Meyrick. “I believe Mirah is cut out after the pattern of her mother. And what a joy it would be to her to have such a daughter brought back again!”

Not only the Meyricks, whose knowledge had been acquired by the irregular foraging to which clever girls have usually been reduced, but Deronda himself, with all his masculine instruction, had been made aware by Mirah’s coming that they knew hardly anything about modern Judaism or Jewish history. Deronda, like his neighbours, had regarded Judaism as a sort of eccentric fossilized form which an accomplished man might dispense with studying, and leave to specialists. But Mirah, with her terrified flight from one parent, and her yearning after the other, had flashed on him the fact that Judaism was something still central in human lives; and while travelling with Sir Hugo he began to look for synagogues and books about the Jews.

It was on this journey that he first entered a Jewish synagogue, at Frankfort, where his group rested one Friday. In exploring the Judengasse, the Jewish ghetto, which he had seen long before, he remembered well enough its picturesque old houses; what his eyes chiefly dwelt on now were the human types there; and his thought, busily connecting them with the past of their race, stirred that fibre of historic sympathy which had grown within him.

His early-wakened sensibility and reflectiveness had developed into a many-sided sympathy. The indefiniteness of his sentiments threatened to hinder any persistent course of action: as soon as he took up any side, he began to see things as they probably appeared to others; so that any strong partisanship, unless it were against oppression, seemed insincere to him. He tended to fall into that reflective analysis which neutralizes sympathy. Few men were able to keep themselves clearer of vices than he; yet he hated vices only mildly, thinking of them as part of human nature, which he should trace with understanding and pity. He was fervidly democratic in his feeling for the multitude, and yet, through his affections, intensely conservative, loath to part with ancient forms which, for him, were alive with memory and sentiment.

He suspected himself of loving too well the losing causes of the world. And yet his fear of falling into an unreasoning narrow hatred constrained him: he apologized for the heirs of privilege; he shrank with dislike from the loser’s bitterness. His too diffusive sympathy was in danger of paralyzing the force of his indignation against wrong; and he had become so keenly aware of this that he longed for some event, or inward light, to urge him into action, and focus his energy. He was ceasing to care for knowledge unless it spoke to his emotions; and he dreaded, as if it were a dwelling-place of lost souls, that dead anatomy of culture which turns the universe into a mere

ceaseless answer to queries, and knows, not everything, but everything else about everything – as if one should know everything about the scent of violets while being unable to detect it oneself.

But how and whence was the needed event to come? – the influence that would make him what he longed to be – an organic part of social life, instead of roaming in it like a yearning disembodied spirit, stirred with a vague social passion, but without a home to render fellowship real? It is one thing to see your road, another to cut it.

He found some of the fault in the way he had been brought up, which had laid no special demands on him and had given him no fixed relationship except a doubtful one; but he also knew that he had fallen into a meditative numbness, and was gliding farther and farther from that energetic life which he would have proclaimed to be the best of all life, and the only way worth living. He wanted some way of keeping emotion strong. To pound the objects of sentiment into small dust, yet keep sentiment alive and active, was something like the famous recipe for making cannon – first take a round hole and then enclose it with iron; whatever you do holding fast to the hole.

This was the under-current in Deronda's mind while he was reading law or imperfectly attending to polite conversation. Meanwhile he had not set about any function in particular with zeal and steadiness.

Under his calm exterior he felt the presence of poetry in everyday events. The Judengasse set him musing on two poetic elements of our historic life: the faint beginnings of faiths and institutions; and their obscure lingering decay, the dust with which they are covered only enhancing their former grandeur and glory.

This imaginative stirring, as he left the Judengasse and sauntered in the warm evening air, meaning to find his way to the synagogue, neutralized the repellent effect of certain ugly little incidents on his way. Turning into an old book-shop to ask the time of service at the old orthodox synagogue, he was affectionately directed by a precocious Jewish youth, who then cheated him in charging him for a book. Meanwhile at the opposite counter a deaf tradesman was conversing with a dingy man in a tall coat hanging from neck to heel, a bag in hand, who shouted at him in Jew-dialect, and who had no sooner disappeared than another dingy man of the same pattern issued from the gloom of the shop and shouted in the same dialect.

In fact, Deronda saw various queer-looking Israelites just distinguishable from queer-looking Christians of the same mixed morals. In his anxiety about Mirah's relatives, he had lately been thinking of vulgar Jews with a sort of personal alarm. But this evening, conscious that he was falling into an unfair and ridiculous exaggeration, he began to correct his own prejudices. At sunset, he arrived at the *Rabbinische Schule*, and entered with a good congregation of men.

He happened to take his seat in a line with an elderly man, whose ample white beard and felt hat framed a fine profile which might as easily be Italian as Hebrew. Their eyes met; an undesirable chance with unknown persons, and a reason to Deronda for not looking again; but he immediately found an open prayer-book pushed toward him and had to bow his thanks.

The reader had mounted to the *almemor* or platform, and the service began. Deronda, having looked enough at the German translation of the Hebrew in the book before him to know that he was hearing Psalms and Old Testament passages, gave himself up to that strong effect of chanted liturgies which is independent of meaning – like the effect of an Allegri's *Miserere* or a Palestrina's *Magnificat*. The most powerful feeling with a liturgy is the prayer which yearns to escape from the limitations of our own weakness and asks Good to enter and abide with us; or else a

lifting up of Gladness, a *Gloria in excelsis* that such Good exists; both the yearning and the exultation gathering force from the sense of communion which has lasted through long generations of struggling fellow-men.

The Hebrew liturgy, like others, has its transitions of litany, lyric, proclamation, dry statement and blessing; but this evening, all were one for Deronda: the chant of the *Chazan's* or Reader's grand wide-ranging voice with its passage from monotony to sudden cries, the outburst of sweet boys' voices from the little choir, the devotional swaying of men's bodies backward and forward, the very shabbiness of the building where a national faith which had penetrated the thinking of half the world was finding a remote echo: all were blended for him as one expression of a tragic, glorious history.

He wondered at the strength of his own feeling. The service embodied a passionate regret, which, if he had known the liturgy for the Day of Reconciliation, he might have understood as; "Happy the eye which saw all these things; but verily to hear only of them afflicts our soul. Happy the eye that saw our temple and the joy of our congregation; but verily to hear only of them afflicts our soul. Happy the eye that saw the fingers when tuning every kind of song; but verily to hear only of them afflicts our soul."

But with the end of the service and the movement of many indifferent faces there darted into his mind the frigid idea that he had probably been alone in his feeling, and perhaps the only person in the congregation for whom the service was more than a dull routine. He was moving away with the rest, when he felt a hand on his arm, and turning saw the white-bearded face of his neighbour, who said to him in German, "Excuse me, young gentleman – what is your parentage – your mother's family – her maiden name?"

Deronda felt resistant, and inclined to shake off the touch on his arm. He said coldly, "I am an Englishman."

The questioner looked at him dubiously for an instant, and then lifted his hat and turned away; whether under a sense of having made a mistake or of having been repulsed, Deronda was uncertain. In his walk back to the hotel he reflected that he could not have acted differently. How could he say that he did not know the name of his mother's family to that total stranger? – who indeed had taken a liberty in asking the abrupt question, probably thinking he saw some likeness. The incident, he told himself, was trivial; but it was a reason, however, for his not mentioning the synagogue to the Mallingers.

This halt at Frankfort was taken on their way home, and its impressions were kept alive in him by the duty of caring for Mirah's welfare. That question about his parentage, though trivial, reinforced his anxiety as to the effect of finding Mirah's relatives, and his resolve to proceed with caution. If he made any unpleasant discovery, was he bound to tell her and perhaps cast a new net of trouble around her?

When he visited the Meyricks at four o'clock, he found Mirah seated with Mrs. Meyrick and Mab by the open piano, with all the glorious company of engravings. The dainty neatness of her hair and dress, and the glow of tranquil happiness in her face, made a contrast to his first vision of her that was delightful to Deronda's eyes. Mirah herself was thinking of it, and on their greeting said –

"See how different I am from the miserable creature by the river! All because you found me and brought me to the very best."

"It was my good chance to find you," said Deronda. "Any other man would have been glad to do what I did."

“That is not the right way to think about it,” said Mirah, shaking her head with decisive gravity, “It was you, and not another, who found me and were good to me.”

“I agree with Mirah,” said Mrs. Meyrick. “Saint Anybody is a bad saint to pray to.”

“Besides, Anybody could not have brought me to you,” said Mirah, smiling at Mrs. Meyrick. “And I would rather be with you than with anyone in the world except my mother. I feel like a lost bird put into a warm nest. I hardly thought before that the world could ever be as happy and without fear as it is to me now.” She looked meditative a moment, and then said plaintively, “Sometimes I am a *little* afraid that I may meet my father in the street. It seems dreadful that I should be afraid of meeting him. That is my only sorrow.”

“It is not very probable,” said Deronda, wishing that it were less so; then, not to let the opportunity escape— “Would it be a great grief to you if you were never to meet your mother?”

She did not answer immediately. Then she said firmly, “I want her to know that I have always loved her, and if she is alive I want to comfort her. She may be dead. If she were, I should long to know where she was buried; and to know whether my brother lives, so that we can remember her together. But I would try not to grieve. I shall have her with me in my mind, as I have always had. We can never be really parted. I have always tried not to do what would hurt her. Only, she might be sorry that I was not a good Jewess.”

“In what way are you not a good Jewess?” asked Deronda.

“I am ignorant, and we never observed the laws, but lived among Christians just as they did. I have heard my father laugh at the strictness of the Jews about their food and customs, and not liking Christians. I think my mother was strict; but she could never want me not to like people who have been so good to me. I do not believe that my mother would wish me not to love my best friends. She would be grateful to them.” Here Mirah turned to Mrs. Meyrick, and with a sudden lighting up of her face, said, “Oh, if we ever do meet, I should be so full of blessedness my soul would know no want but to love her!”

“God bless you, child!” said Mrs. Meyrick involuntarily. Looking at Deronda, she said, “It is curious that Mirah, who remembers her mother so well, cannot recall her brother the least bit – except the feeling of having been carried by him when she was tired, and of his being near when she was in her mother’s lap. It must be that he was rarely at home. He was already grown up.”

“He is good; I feel sure Ezra is good,” said Mirah, eagerly. “He loved my mother. I remember more of him than that. I remember my mother’s voice once calling, ‘Ezra!’ and then his answering from a distance ‘Mother!’ I feel sure he is good. I have always taken comfort from that.”

It was impossible to answer this either with agreement or doubt. Mrs. Meyrick and Deronda exchanged a quick glance: about this brother she felt as painfully dubious as he did. But Mirah went on, absorbed in her memories—

“Is it not wonderful how I remember voices better than anything else? I think they must go deeper into us than other things. I have often fancied heaven might be made of voices.”

“Like your singing – yes,” said Mab, who spoke bashfully, as was her wont in the presence of Prince Camaralzaman. “Ma, do ask Mirah to sing. Mr. Deronda has not heard her.”

“Would it be disagreeable to you to sing now?” said Deronda, with a more deferential gentleness than he had ever been conscious of before.

“Oh, I shall like it,” said Mirah. “My voice has come back a little with rest.”

Perhaps her ease of manner was due to something more than the simplicity of her nature. The circumstances of her life made her think of it as work, which she had begun before self-consciousness was born.

She immediately rose and went to the piano. Imagine her with her dark hair brushed from her temples, yet showing tiny ringlets which had cunningly found their own way back. Then see the perfect cameo of her profile, cut in a dusky shell; the dark eye, delicate nostrils, the finished ear, the firm curves of the chin and neck, all the expression of a refinement which was not feebleness.

She sang Beethoven’s “Per pietà non dirmi addio,” with a subdued but searching pathos which, like all perfect singing, made one oblivious of art or manner, and only possessed one with the song. Deronda began by looking at her, but felt himself presently covering his eyes with his hand, wanting to seclude the melody in darkness; but he was ready to meet the look of appeal which she turned toward him at the end.

“I think I never enjoyed a song more than that,” he said gratefully.

“You like my singing? I am so glad,” she said, with a smile of delight. “It has been painful to me that it failed in what it was wanted for. But now I can use it to get my bread. I have really been taught well. And I have two pupils, that Miss Meyrick found for me. They pay me nearly two crowns for their lessons.”

“I think I know some ladies who would find you many pupils after Christmas,” said Deronda. “You would not mind singing before anyone who wished to hear you?”

“Oh no, I want to do something to get money for my mother. And I can not always live on charity; though” – here she glanced at her companions – “it is the sweetest charity in all the world.”

“I should think you can get rich by teaching,” said Deronda, smiling. “But now do sing again to us.”

She went on willingly, singing with ready memory various things by Gordigiani and Schubert; and then Mab said entreatingly, “Oh, Mirah, if you would not mind singing the little hymn – the Hebrew hymn you remember your mother singing.”

“I should like very much to hear that,” said Deronda, “if you think I am worthy to hear what is so sacred.”

“I will sing it if you like,” said Mirah, “but I don’t sing real words – only here and there – the rest is childish lispings. Do you know Hebrew? because if you do, it will seem childish nonsense.”

Deronda shook his head. “It will be quite good Hebrew to me.”

Mirah crossed her little feet and hands, and then lifted up her head at an angle which seemed to be directed to some invisible face bent over her, while she sang a little hymn of quaint melancholy intervals, with lispings syllables; her voice held an even sweeter tenderness than in her other songs.

“It is very full of meaning,” said Deronda. “Even if I had known the words, I don’t think it would have had more expression for me. I went to the synagogue at Frankfort, and the service impressed me just as much as if I had followed the words.”

“Oh, did it go to your heart?” said Mirah, eagerly. “I thought none but our people would feel that. I thought it was all shut away like a river in a deep valley, where only heaven saw – I mean–” She hesitated.

“I understand,” said Deronda. “But our religion is chiefly a Hebrew religion; and all religious feelings must have much in common. Still it is to be expected that a Jew

would feel the forms of his people's religion more than that of another race – and yet" – here he hesitated in his turn – "that is perhaps not always so."

"No," said Mirah, sadly. "I have seen that. I have seen them mock."

"Some minds naturally rebel against whatever they were brought up to," said Deronda apologetically.

"But you are not like that," said Mirah.

"No, I think not; but I was not brought up as a Jew."

"Ah, I am always forgetting," said Mirah, with a disappointed look, and slightly blushing.

Mrs Meyrick said– "I think it is weak-minded to make your creed up by the rule of the contrary. One may honour one's parents, without following their notions exactly. My father was a Scotch Calvinist and my mother was a French Calvinist; I am neither Scotch, nor French, nor two Calvinists rolled into one, yet I honour my parents' memory."

"But I could not make myself not a Jewess," said Mirah insistently, "even if I changed my belief."

"No, my dear. But if Jews and Jewesses changed their religion, and made no difference between themselves and Christians, there would be no Jews to be seen," said Mrs. Meyrick cheerfully.

"Oh, please do not say that," said Mirah, the tears gathering. "It is the first unkind thing you ever said. I will never separate myself from my mother's people. I was forced to fly from my father; but if he came back in weakness and want, and needed me, should I say, 'This is not my father'? If he had shame, I must share it. And so it is with my people. I will always be a Jewess. I will love Christians when they are good, like you. But I will always cling to my people." She clasped her hands with a sorrowful passion.

"My dear child, you mistake me!" said Mrs. Meyrick, alarmed. "God forbid I should want you to do anything against your conscience. Forgive me, come!"

"I would do anything else for you. I owe you my life," said Mirah, not yet quite calm.

"Hush, hush, now," said Mrs. Meyrick. "I have been punished enough for wagging my tongue foolishly."

Deronda took his leave soon after, and when Mrs. Meyrick went outside with him, he said, "Hans is to share my chambers when he comes at Christmas."

"You have written to him about that?" said Mrs. Meyrick, her face lighting up. "How very good and thoughtful of you! You mentioned Mirah, then?"

"Yes, I concluded he knew everything from you."

"I must confess my folly. I have not yet written a word about her. I have been meaning to do it, and yet have ended my letter without saying a word. However! Thank you a thousand times."

Deronda divined something of what was in the mother's mind. He had the same anxiety about Hans: no man could see this exquisite creature without feeling it possible to fall in love with her. But he urged himself to caution.

"I must exercise control. I shall see Mirah as little as possible," he thought.

How could he be Mirah's guardian, if he showed himself as a lover – whom she did not love – whom she would not marry? And if he encouraged any germ of lover's feeling in himself it would lead up to that issue. Even if Mirah consented to marry a man who was not of her race and religion, her conscience would always feel remorse.



Deronda saw these consequences as we see any danger of marring our own work. It was a delight to have rescued this child, and to think of having placed her little feet in protected paths. The creature we help to save, how we watch it and dote on its recovery!

“I would as soon hold out my finger to be bitten off as spoil her peace,” said Deronda to himself. “It was the rarest fortune that I have friends like the Meyricks to place her with – generous, delicate friends with whom she can be not only safe but happy. There could be no refuge to replace that, if it were broken up. But what is the use of my taking the vows, if that marplot Hans comes and upsets it all?”

Few things were more likely. Hans was made for mishaps: his very limbs seemed more breakable than other people’s. But it was impossible to forbid Hans’s coming to London, where he intended to get a studio. To propose that he should defer coming on some ground or other, concealing the real motive of winning time for Mirah’s position to become more independent, was impracticable.

Deronda tried to believe that both he and Mrs. Meyrick were foolishly troubling themselves about something which would probably not happen, but he did not quite succeed. The position was peculiar, and he could make no further provision against dangers until they came nearer. To discover so rare a creature as Mirah, was an exceptional event which might well bring exceptional consequences. Deronda would not let himself for a moment dwell on any thought that the consequences might enter deeply into his own life. Mirah would have no idea of loving him.

As to the search for Mirah’s mother and brother, he put off any immediate measures. His conscience was not quite easy in this desire for delay, any more than it was quite easy in his not attempting to learn the truth about his own mother: in both cases he felt that there might be an unfulfilled duty to a parent, but in both cases there was an overpowering repugnance to the possible truth.

“At least, I will look about,” he thought. “But I will not act till after Christmas.” Like many of us, he found the calendar a convenient excuse.

### Chapter Thirty-three

Deronda, meanwhile, often went rambling in those parts of London which are most inhabited by ordinary Jews. He walked to synagogues, he looked into shops, he observed faces: a process not very promising of discovery. Why did he not consult a Rabbi on the chances of finding a mother named Cohen, with a son named Ezra, and a lost daughter named Mirah? He thought of doing so – after Christmas.

The fact was that Deronda, for all his sense of the poetic, could not escape the pressure of that hard unaccommodating Actual, which does not consult our taste. Enthusiasm dwells at ease among ideas; but it gets squeamish when faced with bodily reality. Dreamily imagining oneself in quest of a beautiful maiden's relatives in Cordova, elbowed by Jews in the time of Ibn Gebirol, the incidents can be borne without shock. Or suppose the Crusaders of the eleventh century were transported to Whitechapel as they hounded a reviled Jew, who turned round erect and heroic in the face of death – what would the dingy shops signify then? But the chief poetic energy lies in the enthusiasm that is not diminished by the commonplace nature of its beloved ideas made flesh: the force of imagination that pierces the solid fact, instead of floating among cloud-pictures.

Deronda was usually inclined to condemn the feeble, fastidious sympathy which shrinks from the broad life of mankind; but now, with Mirah before him as a living reality, he saw every Jew and Jewess in the light of comparison with her, and feared a collision between her idea of the unknown mother and brother, and the fact. His fear was all the keener because of a suppressed knowledge that a similar collision might lie hidden in his own lot.

In this mood he rambled without expecting any more result than the preparation of his own mind – as if, Mirah being related to Welsh miners, he had gone to look more closely at the ways of those people, perhaps wishing at the same time to learn something about the history of Strikes.

He did not wish to find anybody in particular; and whenever he looked at the name over a shop door, he was well content that it was not Ezra Cohen. I confess, he particularly desired that Ezra Cohen should not keep a shop. But wishes are held to be ominous; so Deronda felt the scale of superstition dip against him when one morning he turned out of the noise of Holborn into a little side street.

He had paused to hail a hansom cab, when his attention was caught by some fine old silver clasps displayed in the window on his right. He thought that Lady Mallinger might like to have these missal-clasps turned into a bracelet: then he saw that the shop was a pawnbroker's, with most of its space given to jewellery, lace and bric-a-brac. A placard in one corner announced – *Watches and Jewellery exchanged and repaired.*

A figure appeared at the door, saying in a tone of cordial encouragement, "Good day, sir." The face, unmistakably Jewish, belonged to a young man of about thirty. Deronda, wincing from the shopkeeper's persuasiveness that would probably follow, returned the "good day," then crossed the street and beckoned to the cabman. From there he saw the name over the shop window – Ezra Cohen.

There might be a hundred Ezra Cohens lettered above shop windows, but Deronda had not seen them. Probably the young man was Ezra himself; and he was about the age to be expected in Mirah's brother, who was grown up while she was still a little child.

But as he drove home Deronda tried to convince himself that there was not the slightest likelihood of this Ezra being Mirah's brother; and that even if he did turn out to be, and if the mother was found to be dead, it was not Deronda's duty to make the discovery known to Mirah. In inconvenient disturbance of this conclusion, he knew that Mirah would have a religious desire to know of her mother's death, and also to learn whether her brother were living. How far was he justified in determining her life by his own notions? Was it not his secret complaint that others had ordered his own life, so that he had not open daylight on all its relations?

He found relief in reflecting that he had not yet made any discovery, and that by looking into the facts he could learn whether there was need for any decision. He intended to return to that shop as soon as he could, and buy the clasps for Lady Mallinger. But he was prevented for several days by Sir Hugo, who, about to make an after-dinner speech, wanted Deronda to help him on a legal question, besides wasting time every day on argument. As on many other questions, they held different sides, but Sir Hugo did not mind this; and when Deronda put his point well, he said with a mixture of satisfaction and regret,

"Confound it, Dan! why don't you make an opportunity of saying these things in public? You might enter Parliament. You know that would gratify me."

"I am sorry not to do what would gratify you, sir," said Deronda. "But I cannot persuade myself to look at politics as a profession."

"Why not? If everybody looked at politics as if they demanded an inspired vocation, the business of the country would never get done."

"I don't want to make a living out of opinions," said Deronda; "especially out of borrowed opinions. Not that I mean to blame other men. I dare say many better fellows than I am don't mind getting on to a platform to praise themselves, and giving their word of honour for a party."

"I'll tell you what, Dan," said Sir Hugo, "a man who sets his face against every sort of humbug is simply impracticable. There's a bad style of humbug, but there is also a good style – one that oils the wheels and makes progress possible. There is no action possible without a little acting."

"There may be an occasional necessity for it," said Deronda. "But it is one thing to say, 'In this particular case I am forced to put on this fool's cap and grin,' and another to buy a pocket fool's cap and practise grinning. Public expediency keeps an ideal before it; but if I were to enter politics I might mistake my success for public expediency."

It was after this dialogue that Deronda set out on his second visit to Ezra Cohen's. As he entered the street, an inward reluctance slackened his pace along this unattractive thoroughfare. His thoughts of public expediency made him wonder how far he could call it a wise expediency to conceal the fact of Mirah's close kin.

We have seen why he had come to regard concealment as a bane of life; and the prospect of being urged against his inclination was naturally grating. He even paused here and there before the most respectable shop-windows, half persuading himself not to increase his knowledge about Ezra Cohen, even though he had decided that this man was most unlikely to be Mirah's brother.

One of the shop-windows he paused before was that of a second-hand book-shop, where, on a narrow table outside, a mixture of the literature of the ages was represented, from the immortal verse of Homer to the mortal prose of the railway novel. Deronda noticed a book that he wanted – the life of the Polish Jew, Salomon

Maimon; which he picked up, and entered the shop to pay for, expecting to see a grimy personage behind the counter.

But instead of the ordinary tradesman, he saw, on the dark background of books in the long narrow shop, a figure that was startlingly unusual. A man in threadbare clothing, whose age was difficult to guess, his skin being yellow like an old ivory carving, was seated on a stool by the counter, reading yesterday's *Times*; but when he looked up, the thought glanced through Deronda that such a face might have been seen in a prophet of the Exile, or in some New Hebrew poet of the mediaeval time. It was a fine Jewish face, given an intensity of expression by strenuous eager experience, and perhaps by bodily suffering also. The features were clear-cut, not large; the brow not high but broad, and fully defined by the crisp black hair.

It might never have been a handsome face, but it must always have been forcible; and now with its dark, far-off gaze, and yellow pallor, one might have imagined coming upon it in some past prison of the Inquisition; while the look fixed on a customer seemed questioning enough to have been turned on a messenger of salvation or of death. To Deronda's mind this figure was so unusual, that there was a perceptible interval of mutual observation before he asked, "What is the price of this book?"

After examining the book, the supposed bookseller said, "There is no mark, and Mr. Ram is not in now. I am keeping the shop while he is gone to dinner. What are you disposed to give for it?" He looked examiningly at Deronda, who had the disagreeable idea that this striking personage might want to see how much could be got. He said, "Don't you know how much it is worth?"

"Not its market-price. May I ask have you read it?"

"No. I have read an account of it, which makes me want to buy it."

"You are a man of learning – you are interested in Jewish history?" This was said in a deepened tone of eager inquiry.

"I am certainly interested in Jewish history," said Deronda, quietly, curiosity overcoming his dislike to the inspection he was under.

But immediately the strange Jew rose from his seat, and Deronda felt a thin hand pressing his arm tightly, while an excited voice said in a hoarse whisper–

"You are perhaps of our race?"

Deronda coloured deeply, and answered, "No." The grasp was relaxed, the hand withdrawn, the eagerness of the face collapsed into melancholy, as if some possessing spirit which had leaped into the eyes had sunk back again. Moving away, the stranger said with distant civility, "I believe Mr. Ram will be satisfied with half-a-crown, sir."

The effect of this change on Deronda was oddly embarrassing and humiliating, as if some high dignitary had found him deficient. He paid his half-crown and carried off his book with a mere "good-morning."

He felt vexed at the sudden end of the interview, so that he should not know more of this man, who was certainly uncommon – as different as a Jew could be from Ezra Cohen, through whose door Deronda now entered, and whose flourishing face was negotiating with some one on the other side of the partition. Seeing Deronda enter, he called out "Mother!" and then with a familiar smile, said, "Coming, sir – coming directly."

Deronda felt some anxiety, which was not soothed when he saw a vigorous woman of over fifty enter the shop. Not that there was anything very repulsive about her: the worst that could be said was that she had that look of having washed with little water, which is common to older people of her class, and of having presumably

slept in her large earrings, if not in her necklace. In fact, what caused Deronda's heart to sink was her not being so coarse and ugly as to exclude the idea of her being Mirah's mother.

Anyone who has looked at a face for signs of kinship in it will understand his process – how he tried to think away the fat which had gradually disguised the outlines of youth, and to discern the underlying expressions of the face. He was sorry to see no absolute negative to his fears. It was not impossible that this mother might have had a lovely, refined daughter like Mirah. The eyebrows had a vexatious similarity of line; and who knows how far a face may be masked by age? Her good-humoured glance shone out in a motherly way at Deronda, as she said, in a mild guttural tone–

“How can I serve you, sir?”

“I should like to look at the silver clasps in the window, please,” said Deronda.

They were not easy to get at. The son called out, “I'll reach 'em, mother,” with alacrity; and handed the clasps to Deronda with the smiling remark–

“Mother's too proud: she wants to do everything herself. That's why I called her to wait on you, sir. But I can't let her do herself mischief with stretching.”

Here Mr. Cohen made way for his parent, who gave an amiable laugh, as much as to say, “The boy will joke, but he's the best son in the world.”

Deronda began to examine the clasps.

“They are only three guineas, sir,” said the mother, encouragingly.

“First-rate workmanship, sir – worth twice the money,” said the son from a distance.

Meanwhile two new customers entered, and the repeated call, “Addy!” brought from the back of the shop a group that Deronda turned frankly to stare at, feeling sure that the stare would be held complimentary. The group consisted of a black-eyed young woman who carried a little one, its head already covered with black curls, and deposited it on the counter, where it looked round with even more than the usual intelligence of babies: also a robust boy of six and a younger girl, both with black eyes and black-ringed hair, looking more Semitic than their parents. The young woman answering to “Addy”, a sort of parakeet in a bright blue dress, with coral necklace and earrings, and her hair in a huge bush, looked as complacently lively and unrefined as her husband. Her difference from the mother deepened in Deronda the unwelcome impression that the latter was not so utterly common a Jewess as to exclude her being Mirah's mother.

Meanwhile, the boy ran forward energetically, and standing about four feet from Deronda, with his hands in the pockets of his miniature knickerbockers, looked at him with a precocious air of survey. With diplomatic intentions, Deronda patted the boy's head, saying–

“What is your name, sirrah?”

“Jacob Alexander Cohen,” said the boy distinctly.

“You are not named after your father, then?”

“No, after my grandfather; he sells knives and scissors,” said Jacob, wishing to impress the stranger with that high connection. “He gave me this knife.” Here a pocket-knife was drawn forth, and the small fingers opened two blades and a cork-screw with much quickness.

“Is not that a dangerous plaything?” said Deronda, turning to the grandmother.

“*He*'ll never hurt himself, bless you!” said she, contemplating her grandson with placid rapture.

“Have *you* got a knife?” says Jacob, coming closer. His small voice was hoarse in its glibness, as if it belonged to an aged commercial soul, fatigued with bargaining through many generations.

“Yes. Do you want to see it?” said Deronda, taking a small penknife from his waistcoat-pocket.

Jacob seized it immediately, holding the two knives to compare them. By now the other clients were gone, and the whole family centred their attention on the marvellous Jacob.

“Mine’s the best,” said Jacob at last, returning Deronda’s knife as if he had considered the idea of exchange and had rejected it.

Father and mother laughed aloud with delight. “You won’t find Jacob choosing the worst,” said Mr. Cohen, winking. Deronda, looking at the grandmother, who had only an inward silent laugh, said—

“Are these your only grandchildren?”

“Yes. This is my only son,” she answered. It seemed natural enough that Deronda should say next—

“And you have no daughter?”

There was an instant change in the mother’s face. Her lips closed, she looked down, and finally turned her back on Deronda to examine some Indian handkerchiefs that hung behind her. Her son gave a significant glance, and put his fingers to his lips — then said quickly, “I think you’re a first-rate gentleman in the city, sir, if I may be allowed to guess.”

“No,” said Deronda. “I have nothing to do with the city.”

“I thought you might be the young principal of a first-rate firm,” said Mr. Cohen, wishing to make amends for his mother’s silence. “But you understand silver-work, I see.”

“A little,” said Deronda, taking up the clasps and laying them down again. That unwelcome bit of evidence had made his mind busy with a plan which was certainly more like acting than anything he had done before. But he no longer wished to be left in uncertainty, when more knowledge might nullify that evidence.

“To tell you the truth,” he went on, “my errand is not so much to buy as to borrow. I dare say you do such transactions?”

“Well, sir, I’ve accommodated gentlemen of distinction — I’m proud to say it. There’s no business more honourable, nor more charitable, nor more necessary for all classes, from the good lady who wants a little of the ready for the baker, to a gentleman like yourself, sir, who may want it for amusement. I like my business, and I like my shop — I wouldn’t be without it to become the Lord Mayor. It puts you in connection with the world at large. Now, what can I do for you, sir?”

Mr. Cohen was in excellent spirits about himself. While speaking with lively rapidity, he took the baby from his wife and presented his face to be explored by its small fists.

Deronda, not in a cheerful mood, was rashly thinking this Ezra Cohen to be the most unpoetic Jew he had ever met with in books or life: no shadow of a suffering race distinguished his vulgarity of soul from that of a prosperous, pink-and-white huckster of the purest English lineage. However, this was no reason for not persevering in his project, and he answered—

“I have a diamond ring to offer as security — not with me at this moment, unfortunately. But I will bring it this evening. Fifty pounds at once would be a convenience to me.”

“Well, you know, this evening is the Sabbath, young gentleman,” said Cohen, “and I go to the *Shool*. The shop will be closed. But if you can’t get here before, and are any ways pressed – why, I’ll look at your diamond. You’re perhaps from the West End – a longish drive?”

“Yes; and your Sabbath begins early at this season. I could be here by five: will that do?” Deronda had hoped that by asking to come on a Friday evening he might get a better opportunity of observing the family character, and perhaps could ask some decisive question.

Cohen assented; but here the marvellous Jacob put in, “You are coming again. Have you got any more knives at home?”

“I think I have one,” said Deronda, smiling at him.

“Has it two blades and a hook, and a white handle like that?” said Jacob, pointing to the waistcoat-pocket.

“I dare say it has.”

“Do you like a cork-screw?” said Jacob, with serious inquiry.

“Yes,” said Deronda, experimentally.

“Bring your knife, then, and we’ll shwop,” said Jacob, stamping about with the sense that he had concluded a good transaction.

The grandmother had now recovered her usual manners, and the whole family watched Deronda radiantly when he caressingly lifted the little girl, and seating her on the counter, asked for her name also. She looked at him in silence, and put her fingers to her gold earrings, which he did not seem to have noticed.

“Adelaide Rebekah is her name,” said her mother, proudly. “Speak to the gentleman, lovey.”

“Shlav’*m* Shabbes fyock on,” said Adelaide Rebekah.

“Her Sabbath frock, she means,” explained the father. “She’ll have her Sabbath frock on this evening.”

“And will you let me see you in it, Adelaide?” said Deronda gently.

“Say yes, lovey,” said her mother, enchanted with this handsome young gentleman, who appreciated remarkable children.

“And will you give me a kiss this evening?” said Deronda.

Adelaide Rebekah immediately put up her lips to offer a kiss, whereupon her father, in glowing satisfaction with himself and the admiring stranger, said cordially—

“Somebody will be disappointed if you don’t come this evening, sir. You won’t mind sitting down in our family place and waiting a bit for me, if I’m not in when you come, sir? Bring the diamond, and I’ll see what I can do.”

Deronda thus left the most favourable impression behind him. But for his own part he was in the heaviest spirits. If these were really Mirah’s relatives, he could not imagine that she could find any sweetness in the reunion with them beyond her filial duty. What did this vaunting brother need? And Deronda shrank from imagining a first meeting between the mother and Mirah, and still more from the idea of Mirah’s domestication with this family.

He took refuge in disbelief. To find an Ezra Cohen was no more extraordinary than to find a John Smith; and as to the coincidence about the daughter, it would probably turn out to be a difference. If, however, further knowledge confirmed the undesirable conclusion, what would be wise expediency?—to conceal it, or to brave the consequences for the sake of that openness which is the sweet fresh air of our moral life?

## Chapter Thirty-four

When Deronda arrived at five o'clock, the servant showed him into the room behind the closed shop. He was surprised at the prettiness of the scene. The house was old, and extensive at the back: the large room was lit by a fine old brass lamp with seven oil-lights hanging above the snow-white cloth spread on the central table.

The dark surroundings threw into relief the human figures, with a Venetian glow of colouring. By this light, the grandmother's face with its darkly-marked eyebrows and framing roll of grey hair looked picturesquely handsome. Young Mrs. Cohen was clad in red and black, with a string of large artificial pearls wound round and round her neck: the baby lay asleep in the cradle; Adelaide Rebekah was in braided amber, and Jacob was in black velveteen with scarlet stockings.

Deronda was almost ashamed of the supercilious dislike these happy-looking creatures had raised in him by daylight. Nothing could be more cordial than the greeting he received, and both mother and grandmother seemed more dignified in this setting. He looked round with some wonder at the old oak bureau and high side-table, where a large blue and yellow dish was set up between two old silver vessels; in front of them lay a large volume in darkened vellum. In the far corner was an open door into an inner room, where there was also a light.

Deronda took in these details while he met Jacob's pressing solicitude about the knife. He had taken the pains to buy one with a hook and white handle, and produced it on demand, saying,—

"Is that the sort of thing you want, Jacob?"

It was subjected to a severe scrutiny, with Jacob's own knife being drawn forth for comparison.

"Why do you like a hook better than a cork-screw?" said Deronda.

"'Caush I can get hold of things with a hook. A corkscrew won't go into anything but corks. But it's better for you, you can draw corks."

"You agree to change, then?" said Deronda, observing that the grandmother was listening with delight.

"What else have you got in your pockets?" said Jacob.

"Hush, Jacob, love," said the grandmother. And Deronda answered—

"I think I must not tell you that. Our business was with the knives."

Jacob scanned his face for a moment, before saying gravely—

"I'll shwop," handing the cork-screw knife to Deronda, who pocketed it with equal gravity.

Immediately Jacob ran off into the next room, whence his voice was heard in rapid chat; and then ran back again — when, seeing his father enter, he seized a little velveteen hat from a chair and put it on. Cohen kept on his own hat, and stood still while the two children went up to him and clasped his knees. Then he laid his hands on each in turn and uttered his Hebrew benediction; whereupon the wife lifted the baby and brought it to her husband to be blessed in its sleep. For the moment, Deronda thought that this pawnbroker was not utterly prosaic.

"Welcome, sir," said Cohen, putting down his hat. "You've been punctual. Nothing like a little stress here," he added, tapping his side pocket as he sat down. "It's good for us all in our turn. It's bracing to the mind. Now then! let us see."



“That is the ring I spoke of,” said Deronda, taking it from his finger. “I believe it cost a hundred pounds. It will be a sufficient pledge to you for fifty, I think. I shall probably redeem it in a month or so.”

Cohen’s glistening eyes seemed to get a little nearer together as met the innocent look of this young gentleman, who apparently supposed that redemption was a satisfaction to pawnbrokers. He examined the ring and returned it, saying with indifference, “Good, good. We’ll talk of it after our meal. Perhaps you’ll join us. Me and my wife’ll feel honoured, and so will mother.”

Deronda gladly accepted. All now turned and stood round the table, which held no dish at present except one covered with a napkin; and Mrs. Cohen had placed a china bowl near her husband that he might wash his hands in it. But after putting on his hat again, he paused, and called in a loud voice, “Mordecai!”

Deronda heard a “Yes” from the next room, and to his astonishment, from it stepped the figure of the enigmatic Jew whom he had met in the book-shop. Their eyes met, and Mordecai looked as much surprised as Deronda – though neither made any sign of recognition. But as Mordecai came to the table, he just bent his head to the guest in a cold and distant manner, as if still feeling the disappointment of the morning.

Cohen now washed his hands, pronouncing Hebrew words: then he took off the napkin covering the dish and disclosed the two long flat loaves besprinkled with seed – the memorial of the manna that fed the wandering forefathers – and breaking off small pieces gave one to each of the family, including Adelaide Rebekah, who stood on the chair in her amber-coloured garment, trying to look suitably solemn. Cohen then uttered another Hebrew blessing, and after that, the male heads were uncovered, all seated themselves, and the meal went on without any peculiarity that interested Deronda.

He was not very conscious of what dishes he ate; being preoccupied with a desire to turn the conversation in a way that would let him ask about Mirah; and also thinking of Mordecai, with whom he exchanged fascinated, furtive glances. Mordecai had no handsome Sabbath garment, but instead of the threadbare rusty black coat of the morning he wore a light one, which looked as if it had once been a handsome loose jacket, now shrunk with washing, which gave a stronger accentuation to his dark-haired, eager face. Deronda noticed that Mordecai was given the thin tails of the fried fish: the sort of share assigned to a poor relation.

Mr. Cohen kept up the conversation with much liveliness, introducing as subjects the Queen and the Royal Family, and the French Emperor and Empress – into which both grandmother and wife entered with zest.

“It’s wonderful how the Emperor resembles a cousin of mine,” said the grandmother; “it struck me like lightning when I saw him.”

“We went to see the Emperor and Empress at the Crystal Palace,” said Mr. Cohen. “I had hard work to take care of mother; she might have been squeezed flat. If I had a hundred mothers I’d never take one of ’em to see the Emperor and Empress at the Crystal Palace again; a man can’t afford it when he’s got but one mother.” He stroked his mother’s shoulder affectionately.

“Your mother has been a widow a long while, perhaps,” said Deronda, seizing his opportunity. “That has made your care for her the more needful.”

“Ay, ay, it’s a good many years since I had to manage for her and myself,” said Cohen. “It’s that makes you a sharp knife.”

“What makes a sharp knife, father?” said Jacob, his cheek swollen with cake.

The father winked at his guest and said, "Having your nose put to the grindstone."

Jacob slipped from his chair, cake in hand, and going to Mordecai, who had been silent hitherto, said, "What does that mean – putting my nose to the grindstone?"

"It means that you are to bear being hurt without making a noise," said Mordecai, turning his eyes benignly on the small face close to his. Jacob put the corner of the cake into Mordecai's mouth as an invitation to bite, keeping his eyes on it to observe how much of it went in this act of generosity. Mordecai took a bite and smiled, and the little incident made them both look more lovable. Deronda, however, felt that he had gathered little by his question.

Turning to Mordecai, he said, "You have been a great student, I imagine?"

"I have studied," was the quiet answer. "And you? You know German by the book you were buying?"

"Yes, I have studied in Germany. Are you generally engaged in bookselling?" said Deronda.

"No; I only go to Mr. Ram's shop every day to keep it while he goes to meals," said Mordecai, who was now looking at Deronda with a revival of his original interest. After a slight pause, he said, "Perhaps you know Hebrew?"

"I am sorry to say, not at all."

Mordecai's countenance fell: he cast down his eyelids and said no more. Deronda noticed a definite difficulty in the other man's breathing, which he thought must be a sign of consumption.

"I've been too busy for book-learning," said Mr. Cohen. "I've had to learn about useful things. I know stones well," – here he pointed to Deronda's ring. "Now, what do you want for it?"

"Fifty or sixty pounds," Deronda answered, rather too carelessly.

Cohen paused a little, hands in his pockets, fixed on Deronda a pair of glistening eyes that suggested a miraculous guinea-pig, and said,

"Couldn't do you that. Happy to oblige, but say forty pound – I'll let you have forty on it."

Deronda was aware that Mordecai had looked up and was examining him again, while he said, "Very well, I shall redeem it in a month or so."

"Good. I'll make you out the ticket by-and-by," said Cohen. Then he, Mordecai and Jacob put on their hats, and he began a thanksgiving, which was carried on by responses, till Mordecai spoke alone at some length, in a solemn chant, with his chin uplifted and his thin hands clasped. There could hardly have been a stronger contrast to the Jew at the other end of the table. It was unaccountable – the presence among these common, prosperous, shopkeeping types, of a man who, in an emaciated threadbare condition, imposed a certain awe on Deronda, and an embarrassment at not meeting his expectations.

No sooner had Mordecai finished his prayer than he rose, and with a slight bend of his head to the stranger, walked back into his room, and shut the door behind him.

"That seems to be rather a remarkable man," said Deronda, turning to Cohen, who tapped his own brow, indicating that Mordecai did not come up to his standard of sanity.

"Does he belong to your family?" said Deronda.

The family exchanged looks of amusement.

"No, no," said Cohen. "Charity! he worked for me, and when he got weaker I took him in. He's an encumbrance; but he brings a blessing, and he teaches the boy. Besides, he repairs the watches and jewellery."

Deronda smiled at this mixture of kindness and the desire to justify it; but Mr. Cohen immediately dismissed the subject of Mordecai by reverting to business. He proceeded to make out the ticket, got the forty pounds, and presented them both in exchange for the diamond ring.

Deronda, feeling he could protract his visit no longer, had to take his leave, with no more result than a pawn-ticket in his pocket to make a reason for returning after Christmas. He was resolved that he would then try to learn more about Mordecai; from whom also he might gather knowledge about the Cohens – for example, the reason why it was forbidden to ask Mrs. Cohen the elder whether she had a daughter.

## BOOK V: MORDECAI

### Chapter Thirty-five

On the 29th of December Deronda knew that the Grandcourts had arrived at the Abbey, but he had had no glimpse of them before he went to dress for dinner. There had been a splendid fall of snow, allowing the Mallinger girls the rare pleasures of snow-balling and snow-building, in which amusement they insisted on the company of “cousin,” as they had always called Deronda. After that exertion, he played billiards, and thus the hours had passed without his dwelling on the prospect of meeting Gwendolen at dinner.

Nevertheless that prospect was interesting to him; and when he went to his room to dress, he began to speculate on how her marriage with Grandcourt would have influenced her. He thought there would be some changes in her manner since he saw her at Diplow, just as there had been since his first vision of her at Leubronn.

“I fancy there are some natures one could see growing or degenerating every day, if one watched them,” was his thought. “I am sure she is a creature who keeps strong traces of anything that has impressed her. That little matter of the necklace, and the idea that somebody thought her gambling wrong, had evidently bitten into her. But such impressibility may drive one to desperation. As for having Grandcourt as a daily companion – good heavens! One might be tempted to horsewhip him for the sake of getting him to show some passion. I’m afraid she married him to escape poverty. But why did she run away at first? The poverty came after, though. Poor thing! she may have been urged into it. One can only pity a young creature like that – full of unused life – ignorantly rash – hanging all her blind expectations on that remnant of a human being!”

Deronda’s notion of Grandcourt as a “remnant” was founded on no particular knowledge, but simply on his impression that Grandcourt had worn out all his natural healthy interest in things.

In general, whenever a marriage of any mark takes place, male acquaintances are likely to pity the bride, female acquaintances the bridegroom: each, it is thought, might have done better; and especially where the bride is charming, young gentlemen are apt to conclude that she can have no real attachment to a fellow so uninteresting as her husband, but has married him on other grounds. But perhaps Deronda may be excused for not pitying Grandcourt, who had never struck acquaintances as likely to undergo more suffering than he inflicted; whereas, for Gwendolen, young, headlong, eager for pleasure – how quickly might life turn from expectancy to a bitter sense of the irremediable!

Still, since the honeymoon was already three weeks past, and Gwendolen had been enthroned at both Ryelands and Diplow, she was likely to have composed herself with suitable concealment, not being one who would indulge the curious by a helpless exposure of her feelings.

A varied party had been invited to meet the new couple; the aristocracy was represented by Lord and Lady Pentreath; the gentry by Mr. and Mrs. Fitzadam of the Worcestershire Fitzadams; politics by Mr. Fenn, Member of Parliament, with his daughters; Lady Mallinger’s family, by her brother and his wife with various little Raymonds; the useful bachelor element by Mr. Sinker, the eminent lawyer, and Mr.

Vandernoodt, whose acquaintance Sir Hugo had found pleasant enough at Leubronn to be adopted in England.

All had assembled in the drawing-room before the new couple appeared. The scene was really delightful: full-length portraits with deep backgrounds, inserted in the cedar panelling, were surmounted by a ceiling that glowed with the richly coloured coats of arms. Sounds were muted by the deep-piled carpet and by the high English breeding that subdues all voices; while the mixture of ages, from the white-haired Lord and Lady Pentreath to the four-year-old Edgar Raymond, gave a varied charm to the groups. Lady Mallinger moved about in her black velvet, carrying a tiny white dog as a sort of finish to her costume; while the gentlemen were conversing with very moderate vivacity.

Deronda was a little out of the circle with Mr. Vandernoodt, a nonchalant Dutchman, who was talking of the bride and bridegroom. Mr. Vandernoodt was an industrious gleaner of personal details, and implied that he had learned many facts about Grandcourt since meeting him at Leubronn.

“Men who have seen a good deal of life don’t always end by choosing their wives so well. He has gone rather deep into pleasures, I fancy, lazy as he is. But, of course, you know all about him.”

“No, really,” said Deronda in an indifferent tone. “I know little more of him than that he is Sir Hugo’s nephew.”

But now the door opened and their conversation halted.

When Mr. and Mrs. Grandcourt entered, no beholder could deny that their figures had distinction. The bridegroom had the same easy perfection of costume and impassivity of face as before his marriage: and his bride looked as faultless as one might expect.

“By George, I think she’s handsomer, if anything!” said Mr. Vandernoodt. Deronda was of the same opinion, but he said nothing. The white silk and diamonds – it may seem strange, but she did wear diamonds on her neck, in her ears, in her hair – might have something to do with the new imposing nature of her beauty; but at Diplow, Deronda had discerned in her that tender appealing charm which we call womanly. Was there any new change since then? As he saw her receiving greetings with what seemed a proud cold quietude and a superficial smile, he thought that there was within her the same demonic force that had possessed her when she turned away a loser from the gaming-table. There was no time for more of a conclusion – no time even for him to greet her before the summons to dinner.

He sat almost opposite her at table, and could sometimes hear what she said in answer to Sir Hugo, who was at his liveliest with her; but she did not look his way at all. At last Sir Hugo, who might have imagined that they had already spoken to each other, said, “Deronda, you will like to hear what Mrs. Grandcourt tells me about your favourite Klesmer.”

Deronda thought he saw a quivering reluctance in Gwendolen’s eyelids as she was obliged to raise them and return his bow and smile. It was but an instant, and Sir Hugo continued–

“The Arrowpoints have condoned the marriage, and he is spending Christmas at Quetcham.”

“I suppose he will be glad of it for his wife’s sake, if not his own,” said Deronda.

“It’s a sort of troubadour story,” said Lady Pentreath, an easy, deep-voiced old lady; “I’m glad to find a little romance left among us. I think our young people now are too worldly wise.”

“It shows the Arrowpoints’ good sense, after the fuss in the paper,” said Sir Hugo. “Disowning your own child because of a *mésalliance* is something like disowning your one eye: everybody knows it’s yours, and you have no other to make an appearance with.”

“As to *mésalliance*,” said Lady Pentreath, “old Admiral Arrowpoint was one of Nelson’s men – a doctor’s son. And we all know how the mother’s money came.”

“If there were any *mésalliance* in the case, I should say it was on Klesmer’s side,” said Deronda.

“Ah, you think it is a case of the immortal marrying the mortal. What is your opinion?” said Sir Hugo, looking at Gwendolen.

“I have no doubt that Herr Klesmer thinks himself immortal. But I dare say his wife will burn as much incense before him as he requires,” said Gwendolen.

“Don’t you approve of a wife burning incense before her husband?” said Sir Hugo, smiling.

“Oh, yes,” said Gwendolen, “if it were only to make others believe in him. When Herr Klesmer admires his own genius, it will take off some of the absurdity if his wife says Amen.”

“Klesmer is no favourite of yours, I see,” said Sir Hugo.

“I think very highly of him, I assure you,” said Gwendolen. “His genius is quite above my judgment, and I know him to be exceedingly generous.”

She spoke with the sudden seriousness which is often meant to correct an unfair or indiscreet sally. Deronda wondered what he would have thought of her if he had never met her before: probably that she put on a little hard defiance to conceal some painful knowledge. But why did she not greet him with more friendliness?

Sir Hugo, changing the subject, said to her, “Is not this a beautiful room? It was part of the Abbey’s refectory. There used to be rows of Benedictines sitting here. Suppose we were suddenly to see the lights burning low and the ghosts of the old monks rising behind our chairs!”

“Please don’t!” said Gwendolen, with a playful shudder. “It is very nice to come after ancestors and monks, but they should know their places and keep underground. I should be rather frightened to go about this house all alone.”

“But I hope you will like to go in company. You and Grandcourt ought to see it all. We will ask Deronda to go round with us. He is more learned about it than I am,” said the baronet good-humouredly.

Gwendolen stole a glance at Deronda; but he looked as impassive as a picture. At the notion of Deronda’s showing her and Grandcourt the place which was to be theirs, and which she painfully remembered might perhaps have been his, certain recurring thoughts about inheritance rushed in anew; and she was conscious of something furtive and awkward in her glance. To explain it, she said, playfully, “You don’t know how much I am afraid of Mr. Deronda.”

“How’s that? Because you think him too learned?” said Sir Hugo, who had noticed the peculiarity of her glance.

“No. It is ever since I first saw him at Leubronn. When he looked on at the roulette-table, I began to lose. He cast an evil eye on my play. He didn’t approve it. He has told me so. And now whatever I do, I am afraid he will cast an evil eye upon it.”

“Gad! I’m rather afraid of him myself when he doesn’t approve,” said Sir Hugo, glancing at Deronda; and added less audibly to Gwendolen, “I don’t think ladies

generally object to have his eyes upon them.” The baronet’s facetiousness was at this moment almost as annoying to her as it often was to Deronda.

“I object to any eyes that are critical,” she said, in a cool, high voice. “Are there many of these old rooms left in the Abbey?”

“Not many. There is a fine cloistered court with a long gallery above it. But the best bit of all is turned into stables. It is part of the old church, so the horses have the benefit of the fine old choir. You must go and see it.”

“I shall like to see the horses as well as the building,” said Gwendolen.

“Oh, I have no stud to speak of. Grandcourt will look with contempt at my horses,” said Sir Hugo. “I’ve given up hunting. The fact is, I did too much at this place. We all lived at Diplow for two years while the alterations were going on. Do you like Diplow?”

“Not particularly,” said Gwendolen, with indifference.

“Ah! it will not do after Ryelands,” said Sir Hugo, well pleased. “Grandcourt, I know, took it for the hunting. But he found something so much better there that he might well prefer it to any other place in the world.”

“It has one attraction for me,” said Gwendolen, passing over this compliment with a chill smile, “that it is within reach of Offendene.”

“I understand that,” said Sir Hugo.

Deronda did not hear much of this conversation, but the glimpses he had of Gwendolen’s manner deepened the impression that it had something newly artificial.

Later, in the drawing-room, Deronda, at somebody’s request, sat down to the piano and sang. On rising to make way for another, he observed that Gwendolen had left her seat, and had come to this end of the room as if to listen, but was now standing with her back to everyone, apparently contemplating a fine cowled ivory head on a small table. He longed to go to her and speak. Why should he not obey such an impulse, as he would have done toward any other lady in the room? Yet he hesitated, observing the graceful lines of her back, but not moving.

If you have any reason for not indulging a wish to speak to a fair woman, it is a bad plan to look at her back: the wish to see what it screens becomes the stronger. Deronda ended by going to the small table, but before he could speak Gwendolen had turned on him such an appealing look of sadness, so utterly different from her chilly recognition at table, that his speech was checked. For a moment they looked at each other – she seeming to take the deep rest of confession, he with an answering depth of sympathy that neutralised all other feelings.

“Will you not join in the music?” he said, since speech seemed necessary.

That her look of confession had been involuntary was shown by her change of expression as she roused herself to reply calmly, “I join in it by listening. I am fond of music.”

“Are you not a musician?”

“I have given a great deal of time to music. But I have not talent enough to make it worth while. I shall never sing again.”

“But if you are fond of music, it will always be worth while in private, for your own delight. I make it a virtue to be content with my middlingness,” said Deronda, smiling. “It is always pardonable, if one does not ask other to take it for superiority.”

“I cannot imitate you,” said Gwendolen, recovering her tone of artificial vivacity. “To be middling with me is another word for being dull. And the worst fault I have to find with the world is, that it is dull. Do you know, I am going to justify gambling in spite of you. It is a refuge from dullness.”

“I don’t agree,” said Deronda. “I think what we call the dullness of things is a disease in ourselves. Else how can anyone find an intense interest in life? And many do.”

“Ah, I see! The fault I find in the world is my own fault,” said Gwendolen, smiling at him. Then after a moment, she said, “Do *you* never find fault with the world or with others?”

“Oh, yes. When I am in a grumbling mood.”

“And hate people? Confess you hate them when they stand in your way.”

“We are often standing in each other’s way when we can’t help it. I think it is stupid to hate people on that ground.”

“But if they injure you and could have helped it?” said Gwendolen with an unaccountable intensity.

Deronda wondered at her choice of subjects. At last he said, more gravely, “Why, then, after all, I prefer my place to theirs.”

“There I believe you are right,” said Gwendolen, with a sudden little laugh, and turned to join the group at the piano.

Deronda looked around for Grandcourt, wondering whether he followed his bride’s movements with any attention; but he should not have supposed he would be able to find that out. Grandcourt had a delusive mood of observing whatever had an interest for him, which could be surpassed by no sleepy-eyed animal on the watch for prey. At that moment he was plunged in the depth of an easy chair, being talked to by Mr. Vandernoodt, and one might have thought it safe to telegraph secrets in front of that unmoving gaze. But Grandcourt saw anyone he cared to out of the corners of his long narrow eyes, and if they went behind him he had a constructive process by which he knew what they were doing there. He knew perfectly well where his wife was, and how she was behaving.

Would he be a jealous husband? Deronda imagined so; but his imagination was as much astray about Grandcourt as it would have been about an unexplored continent where all the species were peculiar. He did not think that he himself was a likely subject of jealousy, or that he gave any pretext for it; but the suspicion that a wife is not happy naturally leads one to speculate on the husband’s private conduct.

Hence Deronda found himself at one o’clock in the morning in the ludicrous position of sitting up, severely holding a Hebrew grammar in his hands (for in deference to Mordecai, he had begun to study Hebrew), with the consciousness that he had been in that attitude nearly an hour, and had thought of nothing but Gwendolen and her husband. Deronda’s nature had been acutely touched by his brief acquaintance and speech with Gwendolen. His ready sympathy made him alive to a certain appealingness in her behaviour toward him; and he remembered that unmistakable look of involuntary confidence which she had turned on him as he approached her.

“What is the use of it all?” thought Deronda, throwing down his book. “I can’t do anything to help her, if she has found out her mistake already. And it seems to me that she has a dreary lack of the ideas that might help her. Poor soul, wrapped around with fine raiment and gems, smiling loftily, and with a sick distaste of all things! But what do I know? There may be a demon in her to match the worst husband, for all I can tell. She is clearly ill-educated and worldly: perhaps she is a coquette.”

This last reflection, not much believed in, was a self-administered dose of caution, prompted partly by Sir Hugo’s joke about flirtation. Deronda resolved not to have any tête-à-tête with Gwendolen during her stay at the Abbey.



But few words could less represent Gwendolen than “coquette.” She had a love of homage, and belief in her own power; but no cold artifice for the sake of enslaving. And the poor thing’s belief in her power, with her other dreams before marriage, had to be thrust aside now like the toys of a sick child, which it looks at with dull eyes, and has no heart to play with, however it may try.

The next day at lunch Sir Hugo said to her, “It’s so pleasant out of doors just now – shall we go and see the stables and the other odd bits about the place?”

“Yes, pray,” said Gwendolen. “You will like to see the stables, Henleigh?” she added, looking at her husband.

“Uncommonly,” said Grandcourt, with an indifference which seemed ironic. It was the first time Deronda had seen them speak to each other since their arrival, and he thought their exchange as cold as an official ceremony. Still, English reserve might account for much of that.

“Who else is inclined to make the tour of the house and premises?” said Sir Hugo. “There is just about time to do it before sunset. You will go, Dan, won’t you?”

“Oh, yes,” said Deronda, carelessly, knowing that Sir Hugo would think any excuse disobliging.

“All meet in the library, then – say in half an hour,” said the baronet.

Gwendolen made herself ready with wonderful quickness, and in ten minutes came down into the library in her sables, plume, and little thick boots. As soon as she entered the room she saw that Deronda was there, as she had hoped. He was standing with his back toward her at the far end of the room, looking over a newspaper. How could little thick boots make any noise on an Axminster carpet? And a cough would have seemed a signal which her pride could not allow. Also, she felt bashful about walking up to him, though it was her hunger to speak to him which had made her hurry down.

Always uneasy about his opinion of her, she felt a peculiar anxiety today, lest he might think of her with contempt, as one triumphantly conscious of being Grandcourt’s wife, the future lady of this domain. There was not the faintest touch of coquetry in her attitude toward him: he was unique to her among men, because he had impressed her as being not her admirer but her superior: in some mysterious way he was becoming a part of her conscience.

And now he would not look round and see that she was there! The paper crackled in his hand, his head rose and sank, exploring those stupid columns. The rest of the company would soon be down, and the opportunity of her saying something to erase the flippancy of the evening before, would be quite gone. She felt sick with irritation and mortification.

At last he threw down the paper and turned round.

“Oh, you are there already,” he said: “I must go and put on my coat.”

He turned aside and walked out of the room. This was behaving quite badly. Mere politeness would have made him stay to exchange some words before leaving. It was true that Grandcourt came in with Sir Hugo immediately after, so that the words must have been few. As it was, they saw him walking from the library door.

“A – you look rather ill,” said Grandcourt, going straight up to her, and looking into her eyes. “Do you feel equal to the walk?”

“Yes, I shall like it,” said Gwendolen, without the slightest movement except of the lips.

“We could put off going over the house, you know,” said Sir Hugo, kindly.

“Oh dear no!” said Gwendolen, speaking with determination, “let us put off nothing. I want a long walk.”

The rest of the walking party had now assembled; and Gwendolen, rallying, went with due cheerfulness by the side of Sir Hugo, paying apparently equal attention to Deronda’s commentaries on the architectural fragments and to Sir Hugo’s reasons for not attempting to change them. Outside the house they paused before a beautiful pointed doorway, the only old remnant of the east front.

“To my mind,” said Sir Hugo, “that is more interesting than if the whole front had been dressed up in a pretence of the thirteenth century. That notion of reproducing the old is a mistake, I think. As for your new-old building, you need to hire men to scratch and chip it all over artistically to give it an elderly-looking surface.”

“Do you want to keep up the old fashions, Mr. Deronda?” said Gwendolen, taking advantage of the grouping to fall back a little, while Sir Hugo and Grandcourt went on.

“Some of them. I don’t see why we should not choose, and why age or novelty in itself is an argument for or against. To delight in doing things because our fathers did them is good if it shuts out nothing better; it enlarges the range of affection – and affection is the broadest basis of good in life.”

“Do you think so?” said Gwendolen, surprised. “I should have thought you cared most about ideas, knowledge, wisdom, and all that.”

“But to care about *them* is a sort of affection,” said Deronda, smiling. “Call it attachment, interest, willingness to bear a great deal for the sake of being with them and saving them from injury. Of course, it makes a difference if the objects of interest are human beings; but generally the objects of deep affections are a mixture of people and ideas.”

“I wonder whether I understand that,” said Gwendolen, putting up her chin in her old saucy manner. “I believe I am not very affectionate; perhaps you mean to tell me, that is the reason why I don’t see much good in life.”

“No, I did not mean to tell you that; but I admit that I should think it true if I believed what you say of yourself,” said Deronda gravely.

Here Sir Hugo and Grandcourt turned and paused.

“I never can get Mr. Deronda to pay me a compliment,” said Gwendolen. “I am quite curious to see whether a little flattery can be extracted from him.”

“Ah!” said Sir Hugo, glancing at Deronda, “the fact is, it is useless to flatter a bride. She has been so fed on sweet speeches that everything we say seems tasteless.”

“Quite true,” said Gwendolen, bending her head. “Mr. Grandcourt won me by neatly-turned compliments. If there had been one word out of place it would have been fatal.”

“Do you hear that?” said Sir Hugo, looking at the husband.

“Yes,” said Grandcourt, without change of expression. “It’s a deucedly hard thing to keep up, though.”

All this seemed to Sir Hugo a natural playfulness between husband and wife; but Deronda wondered at the alternations in Gwendolen’s manner, which at one moment seemed to excite sympathy by childlike indiscretion, at another to repel it by proud concealment. He tried to keep out of her way by devoting himself to Miss Juliet Fenn, a young lady whose unfortunate profile had months ago made Gwendolen feel it impossible to be jealous of her.

Nevertheless, when they were viewing the kitchen, the play of light from the huge glowing fire, the polished brass and copper, the fine resonance of every sound, were

all spoiled for Gwendolen, because Deronda was talking to the other ladies. It did not signify that the other gentlemen were near her: of what use was their admiration compared to Deronda's judgment?

"The heat is too much. I must really go out," she cried at last, marching resolutely into the open air. Grandcourt was already outside, and as she joined him, he said—

"I wondered how long you meant to stay in that damned place"—one of the freedoms he had assumed as a husband being the use of his strongest epithets.

Gwendolen, turning to see the rest of the party approach, said—

"It was certainly rather too warm in one's wraps."

They walked on the gravel across a green court, where the snow still lay in islets on the grass, and in masses on the boughs of the great cedar and the stone walls; and then into a larger court, to find the choir that had been turned into stables. The exterior was much defaced, its gargoyles maimed, the friable limestone broken and fretted; the long windows were bricked in, up to the springing of the arches.

With the low wintry sun lighting up the snow on every ledge, it had an antique solemnity which gave the scene rather a startling effect. Each finely-arched chapel was turned into a stall, where in the dusty glazing of the windows there gleamed patches of crimson, orange and blue; the choir had been gutted, the floor levelled, paved, and drained, and a line of loose boxes erected in the middle. A soft light fell from the upper windows on sleek brown or grey flanks and on mild equine faces looking out over the varnished boarding; while over all, the grand pointed roof showed its lines mysteriously through veiling shadow and cobweb, and a hoof now and then striking against the boards seemed to fill the vault with thunder.

"Oh, this is glorious!" Gwendolen burst forth, forgetting everything but the immediate impression. "I wish there were a horse in every one of the boxes. I would ten times rather have these stables than those at Diplow."

But she had no sooner said this than she involuntarily turned her eyes toward Deronda, who oddly enough had taken off his hat and stood holding it as if in an actual church. He happened to be looking at her, and their eyes met — to her intense vexation, for she felt herself blushing at the thought that Sir Hugo as well as Deronda would have felt her bad taste in referring to the possession of anything at the Abbey. Her annoyance at her own confusion robbed her of her usual facility of playful speech, and turning up her face to look at the roof, she wheeled away. Deronda alone guessed part of her feeling; but while he was observing her, he was himself under observation.

"Do you take off your hat to horses?" said Grandcourt, with a slight sneer.

"Why not?" said Deronda, replacing his hat, which he had removed automatically.

Gwendolen's confusion was soon merged in the survey of the horses, which Grandcourt politely abstained from appraising, languidly assenting to Sir Hugo's self-deprecating opinion of his animals.

"The fact is, stables dive deeper and deeper into the pocket nowadays," said Sir Hugo, as they were coming out.

"What is a man to do, though?" said Grandcourt. "He must ride. I don't see what else there is to do. And I don't call it riding to sit astride a set of brutes with every deformity under the sun."

At this delicate diplomatic assessment of Sir Hugo's stud, the baronet, feeling that the conversation had worn rather thin, said, "Now we are going to see the cloister, which is in perfect preservation; the monks might have been walking there yesterday."

But Gwendolen had lingered behind, and Grandcourt waited for her.

“You had better take my arm,” he said, in his low tone of command. “It’s a great bore being dragged about in this way, and no cigar.”

“I thought you would like it.”

“Like it!— one eternal chatter. And encouraging those ugly girls – inviting one to meet such monsters. How that smug Deronda can bear looking at her—”

“Why do you call him smug? Do you object to him so much?”

“Object? He’s of no consequence to me. I’ll invite him to Diplow again if you like.”

“I don’t think he would come. He is too clever and learned to care about *us*,” said Gwendolen, thinking it useful for her husband to be told (privately) that it was possible for him to be looked down upon.

“I never saw that make much difference in a man. Either he is a gentleman, or he is not,” said Grandcourt.

Meanwhile the group, wishing to indulge a *tete-a-tete* between the new husband and wife, left them behind. On their re-entering the garden, they all paused in that cloistered court where, among the falling rose-petals thirteen years before, we saw a boy becoming acquainted with his first sorrow. This cloister was built of a harder stone than the church, and the delicately-wrought foliage of the capitals seemed still to carry the touches of the chisel. Gwendolen dropped her husband’s arm and joined the other ladies, to whom Deronda was indicating the artistry of the carvings.

“I wonder whether one learns to love real objects through their representations, or the representations through the real objects,” he said, after pointing out some lovely curled leaves of stone. “When I was a little fellow these capitals taught me to delight in the structure of leaves.”

“I suppose you can see every line of them with your eyes shut. You must love this place very much,” said Miss Fenn, innocently, not thinking of inheritance. “You seem to know every cranny of it. I dare say you could never love another home so well.”

“Oh, I carry it with me,” said Deronda quietly.

Gwendolen felt that he probably thought of her as a selfish creature who only cared about possessions. It must be a secret hardship to him that he was shut out from his inheritance; and if he supposed that she exulted in her husband’s taking it, what could he feel for her but scornful pity? It seemed clear to her that he was avoiding her.

With these thoughts in her mind she was prevented by a mixture of pride and timidity from addressing him again, and when they were looking at the quaint portraits in the gallery, she made her vivacious remarks without any direct appeal to Deronda. But at the end she was very weary of her assumed spirits, and when Grandcourt turned into the billiard-room, she went to her pretty boudoir to be melancholy at her ease. No chemical process shows a more extraordinary activity than the transforming influence of the thoughts we imagine to be going on in another. Changes in theory, religion, admirations, may all begin with a suspicion of another’s dissent.

Poor Gwendolen was conscious of an uneasy, transforming process – all the old nature shaken to its depths, its hopes spoiled, its pleasures perturbed, but still showing strength in the will to reassert itself. After every new shock of humiliation she tried to adjust herself and seize her old supports – proud concealment, new excitements that would make life go by without much thinking; trust in some deed of reparation to shield her from a vague, ever-visiting dread of some horrible calamity; trust in the hardening effect of use that would make her indifferent to her miseries.

Yes – miseries. This beautiful, healthy young creature, with her two-and-twenty years and her gratified ambition, no longer felt inclined to kiss her fortunate image in the glass. She looked at it with wonder that she could be so miserable. Her belief in her own power of dominating was utterly gone. Already, in seven short weeks, which seemed half her life, her husband had gained a mastery which she could no more resist than she could have resisted the numbing electric touch of a torpedo fish. Gwendolen's will had seemed imperious in its small girlish sway; but it had been beset by imaginative fears, and even a shadow could weaken it: and she had found a will like that of a boa-constrictor, which goes on crushing without alarm at thunder. Not that Grandcourt was without acuity; he detected the feeling which made her proud and rebellious spirit dumb and helpless before him.

She had burned Lydia Glasher's letter in terror lest other eyes should see it, and had blamed her violent hysterics solely on the excitement and fatigue of the day. "Don't ask me – it was my feeling about everything – it was the sudden change from home." But the words of that letter kept repeating themselves with the weight of doom:

'I am the grave in which your chance of happiness is buried. You had your warning. You have chosen to injure me and my children. He had meant to marry me. He would have married me at last, if you had not broken your word. You will have your punishment. I desire it with all my soul.

'Will you give him this letter to set him against me and ruin us – me and my children? Shall you like to stand before your husband with these diamonds on you, and these words in his thoughts and yours? Will he think you have any right to complain when he has made you miserable? You took him with your eyes open. The wrong you have done me will be your curse.'

The words had nestled their venomous life within her. She dreaded that Grandcourt should know of that meeting at the Whispering Stones – so far out of her sight now was the possibility of speaking to him about Mrs. Glasher and her children, and making them rich amends. Any endurance seemed easier than the humiliation of confessing that she knew all before she married him, and in marrying him had broken her word. For the reasons by which she had justified her marriage, and her easy assumption of her future power over her husband, seemed now childish and futile. She dreaded the veil of secrecy being removed, and giving Grandcourt the right to taunt her. With the reading of that letter had begun her husband's empire of fear.

And her husband all the while knew it. He did not know of her broken promise; but he was aware not only of what Lush had told him about the meeting at the Whispering Stones, but also of Gwendolen's concealment as to the cause of her sudden illness. He felt sure that Lydia had enclosed something with the diamonds which had created in Gwendolen a new repulsion for him and a reason for not daring to show it. He did not greatly mind, or feel that his hopes in marriage were blighted: he had wanted to marry Gwendolen, and he was not a man to repent. Sympathetic feeling did not play a large part in his life. What he chiefly felt was that the change might establish his mastery more thoroughly.

And it was established. He judged that he had not married a simpleton: he had married a girl who had spirit and pride enough not to make a fool of herself by forfeiting the advantages of her position; and if she wanted pregnant hints to help her in making up her mind properly he would not withhold them.

Gwendolen, indeed, for all her trouble, felt bound to bear herself with dignity, and appear what is called happy. In disclosure of her disappointment or sorrow she saw

nothing but humiliation. Whatever her husband might have become to her, she meant not to be pitied. For she did think of the future with fear: she was frightened at Grandcourt.

The poor thing had passed from her girlish sauciness of superiority over this inert specimen into an amazed perception of her former ignorance about the possible attitude of a man toward the woman he sought in marriage. During their courtship, her little coquetries had formed a means of communication between them, showing him in the light of a creature such as she could understand and manage. But marriage had nullified all such interchange, and Grandcourt had become a blank uncertainty to her in everything but that he would do just what he willed; and she had no means of either discovering his will, or of escaping it.

What had occurred between them concerning her wearing the diamonds was typical. One evening, shortly before they came to the Abbey, they were going to dine at Brackenshaw Castle. Gwendolen had said to herself that she would never wear those diamonds: they had horrible words clinging and crawling about them. She came down dressed in her white, with only a streak of gold and a pendant of emeralds, which Grandcourt had given her, round her neck, and little emerald stars in her ears.

Grandcourt looked at her as she entered.

“Am I altogether as you like?” she said, speaking rather gaily. She was not without enjoyment at going to Brackenshaw Castle with her new dignities upon her.

“No,” said Grandcourt.

Gwendolen felt suddenly uncomfortable, wondering what was to come. She was prepared for some struggle about the diamonds; but suppose he were going to say, in low, contemptuous tones, “You are not in any way what I like.” It was very bad for her to be secretly hating him; but it would be much worse when he gave the first sign of hating her.

“Oh, mercy!” she exclaimed. “How am I to alter myself?”

“Put on the diamonds,” said Grandcourt, looking straight at her with his narrow glance.

Gwendolen paused, afraid of showing any emotion. But she was obliged to answer, and said as indifferently as she could, “Oh, please not. I don’t think diamonds suit me.”

“What you think has nothing to do with it,” said Grandcourt with *sotto voce* imperiousness. “I wish you to wear the diamonds.”

“Pray excuse me; I like these emeralds,” said Gwendolen, frightened in spite of her preparation. That white hand of his which was touching his whisker was capable, she fancied, of threatening to throttle her; for her fear of him, mingling with the vague foreboding of some retributive calamity, had reached a superstitious point.

“Oblige me by telling me your reason for not wearing the diamonds when I desire it,” said Grandcourt. His eyes were still fixed upon her.

Of what use was rebellion? It would hurt her worse than submission. She went slowly to her dressing-room. As she brought out the diamonds it occurred to her that she might have already raised a suspicion in Grandcourt that she had some knowledge about them. She fancied that his eyes showed a delight in torturing her. How could she be defiant? Nothing she could say would touch him – it would merely give him a more painful grasp on her mind.

“He delights in making the dogs and horses quail: that is half his pleasure in calling them his,” she said to herself, as she opened the jewel-case with a shiver. “So shall I quail too. What else is there for me? I will not say to the world, ‘Pity me.’”

She heard the door open behind her, and Grandcourt came in.

"You want some one to fasten them," he said.

She did not answer, but simply stood still, leaving him to fasten the diamonds on her as he would. Doubtless he had been used to fasten them on someone else. With a bitter sarcasm against herself, Gwendolen thought, "What a privilege this is, to have robbed another woman of!"

"What makes you so cold?" said Grandcourt. "Pray put plenty of furs on. I hate to see a woman come into a room looking frozen. If you are to appear as a bride at all, appear decently."

This marital speech touched the quick of Gwendolen's pride and forced her to rally. The words of the bad dream crawled about the diamonds still, but only for her: to others they were brilliants that suited her perfectly, and Grandcourt inwardly observed that she answered to the rein.

"Oh, yes, mamma, quite happy," Gwendolen had said on her return to Diplow. "Ryelands is a much finer place than this in every way. But don't you want some more money?"

"Did you not know that Mr. Grandcourt left me a letter on your wedding-day? I am to have eight hundred a year. He wishes me to keep Offendene for the present, while you are at Diplow. But if there were some pretty cottage near the park at Ryelands we might live there without much expense, and be closer to you."

"We must leave that to Mr. Grandcourt, mamma."

"Oh, certainly. It is exceedingly handsome of him to pay the rent for Offendene till June. And we can go on very well; our good Merry will stay and help to manage everything. It is natural that Mr. Grandcourt should wish me to live in a good style of house, and I cannot decline. So he said nothing about it to you?"

"No; he wished me to hear it from you, I suppose." Gwendolen in fact had been very anxious to have some definite knowledge of what would be done for her mother, but had not been able to overcome the difficulty of mentioning the subject to Grandcourt. Now, however, she had a sense of obligation which made her say to him, "It is very good of you to provide for mamma."

Grandcourt only said carelessly, "Of course I was not going to let her live like a gamekeeper's mother."

"At least he is not mean about money," thought Gwendolen, "and mamma is the better off for my marriage."

She often pursued the comparison between what might have been, if she had not married Grandcourt, and what actually was, trying to persuade herself that life generally was barren of satisfaction, and that if she had chosen differently she might now be feeling a regret as bitter as her current misery. She still thought that she would "manage differently from mamma;" but her management now only meant that she would let none suspect her troubles. She promised herself that she should get used to her heart-sores, and find excitements that would carry her through life, as a hard gallop carried her through the morning hours. There was gambling: she had heard stories at Leubronn of fashionable women who gambled. It seemed very flat to her at this distance, but perhaps if she began to gamble again, the passion might awake. Then there was the pleasure of producing an effect by her appearance in society, and winning men's admiration, as celebrated beauties did: they had perfect outfits, walked into public places, bowed, made the usual answers, and walked out again; and perhaps they bought china, and practiced accomplishments.

If she could only believe in pleasure as she used to do! Accomplishments had ceased to have the exciting quality of promising her pre-eminence; and as for admirers, she imagined them with weariness and disgust. Gwendolen's appetite for such delights had sickened. Wherever she wandered over the possibilities of her life, a shadow dogged her. Her confidence in herself and her destiny had turned into remorse and dread; she trusted neither herself nor her future.

This hidden helplessness gave fresh force to the hold Deronda had taken on her mind, as one who judged her by an unknown standard. Had he some way of looking at things which might be a new inward safeguard for her against the retribution which she dreaded? It had been Gwendolen's habit to think of the persons around her as stale books, too familiar to be interesting. Deronda had lit up her attention with a sense of novelty: his influence had entered into the current of that self-suspicion and self-blame which awakens a new consciousness.

"I wish he could know everything about me without my telling him," she thought, as she sat on a couch, supporting her head with her hand, and looking at herself in a mirror – not in admiration, but in a sad companionship. "I wish he knew that I am not so contemptible as he thinks me; that I am in deep trouble, and want to be something better." Without the aid of sacred ceremony or costume, her feelings had turned this man, only a few years older than herself, into a priest. Young reverence for one who is also young is the strongest of all.

But the effect is also stronger on the one who takes the reverence. Those who trust us educate us. And perhaps in that consecration of Gwendolen's, some education was being prepared for Deronda.



## Chapter Thirty-six

Meanwhile Deronda had been led off by Mr. Vandernoodt, who wished for a cigar and a little gossip. That gentleman presently said—

“What a washed-out piece of cambric Grandcourt is! But if he is a favourite of yours, I withdraw the remark.”

“Not the least in the world,” said Deronda.

“I thought not. One wonders how he came to have a great passion again; though Lush, his old chum, hints that he married this girl out of obstinacy. By George! it was a very accountable obstinacy. But it must be a pretty large drain of money, eh?”

“I know nothing of his affairs.”

“What! not of the other establishment he keeps up?”

“Diplow? Of course.”

“No, no; not Diplow: Gadsmere. Sir Hugo knows, I’ll answer for it.”

Deronda said nothing, despite feeling some curiosity; but Mr. Vandernoodt required no prompting.

“Lush would not altogether own to it, of course. But I have it on the best authority. The fact is, there’s another lady with four children at Gadsmere. She has had the upper hand of him these ten years and more – left her husband for him. He’s dead now; I found a fellow who was in the same regiment with him, and knew this Mrs. Glasher before she took wing. A noted beauty at that time – he thought she was dead. They say she has Grandcourt under her thumb still, and it’s a wonder he didn’t marry her, for there’s a very fine boy, and I understand Grandcourt can do as he pleases with the estates.”

“What right had he to marry this girl?” said Deronda, with disgust.

Mr. Vandernoodt, adjusting his cigar, shrugged.

“She can know nothing of it,” said Deronda, emphatically. But that statement was immediately followed by an inward query – “Could she have known?”

“It’s rather a piquant picture,” said Mr. Vandernoodt, “Grandcourt between two fiery women. These fine women generally get hold of a stick.”

“Grandcourt is no stick,” said Deronda.

“I can’t quite make him out. But this girl may think herself lucky to get him. I don’t want to be hard on a man because he gets involved in an affair of that sort. But he might make himself more agreeable. I was telling him a capital story last night, and he got up and walked away in the middle. I felt inclined to kick him.”

“He doesn’t listen much,” said Deronda. After a pause, he went on, “I think there must be some exaggeration in what you have heard about this lady at Gadsmere.”

“Not a bit. People have forgotten all about it. But there the nest is, and the birds are in it. And I have good evidence that Grandcourt goes there. However, that’s nobody’s business but his own. The affair has sunk below the surface.”

Deronda then chose to point to some giant oaks worth looking at: although this piece of gossip interested him, he felt that Mr. Vandernoodt had no more to tell.

Since the early days when he tried to construct the hidden story of his own birth, his mind had never been so active in weaving probabilities as it now began to be about Gwendolen’s marriage. Could she have gained some knowledge of this other household, which caused her to shrink from the match – a shrinking finally overcome by poverty? Her words seemed to show that she was conscious of having done some wrong. His own acute experience made him alive to the injury which might affect the

unavowed children and their mother. Was Mrs. Grandcourt, under all her determined show of satisfaction, gnawed by self-reproach, disappointment or jealousy?

He dwelt especially on the signs of self-reproach: he was inclined to judge her tenderly. He thought he had found a key by which to interpret her more clearly, imagining the misery of a young creature who had wedded her fresh hopes to old secrets; and he saw why Sir Hugo had never dropped any hint of this affair to him. Immediately the image of Mrs. Glasher became painfully associated with his own hidden birth.

Gwendolen knowing of that woman and her children, marrying Grandcourt, and showing herself contented, would have repulsed him; but Gwendolen tasting bitter remorse for contributing to their injury was a sympathetic figure. She seemed to have reached a common plane of understanding with him on matters which a woman is rarely able to judge of with justice or generosity: for she might easily have taken the view that her husband's marriage was his entrance on the path of virtue, while Mrs. Glasher represented his forsaken sin. And Deronda had naturally some resentment on behalf of the abandoned Hagar and Ishmaels.

Undeniably his growing solicitude about Gwendolen depended chiefly on her peculiar manner toward him; but he dismissed any idea of her being a coquette trying to involve him in a vulgar flirtation, and he determined that he would not again evade any opportunity of talking to her.

That evening, he realised that she was likely to be at tea with the other ladies in the drawing-room. The conjecture was true; for Gwendolen, after resolving not to go down again, began to feel that in shutting herself up she missed all chances of seeing and hearing, and that her visit would only last two days more. She adjusted herself, put on her self-possession, and going down, made herself resolutely agreeable. Lady Pentreath was amusing the assembled ladies with a description of a Regency drawing-room, when Deronda entered.

"Shall I be acceptable?" he said. "Perhaps I had better go back to the others in the billiard-room."

"No, no; stay where you are," said Lady Pentreath. "Let us hear what you have to say."

"That is rather an embarrassing appeal," said Deronda, drawing up a chair. "I think I had better take the opportunity of mentioning our songstress," he added, looking at Lady Mallinger— "unless you have done so."

"Oh, the little Jewess!" said Lady Mallinger. "No, I have not mentioned her. It never entered my head that anyone here wanted singing lessons."

"All ladies know someone else who wants singing lessons," said Deronda. "I have happened to find an exquisite singer,"— here he turned to Lady Pentreath. "She is living with some ladies who are friends of mine. She was on the stage at Vienna; but she wants to leave that life, and maintain herself by teaching."

"There are swarms of those people, aren't there?" said the old lady. "Are her lessons to be very cheap or very expensive? Those are the two baits I know of."

"There is another bait for those who hear her," said Deronda. "Her singing is something quite exceptional, I think."

"Why did she leave the stage, then?" said Lady Pentreath.

"Her voice was too weak. It is a delicious voice for a room. You who put up with my singing of Schubert would be enchanted with hers," said Deronda. "And I imagine she would not object to sing at private parties or concerts. Her voice is quite equal to that."

“I am to have her in my drawing-room when we go up to town,” said Lady Mallinger. “You shall hear her then. I have not heard her; but I trust Daniel’s recommendation. I mean my girls to have lessons.”

“Is it a charitable affair?” said Lady Pentreath.

“It is a charity to those who want to have a good model of feminine singing,” said Deronda. “If you heard Miss Lapidoth” – here he looked at Gwendolen – “perhaps you would change your resolution to give up singing.”

“I should rather think my resolution would be confirmed,” said Gwendolen. “I don’t feel able to follow your advice of enjoying my own middlingness.”

“For my part,” said Deronda, “people who do anything finely always encourage me to try. I don’t mean that they make me believe I can do it as well. But they make the thing seem worthy of doing. Although my own music is not good for much, the world would be more dismal if I thought music itself not good for much. Excellence shows us the spiritual wealth of the world.”

“But if we can’t imitate it, it only makes our own life seem tamer,” said Gwendolen.

“That depends on the point of view, I think,” said Deronda. “Most of us ought to practice art only as private study – preparation to understand and enjoy what the few can do for us. I think Miss Lapidoth is one of the few.”

“She must be a very happy person, don’t you think?” said Gwendolen, with a touch of sarcasm.

“It may have been a bitter disappointment to her that her voice failed her for the stage,” said Juliet Fenn, sympathetically.

“I suppose she’s past her best, though,” said Lady Pentreath.

“On the contrary, she has not reached it,” said Deronda. “She is barely twenty.”

“And very pretty,” interposed Lady Mallinger, with an amiable wish to help Deronda. “And she has very good manners. I’m sorry she’s a Jewess; but it doesn’t matter in singing.”

“Well, I’ll tell Lady Clementina to set her on my nine granddaughters,” said Lady Pentreath; “and I hope she’ll convince eight of them that they have not voice enough to sing anywhere but at church. I think many of our girls nowadays want lessons not to sing.”

“I have had my lessons in that,” said Gwendolen, looking at Deronda.

While she was speaking, Sir Hugo entered with some of the other gentlemen, including Grandcourt, and said–

“What is Deronda imposing on you, ladies – slipping in among you by himself?”

“A pretty singing Jewess who is to astonish these young people,” said Lady Pentreath. “You and I, who heard Catalani in her prime, are not so easily astonished.”

Sir Hugo listened with his good-humoured smile as he took a cup of tea from his wife, and then said, “Well, you know, there have been singers since Catalani’s time.”

“Ah, you are younger than I am. I dare say you are one of the men who ran after Alcharisi. But she married and left you all in the lurch.”

“Yes, it’s too bad when these great singers marry themselves into silence,” said Sir Hugo, while Deronda moved away to make room for others, and sat down a little apart.

Presently he became aware that Gwendolen had walked to the piano, where she stood apparently examining the music which lay there. Will anyone be surprised at his concluding that she wished him to join her? He went to her side and said–

“Are you relenting about the music and looking for something to play or sing?”

“I am not looking for anything, but I *am* relenting,” said Gwendolen. “I should like to hear Miss Lapidoth and have lessons from her, since you admire her so much, when we go to town. I mean lessons in rejoicing at her excellence and my own deficiency,” said Gwendolen, turning on him a sweet, open smile.

“I shall be really glad for you to see and hear her,” said Deronda, returning the smile. “She has had an unhappy life, and has grown up among very painful surroundings. But I think you will say that no advantages could have given her more grace and truer refinement.”

“I wonder what sort of trouble hers were?”

“I have not any very precise knowledge. But I know that she was on the brink of drowning herself in despair.”

“And what hindered her?” said Gwendolen, quickly, looking at Deronda.

“Some ray or other came – which made her feel that it was good to live,” he answered quietly. “She is full of piety, and seems capable of submitting to any duty.”

“Those people are not to be pitied,” said Gwendolen, impatiently, fingering the music. “I have no sympathy with women who are always doing right. I don’t believe in their great sufferings.”

“It is true,” said Deronda, “that the consciousness of having done wrong is deeper and more bitter. I suppose we faulty creatures feel the most for those who struggle with their own faults. It is a very ancient story, that of the lost sheep.”

“That is a way of speaking – it is not real,” said Gwendolen, bitterly. “You admire Miss Lapidoth because you think her blameless. You would despise a woman who had done something you thought very wrong.”

“That would depend entirely upon her own view of what she had done,” said Deronda.

“You would be satisfied if she were very wretched, I suppose,” said Gwendolen, impetuously.

“No, not satisfied – full of sorrow for her. I did not mean to say that the finer nature is not more adorable; I meant that people may become worthier of sympathy when they do something that awakens in them a keen remorse. Lives are enlarged in different ways. I dare say some would never get their eyes opened if it were not for a violent shock from the consequences of their own actions. And when they are suffering in that way one must care for them more than for the comfortably self-satisfied.”

Deronda forgot everything but his vision of what Gwendolen’s experience had probably been, and, urged by compassion, let his eyes and voice express as much interest as they would. Gwendolen, sitting on the music-stool, looked up at him with pain in her eyes, like a wounded animal asking for help.

“Are you persuading Mrs. Grandcourt to play to us, Dan?” said Sir Hugo, coming up and putting his hand on Deronda’s shoulder with a gentle, admonitory pinch.

“I cannot persuade myself,” said Gwendolen, rising.

There was an end of any confidences for that day. But the next was New Year’s Eve; and a grand dance, to which the chief tenants were invited, was to be held in the picture-gallery above the cloister. When Gwendolen was dressing, she longed, in remembrance of Leubronn, to put on the old turquoise necklace for her sole ornament; but she dared not offend her husband by appearing in that shabby way on an occasion when he would demand her utmost splendour. Determined to wear the necklace somehow, she wound it thrice round her wrist and made a bracelet of it just before entering the ball-room.

It was always a beautiful scene, this dance on New Year's Eve, which had been kept up by family tradition. Red carpet was laid down for the occasion: hot-house plants and evergreens were arranged in every recess of the gallery; and the old portraits made a piquant line of spectators. Some neighbouring gentry were invited; and Sir Hugo expected Grandcourt to feel flattered by being asked to the Abbey at a time which included this festival. All present knew that they were to see "young Grandcourt," Sir Hugo's nephew, the presumptive heir, now visiting the Abbey with his bride; and Gwendolen, opening the ball with Sir Hugo, was necessarily the focus of all eyes.

A year before, if some magic mirror could have shown Gwendolen her position, she would have imagined herself in a glow of triumphant pleasure, ready to make the best of her cleverness and spirit in her new life. And now she was wondering that she could get so little joy out of her exalted state, above the petty empire of her girlhood with its irksome lack of distinction and superfluity of sisters.

Wondering in this way at her own dullness, and longing for an excitement that would deaden her aches, she passed through files of admiring beholders in the country-dance with which the ball opened, and was generally regarded by her own sex as an enviable woman, who carried herself with a wonderful air, considering her origins. Poor Gwendolen! She would by-and-by become practised in the skill of bearing this last great gambling loss with an air of perfect self-possession.

The next couple that passed were also worth looking at. Lady Pentreath had insisted on standing up with Mr. Deronda. The contrast certainly set off the old lady well. She was one of those women who are never handsome till they are old, and she had wisely embraced the beauty of age as early as possible. What might have seemed harshness in her face when she was young, had turned now into a satisfactory strength of feature which defied wrinkles, and was set off by a crown of white hair. She glided along gracefully, with a mischievous smile in her eyes as she observed the company. Her partner's young richness of tint against her flattened hues had an effect something like that of a fine flower against a lichenous branch.

Grandcourt stood up with Lady Mallinger. It was agreed by onlookers that the heir to the estate could have had more hair, a fresher colour, and greater animation; but that Mr. Grandcourt could never be taken for anything but a born gentleman. Perhaps the person least well-disposed toward him at that moment was Lady Mallinger, to whom this country-dance with Grandcourt was a blazonment of herself as the unlucky wife who had produced nothing but daughters.

One side of the quadrangle was used for dancing, and the opposite side for the supper-table; a third side was less brilliantly lit, and fitted with comfortable seats. Later in the evening Gwendolen was in one of these seats, and Grandcourt was standing near her. They were not talking to each other; and Deronda, observing this, went up to ask her if she had resolved not to dance any more. Having himself been doing hard duty at dancing with the guests, he thought he had earned the right to sink into the background, and he had spoken little to Gwendolen since their conversation at the piano the day before. Grandcourt's presence would make it the easier to show his friendly pleasure in talking to her, even about trivialities.

Her face looked blank, but a smile beamed from it as she saw him coming, and she raised herself from her leaning posture. Grandcourt had been grumbling at the tedium of this stupid dance, and proposing that they should vanish: she had resisted on the ground of politeness, even though she was a little frightened that he was

silently angry with her. She began to despair of the opportunity for which she had put the old necklace on her wrist. But now at last Deronda had come.

“Yes; I shall not dance any more. Are you not glad that you need not ask me?” she said gaily. “I feel sure you have danced more than you like already.”

“I will not deny that,” said Deronda, “since you have danced as much as you like.”

“But will you take trouble for me in another way, and fetch me a glass of water?”

It was but a few steps that Deronda had to go for the water. Gwendolen was wrapped in the lightest of white woollen wraps, under which her hands were hidden. While he was gone she had drawn off her glove, and when she put up her hand to take the glass and drink, the necklace-bracelet, with its clumsy triple winding, was conspicuous. Grandcourt saw it, and saw that it was attracting Deronda’s notice.

“What is that hideous thing you have got on your wrist?” said the husband.

“That?” said Gwendolen, composedly; “it is an old necklace I like to wear. I lost it once, and someone found it for me.”

With that she gave the glass again to Deronda, who carried it away, and on returning said, in order to banish any consciousness about the necklace—

“It is worth going to look out of the windows on that side. You can see the finest possible moonlight on the stone pillars and carving.”

“I should like to see it. Will you go?” said Gwendolen to her husband.

Saying, “No, Deronda will take you,” he slowly walked away.

Gwendolen’s face showed a fleeting vexation at this show of indifference toward her. Deronda felt annoyed for her sake; and with a sense that it would relieve her to behave as if nothing unusual had occurred, he said, “Will you take my arm and go, while only servants are there?” He thought that he understood her action in drawing his attention to the necklace: she wished him to infer that she had submitted herself to rebuke, and that she felt no lingering resentment. Her evident confidence in his interpretation appealed to him.

As they walked together, Gwendolen felt as if the previous annoyance had removed another veil of reserve from between them. She did not speak until they were at the window looking out on the moonlit court. She folded her hands in her wrap, and pressed her brow against the glass. He moved slightly away, abstaining from remarking on the scene, for fear that any indifferent words might jar on her: already the calm light and shadow, the ancient steadfast forms, had aloofness enough from her inward troubles. He judged aright: she would have been impatient of polite conversation. In a subdued voice, she said—

“Suppose I had gambled again, and lost the necklace again, what should you have thought of me?”

“Worse than I do now.”

“Then you are mistaken about me. You wanted me not to make gain out of another’s loss in that way – and I have done a great deal worse.”

“I can imagine temptations,” said Deronda. “And at least I understand self-reproach.” He was almost alarmed at her sudden confidence toward him, in contrast with her habitual concealment.

“What should you do if you were like me – feeling that you were wrong and miserable, and dreading everything to come?” It seemed that she was hurrying to make the utmost use of this opportunity to speak.

“That is not to be amended by doing one thing only – but many,” said Deronda, decisively.

“What?” said Gwendolen, moving away from the glass and looking at him.

He looked full at her in return, with some severity. He felt he must not let himself be tender.

“I mean there are many thoughts and habits that may help us to bear inevitable sorrow. Multitudes have to bear it.”

She turned to the window again, and said impatiently, “You must tell me then what to think and what to do; else why did you not let me go on gambling? I might have won again, and I might not have to care for anything else. You would not let me do that. Why shouldn’t I do as I like, and not mind? Other people do.” Poor Gwendolen’s speech expressed nothing very clearly except her irritation.

“I don’t believe you would ever get not to mind,” said Deronda, with deep-toned decision. “Idiots escape pain; but you can’t be an idiot. Some may do wrong to another without remorse; but suppose one does feel remorse? I believe you could never lead an injurious life without feeling remorse.”

“Then tell me what better I can do,” said Gwendolen, insistently.

“Many things. Look on other lives besides your own. See what their troubles are, and how they are borne. Try to care about something in this vast world besides the gratification of small selfish desires. Try to care for something that is good apart from the accidents of your own lot.”

For an instant or two Gwendolen was mute. Then she said—

“You mean that I am selfish and ignorant.”

He met her fixed look in silence before he answered firmly— “You will not go on being selfish and ignorant.”

She did not turn away her glance, but a subtle change came over her face: the subsidence of self-assertion.

“Shall I lead you back?” said Deronda, gently offering her his arm. She took it silently, and that way they came in sight of Grandcourt. Gwendolen went up to him and said, “I am ready to go now. Mr. Deronda will excuse us to Lady Mallinger.”

“Certainly,” said Deronda.

Grandcourt gave his arm in silent compliance, nodding over his shoulder to Deronda, and Gwendolen half turned to bow and say, “Thanks.” The husband and wife left the gallery and paced the corridors in silence.

When the door had closed on them in the boudoir, Grandcourt threw himself into a chair and said, with undertoned peremptoriness, “Sit down.” She, already expecting something unpleasant, had nervously thrown off her shawl, and immediately obeyed. He began—

“Oblige me in future by not showing whims like a mad woman in a play.”

“What do you mean?” said Gwendolen.

“I suppose there is some understanding between you and Deronda about that thing you have on your wrist. If you have anything to say to him, say it. But don’t carry on a telegraphing which other people are supposed not to see. It’s damnably vulgar.”

“You can know all about the necklace,” said Gwendolen, her angry pride resisting the nightmare of fear.

“I don’t want to know. Keep to yourself whatever you like.” Grandcourt paused between each sentence, and in each his speech seemed to become more distinct in its inward tones. “What I care to know I shall know without your telling me. Only you will behave as becomes my wife, and not make a spectacle of yourself.”

“Do you object to my talking to Mr. Deronda?”

“I don’t care two straws about Deronda, or any other hanger-on. You may talk to him as much as you like. He is not going to take my place. You are my wife. And you will either fill your place properly or you will go to the devil.”

“I never intended anything but to fill my place properly,” said Gwendolen, with bitterest mortification in her soul.

“You put that thing on your wrist, and hid it from me till you wanted him to see it. Only fools go into that deaf and dumb talk, and think they’re secret. You will understand that you are not to compromise yourself. Behave with dignity. That’s all I have to say.”

With that last word Grandcourt turned his back to the fire and looked down on her. She was mute. There was no reproach that she dared to fling back at him. She dreaded making a fool of herself and being compromised. It was futile to try and explain that Deronda had only been a monitor. Grandcourt was contemptuous, not jealous; contemptuously certain of her subjection.

Why could she not rebel and defy him? She longed to do it. But she might as well have tried to defy the palpitation of her heart. Her husband had a ghostly army at his back, that closed around her. She sat in her splendid attire, a white image of helplessness, and he seemed to gratify himself with looking at her. She could not even throw up her arms, as she would have done in her maiden days. The sense of his scorn kept her still.

“Shall I ring?” he said, after what seemed to her a long while. She moved her head in assent, and after ringing he went to his dressing-room.

Certain words were gnawing within her. “The wrong you have done me will be your own curse.” As he closed the door, the bitter tears rose, and the gnawing words provoked a whispered answer: “Why did you put your fangs into me and not into him?” She pressed her handkerchief against her eyes, and checked her tendency to sob.

The next day, recovered from the shuddering fit of this evening scene, she determined to use the charter which Grandcourt had scornfully given her to talk as much as she liked with Deronda; but no opportunities occurred, and she dared not devise any for the sake of her pride and dignity. Although she did not think that Deronda would misunderstand her openness, others might. But when the last morning came, still she had never been able to take up the dropped thread of their talk.

She and Grandcourt were to leave at three o’clock. It was too irritating that after a walk in the grounds had been planned in Deronda’s hearing, he did not join in it. Grandcourt had gone out with Sir Hugo; other gentlemen were shooting; she was condemned to go and see the waterfowl, and everything else that she least wanted to see, with the ladies and Mr. Vandernoordt.

The irritation became too strong for her; without premeditation, she took advantage of the winding road to linger out of sight, and then set off back to the house, almost running when she was safe from observation. She entered by a side door, near the library. Deronda, she knew, was often there; why might she not enter? She had been taken there expressly to see the family tree – what more natural than that she should like to look in again?

The door was ajar. She pushed it gently, and looked round it. Deronda was there, writing at a distant table, with his back toward the door (Sir Hugo had asked him to answer some constituents’ letters). An enormous log fire warmed the great room. It seemed too daring to go in – too rude to interrupt him; yet she went in on the noiseless carpet, and stood still for two or three minutes, till Deronda, having finished a letter,



pushed it aside. He sat back to consider whether he could walk out for the chance of meeting the party which included Gwendolen, when he heard her voice saying, "Mr. Deronda."

He rose hastily, and turned with a strong expression of surprise.

"Am I wrong to come in?" said Gwendolen.

"I thought you were on your walk," he said.

"I turned back."

"Do you intend to go out again? I could join you now."

"No; I want to say something, and I can't stay long," said Gwendolen, speaking quickly and quietly, while she walked forward and rested her arms on the back of a chair. "I want to tell you that it is so – I can't help feeling remorse for having injured others. That was what I meant when I said that I had done worse than gamble again. And I can't alter it. I am punished, but I can't alter it. You said I could do many things. Tell me again. What should you do – what should you feel if you were in my place?"

The hurried directness with which she spoke – the absence of all her little airs – made her appeal unspeakably touching.

Deronda said– "I should feel what you feel: deep sorrow."

"But what would you try to do?" said Gwendolen urgently.

"Order my life so as to make any possible amends, and keep away from doing any injury again," said Deronda.

"But I can't – I can't; I must go on," said Gwendolen, in a passionate loud whisper. "I have made my gain out of others' loss – tried to make it. And I must go on. I can't alter it."

It was impossible to answer this instantaneously. Her words had confirmed his guess, and the situation rose in swift images before him. He felt for those who had been thrust out, yet his heart was full of pity for her. He answered–

"It is bitter to bear our own wrong-doing. But if you submitted to that as men submit to incurable disease? If you made the wrong a reason for more effort toward good, that may do something to counterbalance the evil. Feeling what it is to have spoiled one life may make us long to save other lives from being spoiled."

"But you have not wronged anyone, or spoiled their lives," said Gwendolen, hastily. "It is only others who have wronged *you*. You were right – I am selfish. I have never thought much of anyone's feelings, except my mother's. I have not been fond of people. But what can I do? I must get up in the morning and do what everyone else does. It is all like a dance set beforehand. I am tired and sick of it. And the world is all confusion to me" – she made a gesture of disgust. "You say I am ignorant. But what is the good of trying to know more, unless life were worth more?"

"Life would be worth more to you," said Deronda with indignant severity, which he encouraged as his own safeguard, "if some real knowledge were to give you an interest in the world beyond the small drama of personal desires. It is the curse of your life – forgive me – of so many lives, that all passion is spent in that narrow round, for want of ideas to make a larger home for it. Is there any occupation of mind that you care about with delight or interest?"

Deronda paused, but Gwendolen, looking startled and thrilled as by an electric shock, said nothing, and he went on–

"I take what you said of music for a small example: you will not cultivate it for the sake of a private joy. What sort of earth or heaven would hold any spiritual wealth in it for souls pauperized by inaction? The refuge you need from personal trouble is

the higher, the religious life, which holds an enthusiasm for something more than our own appetites and vanities. The few may find themselves in it simply by an elevation of feeling; but for us who have to struggle for our wisdom, the higher life must be a region which we reach by knowledge."

The remonstrance in Deronda's voice came from the habit of inward argument with himself rather than from severity toward Gwendolen: but it had a more beneficial effect on her than any soothing. She was roused into self-judgment, like a child shaken out of its wailing into awe, and she said humbly—

"I will try. I will think."

They both stood silent for a minute, as if some third presence had halted them — for Deronda, too, was under that sense of pressure which comes when our own winged words seem to be hovering around us — till Gwendolen began again.

"You said affection was the best thing, and I have none about me. If I could, I would have mamma; but that is impossible. Things have changed in such a short time. What I used not to like I long for now. I think I am almost fond of the old things now they are gone." Her lip trembled.

"Take the present suffering as a painful letting in of light," said Deronda, more gently. "You are conscious of more beyond yourself. You are learning the way in which your life presses on others, and their life on yours. I don't think you could have escaped the painful process in some form or other."

"But it is a very cruel form," said Gwendolen, beating her foot on the ground with agitation. "I am frightened at everything. When my blood is fired I can do daring things — take any leap; but that makes me frightened at myself."

Deronda said, with quick comprehension—

"Turn your fear into a safeguard. Keep your dread fixed on the idea of increasing that remorse which is so bitter to you. When we are calm we can use our memories and gradually change the bias of our fear, as we do our tastes. Take your fear as a safeguard, like quickness of hearing, that can warn you of consequences. Try to take hold of your sensibility, and use it as a faculty, like vision." Deronda uttered each sentence more urgently; he felt as if he were seizing a faint chance of rescuing her from some indefinite danger.

"Yes, I know; I understand what you mean," said Gwendolen. "But if feelings rose — hatred and anger — how can I be good when they keep rising? And if there came a moment when I felt stifled and could bear it no longer—"

She broke off, agitated, and looked at Deronda, but the expression on his face pierced her with an entirely new feeling. He was under the baffling difficulty of seeing his urgings as mere pallid words before the outburst of her emotion. It was as if he saw her drowning while his limbs were bound. The pained compassion in his features as he watched her, affected her with a compunction unlike any she had felt before. In a changed and imploring tone she said—

"I am grieving you. I am ungrateful. You *can* help me. I will think of everything. I will try. You will not mind that I have dared to speak of my trouble to you? You began it, you know, when you rebuked me." She said this with a melancholy smile, but added more entreatingly, "It will not be a pain to you?"

"Not if it does anything to save you from an evil to come," said Deronda strongly; "otherwise, it will be a lasting pain."

"No — no — it shall not be. It shall be better with me because I have known you." She turned immediately, and quitted the room.

When she was on the staircase, Sir Hugo crossed the hall on his way to the library, and saw her. When the baronet entered, Deronda was standing in his usual attitude, grasping his coat-collar, with that indefinable expression of a man still in the shadow of a scene which he has just gone through. He moved, and began to arrange the letters.

“Has Mrs. Grandcourt been here?” said Sir Hugo.

“Yes, she has.”

“Where are the others?”

“I believe she left them somewhere in the grounds.”

After a moment’s silence, Sir Hugo said, “I hope you are not playing with fire, Dan – you understand me?”

“I believe I do, sir,” said Deronda, with some repressed anger. “But there is no fire, and therefore no chance of scorching.”

Sir Hugo looked searchingly at him, and then said, “So much the better. For, between ourselves, I fancy there may be some hidden gunpowder in that marriage.”

## Chapter Thirty-seven

In spite of Deronda's reasons for wishing to be in London again – anxiety for Mirah, combined with curiosity about Mordecai – he did not manage to go there before Sir Hugo, who went ahead of his family for the opening of Parliament in February. Deronda took up his quarters in Park Lane, since his chambers were tenanted by Hans Meyrick – but he found things there not altogether according to his expectations.

It is a peculiar test of a man's mettle when, after painfully adjusting himself to a wise precaution, he finds he has missed the mark, so that quite a different call is made upon him to that which he expected.

On visiting Hans, Deronda's first impression was one of pure pleasure and amusement, at finding his sitting-room transformed into a studio. It was strewn with drawings and the contents of the trunks from Rome, with Hans as the presiding genius of the littered place – his hair longer than before, his face more whimsically creased, and his high voice getting higher under the excitement of rapid talk.

"I knew you would like to see my casts and antiquities," said Hans, after the first hearty greetings, "but I didn't unload my chests here. I've found two rooms at Chelsea close to my mother and sisters, and I shall soon be ready to hang out there – when they've scraped the walls and put in some new lights. But you see I've already begun working: you can't conceive what a great fellow I'm going to be. The seed of immortality has sprouted within me."

"Only a fungoid growth, I dare say," said Deronda, accustomed to treat Hans in brotherly fashion. He walked toward some drawings propped on the bookcases; five rapidly-sketched heads – different aspects of the same face. He looked at them without making any remark.

Hans, too, was silent for a minute, and began touching up the picture on his easel.

"What do you think of them?" he said at last.

"The full face looks too massive; otherwise the likenesses are good," said Deronda, somewhat coldly.

"No, it is not too massive," said Hans, decisively. "But I shall enlarge her scale for Berenice. I am making a Berenice series – there are the sketches – and you are just the model I want for Agrippa. No, I forgot; you don't like sitting for your portrait, confound you! However, I've picked up a capital Titus. There are to be five in the series."

"Agrippa's legs will never do," said Deronda.

"The legs are realistic," said Hans; "public men are often shaky about the legs. But never mind the legs: the third sketch is Berenice exulting in the prospects of being Empress of Rome, when the news has come that Vespasian is declared Emperor and her lover Titus his successor."

"You must put a scroll in her mouth, else people will not understand that."

"It will make them feel their ignorance then – an excellent æsthetic effect. The fourth is, Titus sending Berenice away from Rome after she has shared his palace for ten years – both reluctant and sad."

"Shall you make Berenice look fifty? She must have been that."

"No, no; a few mature touches to show the lapse of time. But now, here is the fifth: Berenice seated lonely on the ruins of Jerusalem. That is pure imagination. That is what ought to have been – perhaps was. Nobody knows what became of her. There

is no sixth picture. I break off in the Homeric style. The story is chipped off, so to speak. But now come and look at this on the easel.”

“That beseeching attitude is really good,” said Deronda, after a moment’s contemplation. “You have been very industrious over Christmas; for I suppose you have taken up the subject since you came to London.” Neither of them had yet mentioned Mirah.

“No,” said Hans, “I decided on the subject before. I saw a splendid woman in the Trastevere – the grandest women there are half Jewesses – and she set me hunting for a fine subject of a Jewess at Rome. I’ll show you a sketch of the Trasteverina’s head when I can lay my hands on it.”

“I should think she would be a more suitable model for Berenice,” said Deronda, not knowing exactly how to express his discontent.

“Not at all. The model ought to be the most beautiful Jewess in the world, and I have found her.”

“Are you sure that she would like to figure in that character? I should think no woman would be more abhorrent to her. Does she quite know what you are doing?”

“Certainly. I got her to throw herself into this attitude. Little mother sat for Gessius Florus, and Mirah clasped her knees.”

“I dare say she knows nothing about Berenice’s history,” said Deronda, with some indignation.

“Oh, yes, she does – ladies’ edition. Berenice was a fervid patriot, but was beguiled by love and ambition into attaching herself to the arch-enemy of her people. Mirah takes it as a tragic parable, and cries to think what the penitent Berenice suffered as she wandered back to Jerusalem and sat desolate amidst desolation. That was her own phrase. I couldn’t find it in my heart to tell her I invented that part of the story.”

“Show me your Trasteverina,” said Deronda, chiefly in order to stop himself from saying something else.

“Look in that folio,” said Hans. “My portrait studies are all there, Cambridge heads and others all mixed up. You’ll find her about the middle.”

“Is this one of your undergraduates?” said Deronda, holding up a drawing. “It’s an unusually agreeable face.”

“Oh, that’s a man named Gascoigne – Rex Gascoigne. An uncommonly good fellow; I coached him before he got his scholarship. He was ill, and has had to stay up another year. I must look him up.”

“Here she is, I suppose,” said Deronda, holding up a sketch of the Trasteverina.

“Ah,” said Hans, looking at it rather contemptuously, “too coarse. I was unregenerate then.”

Deronda was silent while he closed the folio. Then turning toward Hans, he said, “I dare say my scruples are excessive, Meyrick, but I must ask you to give up this notion.”

Hans threw himself into a tragic attitude, screaming, “What! my immortal Berenice series? Think of what you are saying, man – destroying not a life but an immortality. Wait, while I deposit the implements of my art and uproot my hair.”

Here Hans laid down his pencil, threw himself into a great chair, and shaking his long hair over his face, hooked his fingers onto it and looked up with comic terror at Deronda, who was obliged to smile, as he said–

“Paint as many Berenices as you like, but I wish you would choose another model.”

“Why?” said Hans, standing up, and looking serious again.

“Because she may get into such a position that her face is recognized. Mrs. Meyrick and I are anxious that she should be known as an admirable singer. She wishes to make herself independent. And she has excellent chances. One good introduction is secured already, and I am going to speak to Klesmer. Her face may come to be very well known, and I believe that if Mirah saw the circumstances clearly, she would strongly object to being exhibited in this way – to allowing herself to be used as a model for a heroine of this sort.”

As Hans stood with his thumbs in his belt, listening to this speech, his face showed surprise melting into amusement: but seeing that Deronda looked gravely offended, he said, “Excuse my laughing, Deronda. You never gave me an advantage over you before. So you actually believe that I could get my five pictures hung in a conspicuous position, and carefully studied by the public? Zounds, man! what a beautiful dream. My pictures are likely to remain as private as you could desire.”

Hans turned to paint again to fill up the awkward pause. Deronda stood still, recognizing his mistake as to publicity; but his repugnance was not diminished. Hans presently went on, painting the while—

“Even supposing I had the public rushing after my pictures as if they were a railway series including nurses, babies and bonnet-boxes, I can’t see any justice in your objection. Every painter paints the face he admires most. Part of his soul goes out into his pictures. He puts what he adores into some sacred, heroic form.”

“Every objection can be answered by generalising, Hans,” said Deronda, impatiently. “I might admit your generalities, and yet be right in saying you ought not to publish Mirah’s face. I was unreasonable about publicity; but there might be other good reasons for your not indulging yourself too much in painting her. Her situation is very delicate; and until she is more independent, she should be carefully kept safe. Are you quite sure of your own discretion? Excuse me, Hans. My having found her binds me to watch over her. Do you understand?”

“Perfectly,” said Hans, putting on a good-humoured smile. “You think I shall get into a scrape. Quite fair. Since I got into the scrape of being born, everything I have liked best has been a scrape either for myself or somebody else. My painting is the latest scrape; and I shall be all my life getting out of it. You think I am head over heels in love with Mirah. Quite right; so I am. But if you think I shall scream and plunge and spoil everything, you are mistaken. Awe prevents me. Ask the little mother.”

“You don’t reckon a hopeless love among your scrapes, then,” said Deronda, whose voice seemed to get deeper as Hans’s went higher.

“I don’t mean to call mine hopeless,” said Hans, with provoking coolness.

“My dear fellow, you are only preparing misery for yourself. She would not marry a Christian, even if she loved him. Have you heard her speak of her people and her religion?”

“That can’t last,” said Hans. “She will see no Jew who is tolerable. Every male of that race is insupportable.”

“She may rejoin her family. That is what she longs for. Her mother and brother are probably strict Jews.”

“I’ll turn proselyte, if she wishes it,” said Hans, with a shrug and a laugh.

“Don’t talk nonsense, Hans. I thought you professed a serious love for her,” said Deronda, getting heated.

“So I do. You think it desperate, but I don’t.”

“I can hardly imagine that there was anything in Mirah’s sentiments for you to found a romantic hope on.”

“I don’t found my romantic hopes on a woman’s sentiments,” said Hans. “I go to science and philosophy for my romance. Nature designed Mirah to fall in love with me. The amalgamation of races demands it.”

“You don’t mean a word you say, Meyrick,” said Deronda, laying his hand on his friend’s shoulder.

“Upon my honour I do mean it, though,” said Hans, in turn laying his hand on Deronda’s shoulder. “I am at the confessional. My mother says you are Mirah’s guardian, and she thinks herself responsible to you for every breath that falls on Mirah in her house. Well, I worship her – I won’t despair – I mean to deserve her.”

“My dear fellow, you can’t do it,” said Deronda, quickly. “Perhaps I am ungenerous, but I warn you that you are indulging mad, Quixotic expectations.”

“Who will be hurt but myself, then?” said Hans. “I am not going to say anything to her unless I am sure of the answer. I am giving up wine, so let me get a little drunk on hope and vanity.”

“With all my heart, if it will do you any good,” said Deronda, making his tone kindly, as he loosed Hans’s shoulder with a little push.

He was conscious of that irritation which sometimes befalls the man whom others trust as a mentor – the irritation of perceiving that he is supposed to be entirely off the same plane of desire and temptation as those who confess to him. Our guides, we pretend, must be sinless. Deronda had grown used to Hans’s egotism, but he had never before felt intolerant of it. When Hans poured out his own feelings, and never cared for any detail in return, Deronda had been indulgent.

But now he was indignant at Hans’s assumption that as far as rivalry over Mirah was concerned, Deronda was as much out of the question as the angel Gabriel. He had expected that Hans would give him trouble: what he had not expected was that the trouble would make him feel so strongly. And he was rather ashamed that Hans’s hopes caused him uneasiness. They had raised an unpleasant image of Mirah changing.

When Deronda went to Chelsea he was not comforted by Mrs. Meyrick’s lack of anxiety about her son. Mirah seemed livelier than before, and for the first time he saw her laugh, as she described Hans play-acting.

“He is so wonderfully quick,” said Mirah. “I used never to like comic things on the stage; but all in one minute Mr. Hans makes himself a blind bard, and then an opera-dancer, and then a desponding young gentleman – I am sorry for them, and yet I laugh.”

“We hardly thought that Mirah could laugh till Hans came,” said Mrs. Meyrick.

“Hans seems in great force just now,” said Deronda in a tone of congratulation.

“He’s been just perfect ever since he came back,” said Mrs. Meyrick.

“It is a great happiness,” said Mirah, “to see the son and brother come into this dear home, and to hear them all talk about what they did together when they were little. That seems like heaven, to have a mother and brother who talk in that way. I have never had it.”

“Nor I,” said Deronda, involuntarily.

“No?” said Mirah, regretfully. “I wish you had. I wish you had had every good.” The last words were uttered with a serious ardour, while her eyes were fixed on Deronda, who was contemplating her by the new light of Hans’s worship, and the possibility of her being attracted to his friend.

For the first time in her life Mirah was among those whom she trusted, and her original vision of Deronda as a divinely-sent messenger hung about him still. She felt that she had passed from imprisonment into an exhilarating air which made speech and action a delight. But Deronda's implying that there had been some lack in his life comparable to hers, was an entirely new inlet of thought about him. She went on—

“Mr. Hans said yesterday that you thought so much of others you hardly wanted anything for yourself. He told us a wonderful story of Buddha giving himself to the famished tigress to save her and her little ones from starving. And he said you were like Buddha.”

“Pray don't imagine that,” said Deronda, rather exasperated. “Even if it were true that I thought so much of others, it would not follow that I had no wants. When Buddha let the tigress eat him he might have been very hungry himself.”

“Perhaps if he was starved he would not mind about being eaten,” said Mab, shyly.

“Please don't think that, Mab; it takes away the beauty of the action,” said Mirah.

“But if it were true, Mirah?” said the rational Amy; “you always take what is beautiful as if it were true.”

“So it is,” said Mirah, gently. “If people have thought what is the most beautiful and the best thing, it must be true. It is always there.”

“Now, Mirah, what do you mean?” said Amy.

“I understand her,” said Deronda, coming to the rescue. “It is a truth in thought though it may never have been carried out in action. It lives as an idea. Is that it?” He turned to Mirah, who was listening with a blind look in her lovely eyes.

“It must be that, because you understand me, but I cannot quite explain,” said Mirah, rather abstractedly.

“But *was* it beautiful for Buddha to let the tiger eat him?” said Amy. “It would be a bad example.”

“The world would get full of fat tigers,” said Mab.

“When the best thing comes into our thoughts, it is like what my mother has been to me,” said Mirah.

Deronda, inwardly wincing as he thought of other possibilities about that mother, turned the conversation, saying, “I came to tell you of an interview I had yesterday with Klesmer, the great pianist. He has promised to fix a time for hearing Miss Lapidoth, if she consents.”

“I shall be very grateful,” said Mirah. “He wants to hear me sing, before he can judge whether I ought to be helped.” Deronda was struck with her plain sense and practicality. “Is Klesmer a severe man?”

“He is peculiar, but I do not know if you would call him severe. He is kind in action, if not in speech.”

“I have been used to be frowned at and not praised,” said Mirah.

“Klesmer frowns a good deal,” said Deronda, “but with a sort of smile in his eyes, if you can catch it.”

“I shall not be frightened. I shall do what I can.”

“Then I feel sure you will not mind being invited to sing in Lady Mallinger's drawing-room,” said Deronda. “She intends to ask you next month, and will invite many ladies to hear you, who are likely to want lessons from you for their daughters.”

“How fast we are mounting!” said Mrs. Meyrick, with delight.

“I am a little frightened at being called Miss Lapidoth,” said Mirah, with a new uneasiness. “Might I be called Cohen?”



“I understand you,” said Deronda, promptly. “But I assure you, you must not be called Cohen. The name is inadmissible for a singer. This is one of the trifles in which we must conform to vulgar prejudice. We could choose some other name, however: an Italian or Spanish name, which would suit your looks.” To Deronda just now the name Cohen was equivalent to the ugliest of yellow badges.

Mirah reflected anxiously, then said, “No. I will keep the name Lapidoth. I will not hide myself. I have friends to protect me. And now – if my father were very miserable and wanted help,” she said, looking at Mrs. Meyrick, “I should think, then, that I had hidden myself from him. He had no one but me.”

“Do what you feel right, my dear child,” said Mrs. Meyrick. For her own part she had no patience or pity for that father.

Deronda thought, “I should not be angry with Hans. How can he help being in love with her? But it is too absurd for him even to think of marrying her, and a sort of blasphemy to suppose that she could possibly give herself to him.”

What would it be for Daniel Deronda to entertain such hopes? He could not naively introduce himself where he had just excluded his friend, yet it was undeniable that he had reached a new stage in his feeling toward Mirah. But reasons both definite and vague made him shut away that question. What did he really know about his origin? What was his destination? Strangely, in these latter months when it seemed right that he should choose a destination, he had become more and more locked in by this uncertainty. His chief tether was his early affection for Sir Hugo: he was gratefully deferential to his wishes, while not agreeing with them; but now his doubts were close to making him ungrateful.

He accused himself of being weakly self-conscious and wanting in resolve. To Daniel the words Father and Mother still held the mystic power which had made his neck and ears burn in boyhood. The average man may regard this sensitivity on the question of birth as preposterous; but the average man does not even understand the action of his own heart and the structure of his own retina, let alone his mind.

Perhaps Deronda struggled all the more because he had never had a confidant to speak openly to on these delicate subjects. He had always been leaned on instead of being invited to lean. Sometimes he had longed for the sort of friend to whom he might unfold his experience: a young man like himself who had sustained a private grief and was not too confident about his own career. But he had no expectation of meeting the friend he imagined. Deronda’s was not one of those natures that lend themselves to second-sight.

## Chapter Thirty-eight

“Second-sight” is disputed. But there are people whose yearnings and ideas have a foreshadowing power; the deed they would do starts up before them in complete shape; the event they hunger for, or dread, rises into vision. These people are not always less sane or logical than others: but it may be that their natures are more open to impressions.

The figure of Mordecai had bitten itself into Deronda’s mind as a new question which he felt an interest in getting answered. But the interest was no more than a vaguely-expectant suspense: the consumptive-looking Jew, apparently a fervid student of some kind, fitted into none of Deronda’s anticipations.

It was otherwise with the effect of their meeting on Mordecai. For many winters, he had been conscious both of ebbing physical life, and a widening spiritual loneliness. All his desire had concentrated in the yearning for some young ear into which he could pour his mind, some soul kindred enough to accept the spiritual product of his own brief, painful life. The yearning had grown into a hope – the hope into a confident belief, which, instead of being checked by his knowledge of his hastening decline, became an intense expectant faith as if in a prophecy which has only a brief time to be fulfilled.

Some years had now gone by since he had first begun to measure men with a keen glance, searching for such a person. He imagined a man who would have all the elements necessary for sympathy with him, but in a body unlike his own: he must be a Jew, cultured, morally fervent; but he must be beautiful and strong, he must be socially refined, his voice must flow with a full and easy current. His circumstances must be free from sordid need: he must glorify the possibilities of the Jew, not sit amidst poverty as Mordecai did. He had looked at pictures as well as men, and had sometimes lingered in the National Gallery in search of paintings which might feed his hopefulness with noble types of humanity that might be Jews – but he was disappointed.

Observant persons might note his emaciated figure, and dark deep-set eyes, as he stood in front of a picture that had touched him: he commonly wore a cloth cap with black fur round it, which no painter would have asked him to take off. But spectators would be likely to regard him as an odd-looking Jew, who probably made money from pictures; and Mordecai was perfectly aware of the impression he made. Experience had rendered him morbidly alive to the effect of a man’s poverty in cheapening his ideas.

But he was too sane and generous to attribute his spiritual banishment solely to prejudice; his own incapacities played a part; and hence he imagined another, flourishing man, ready to incorporate all that was worthiest from an existence which was burning itself fast away. As the more beautiful, the stronger, the more executive self took shape in his mind, he loved it beforehand with an affection half identifying, half contemplative and grateful.

Mordecai’s mind worked so constantly in images, that his trains of thought often resembled dreams. Thus, he thought of the Being answering to his need as one distantly approaching, dark against a golden sky. The reason of the golden sky lay in one of Mordecai’s habits: he liked to visit London’s bridges, especially about sunrise or sunset. Even when he was bending over watch-wheels and trinkets, his imagination

took him to a far-stretching scene; his thoughts went on in wide spaces; and whenever he could, he tried to see them in reality.

As he leaned on the parapet of Blackfriars Bridge, the calm breadth of the river with its long hazy vista, the grand dim masses of tall buildings, the oncoming of boats and barges from the still distance, entered into his mood like a fine symphony. Thus the figure that represented Mordecai's longing was mentally seen darkened by the bright sky in the background.

But in the progress of his imagination toward fuller detail, the figure began to advance, and a face became discernible; he saw youth, beauty, refinement, Jewish birth and noble gravity. This spiritual need was akin to the boy's and girl's picturing of the future beloved; but the stirrings of such young desire are feeble compared with the passion of an ideal life straining to embody itself, in intense resistance to oncoming death. This visionary form became a companion not only in his waking imagination, but in his sleep.

Of late the urgency of time, measured by the gradual choking of life, had turned Mordecai's trust into an agitated watch for the fulfilment that must be at hand. Was the bell on the verge of tolling? The deliverer must be near – the deliverer who would save Mordecai's spiritual work from oblivion, and preserve it in the heritage of his people.

Many would have seen this yearning as an insane exaggeration of his own value. But love hungers to bless, not merely to behold blessing. And while there is warmth enough in the sun to feed life, there will still be men to feel, "I am lord of this moment, and will charge it with my soul."

Mordecai was not passive while he waited. He tried expedients, pathetically humble, for communicating himself. It was now two years since he had made his home under Ezra Cohen's roof, where he was regarded with much good-will as a compound of workman, scholar, inspired idiot, man of piety, and dangerous heretic. During that time little Jacob had become attached to Mordecai, viewing him as an inferior, but liking him none the worse, and taking his helpful cleverness as he might have taken the services of an enslaved Djinn.

As for Mordecai, he had given Jacob his first lessons, with his habitual tenderness. Though he was fully conscious of the spiritual distance between the parents and himself, the boy moved him with that idealizing affection that comes from the glory of childhood.

This feeling had drawn him on to a sort of outpouring in the boy's ear. When Jacob went up to Mordecai's room after work, for example, to have a brief lesson in reading or arithmetic, he was induced to remain standing at his teacher's knees, or chose to jump astride them, often to the patient fatigue of the wasted limbs. The inducement was perhaps the mending of a toy; and with the boy thus tethered, Mordecai would begin to repeat a Hebrew poem of his own, into which he had poured his youthful ardent idea of a blended past and future, telling Jacob to say the words after him.

"The boy will get them engraved within him," he thought.

None readier than Jacob at this fascinating game of imitating unintelligible words; and he would sometimes carry on as long as the teacher's breath would last out, showing no other distraction than surveying the contents of his pockets; or pulling down the skin of his cheeks to make his eyes look awful, or alternately handling his own nose and Mordecai's to compare them. Under all this the fervid reciter would not pause. But most commonly a sudden impulse sent Jacob leaping away into some

active amusement. Yet Mordecai waited with such patience as a prophet needs, and began again undiscouraged on the morrow, saying inwardly—

“My words may rule him some day. Their meaning may flash out on him.”

Meanwhile Jacob’s sense of power was increased by a store of magical chants with which he made the baby laugh, or drove the cat away, or promised himself to frighten any incidental Christian his own age. As soon as he got used to one portion of the poem, Mordecai began a fresh passage.

The consumptive voice, with its hoarseness and its occasional gasp, was on one occasion chanting Hebrew verses with this meaning:

“Away from me the garment of forgetfulness  
Withering the heart;  
The oil and wine from presses of the Goyim,  
Poisoned with scorn.  
Solitude is on the sides of Mount Nebo,  
In its heart a tomb:  
There the buried ark and golden cherubim  
Make hidden light:  
There the solemn faces gaze unchanged,  
The wings are spread unbroken:  
Shut beneath in silent awful speech  
The Law lies graven.  
Solitude and darkness are my covering,  
And my heart a tomb;  
Smite and shatter it, O Gabriel!  
Shatter it as the clay of the founder  
Around the golden image.”

As Mordecai intoned this last invocation, he was unaware that Jacob had ceased to follow him and had moved away. Having recently watched a mountebank in the street, the lad threw himself on his hands with his feet in the air, and was picking up a coin with his lips. The sudden sight jarred Mordecai horribly, as if it had been a Satanic grin upon his prayer.

“Child! child!” he called out with a strange cry that startled Jacob to his feet, and then he sank backward with a shudder, closing his eyes.

“What?” said Jacob, quickly. Not getting an answer, he shook Mordecai’s knees to rouse him. Mordecai opened his eyes with a fierce expression, leaned forward, grasped the little shoulders, and said in a hoarse whisper—

“A curse is on your generation, child. They will open the mountain and drag forth the golden wings and coin them into money! And they shall get themselves a new name, but the angel of ignominy, with the fiery brand, shall know them, and their heart shall be the tomb of dead desires that turn their life to rottenness.”

Mordecai’s behaviour was so new and mysterious to Jacob that it was as if the indulgent companion had turned into something unknown and terrifying. Little Jacob was shaken into awe, and he stood trembling with a sense that the house was tumbling in and they were not going to have dinner any more. But when the terrible speech had ended, the shock resolved itself into tears; Jacob lifted up his face and wept aloud.

This sign of childish grief at once recalled Mordecai to his usual gentle self: he drew the curly head toward him and pressed it tenderly against his breast. On this, Jacob, feeling the danger over, howled at ease, improving upon his own performance

– a transition from impulse into art. Indeed, the next day he undertook to terrify Adelaide Rebekah in like manner, and succeeded very well.

But Mordecai suffered a check: he judged himself severely. All the more his mind was strained toward that friend to come, with whom he would have a calm certainty of fellowship and understanding.

It was just then that, in the old book-shop, he was struck by Deronda's appearance; and it is perhaps comprehensible now why he looked at the newcomer with a sudden eager interest: he saw a face and frame which seemed to him to realize the long-conceived type. But the disclaimer of Jewish birth was a severe backward thrust, shaking his confidence.

Nevertheless, when he found Deronda at the Cohens' table, the first impression returned with added force; and in asking Deronda if he knew Hebrew, Mordecai was so possessed by the new inrush of belief, that he had forgotten the absence of any other condition to the fulfilment of his hopes.

But the answering "No" struck them all down again, and the frustration was more painful than before. After turning his back on the visitor that Sabbath evening, Mordecai went through days of deep discouragement, like that of men on a doomed ship, who having strained their eyes after a sail, and beheld it with rejoicing, see it drift away. But the long-contemplated figure in his mind came to take on Deronda's face, until the vision had the force of an outward call, keeping his expectation awake. It was Deronda now who was seen in the often painful night-watches – whose figure, never with its back turned, was seen in moments of soothed reverie, painted on that golden sky which was the doubly blessed symbol of advancing day and of approaching rest.

Mordecai knew that the nameless stranger was to come and redeem his ring; and the wish to see him again was growing into a belief that he should see him. He felt an increasing agitation which hindered him from steady occupation. He could not go on with his printing of Hebrew on little Jacob's mind; or with his attendance at a weekly club, which was another effort of the same forlorn hope: something else was coming.

The one thing he longed for was to get to the river, which he could do but seldom and with difficulty. He yearned with a poet's yearning for the wide sky, the far-reaching vista of bridges, the tender, fluctuating lights on the water, which seems to breathe with a life that can shiver and mourn, be comforted and rejoice.

## Chapter Thirty-nine

Momentous things happened to Deronda the very evening of that visit to the Meyricks' house. But for the family there, the chief sequel connected with it occurred two days afterward.

About four o'clock wheels paused before the door, and there came an imperious knock with an accompanying ring. All the girls were at home: Kate was drawing, and a great length of embroidery was stretched across the front room, Mrs. Meyrick bending over it on one corner, Mab in the middle, and Amy at the other end. Mirah was acting as reader to the party, seated on a stool, and giving forth with charming distinctness a delightful Essay of Elia, over which all were smiling, when the imposing knock and ring caused them to look up in wonderment.

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Meyrick. "Is there a grand carriage, Amy?"

"No – only a hansom cab. It must be a gentleman."

When the old maid-servant opened the door, there was seen a tall and impressive figure, with massive face, flamboyant hair, and gold spectacles: in fact, as Mrs. Meyrick read on the card, *Julius Klesmer*.

When he entered, the rooms shrank into closets, the cottage piano, Mab thought, seemed a ridiculous toy, and the entire family existence like an establishment of mice in the Tuileries. Klesmer's personality, especially his way of glancing round him, immediately suggested vast areas and an audience, and probably they made the usual scenery of his consciousness. But while his grandiose air was making Mab feel herself a ridiculous toy to match the cottage piano, he was taking in his surroundings with a keen and thoroughly kind sensibility. He remembered a home no larger than this on the outskirts of Bohemia; and he addressed Mrs. Meyrick with the utmost deference.

"I hope I have not taken too great a freedom by calling, since I was in the area. Our friend, Mr. Deronda, mentioned to me a young lady here – Miss Lapidoth."

Klesmer had really discerned Mirah on entering, but he looked round bowingly at the three sisters as if he were uncertain which was the young lady in question.

"This is Miss Lapidoth," said Mrs. Meyrick, waving her hand toward Mirah.

"Ah," said Klesmer, turning a radiant smile and deep bow to Mirah, who, instead of surprise, had a calm pleasure in her face. She liked the look of Klesmer, feeling sure that he would scold her, like a great musician and a kind man.

"You will not object to beginning our acquaintance by singing to me," he added.

"I shall be very glad. It is good of you to be willing to listen," said Mirah, moving to the piano. "Shall I accompany myself?"

"By all means," said Klesmer, sitting, at Mrs. Meyrick's invitation, where he could have a good view of the singer. The acute little mother said to herself, "He will like her singing better if he sees her."

All the feminine hearts except Mirah's were beating fast with anxiety, finding Klesmer terrifying as he sat with his listening frown on. They could only comfort themselves with thinking that Prince Camaralzaman preferred Mirah's singing to any other: – also she appeared to be doing her very best, as if she were more instead of less at ease than usual.

The song she had chosen was a fine setting of Leopardi's grand Ode to Italy; the recitative was followed by "*Ma la Gloria non vedo*" – a mournful melody; then after this came a climax of devout triumph, ending in the joyous outburst of an exultant Allegro:

*“Oh viva, oh viva:*

*Beatissimi voi*

*Mentre nel mondo si favelli o scriva.”*

When she had ended, Klesmer said after a moment—

“That is Joseph Leo’s music.”

“Yes, he was my last master, at Vienna: so fierce and so good,” said Mirah, with a melancholy smile. “He prophesied that my voice would not do for the stage. And he was right.”

“Continue, if you please,” said Klesmer, putting out his lips and shaking his long fingers. The three girls detested him unanimously for not saying one word of praise. Mrs. Meyrick was a little alarmed.

Mirah, simply bent on doing what Klesmer desired, and imagining that he would now like to hear her sing some German, went through Prince Radzivill’s music to Gretchen’s songs in the “Faust,” one after the other without any pause. When she had finished he rose and walked the length of the small space, then walked back to the piano, where Mirah had risen from her seat and stood with her little hands crossed before her, meekly awaiting judgment. With a sudden unknitting of his brow and with beaming eyes, he stretched out his hand and said abruptly, “Let us shake hands: you are a musician.”

Mab felt herself beginning to cry, and all the three girls held Klesmer adorable. Mrs. Meyrick took a long breath.

But straightway the frown came again, as with protruded lip he said—

“Not for great tasks. No high roofs. We are no skylarks. We must be modest.”

Klesmer paused. And Mab ceased to think him adorable: “as if Mirah had shown the least sign of conceit!”

Klesmer went on— “I would not advise your singing in any larger space than a private drawing-room. But you will do there. And here in London that is one of the best careers open. Lessons will follow. Will you come and sing at a private concert at my house on Wednesday?”

“Oh, I shall be grateful,” said Mirah, putting her hands together. “I would rather get my bread in that way than by anything more public. I will try to improve. What should I work at most?”

“I shall introduce you to Astorga: he is the foster-father of good singing and will give you advice.” Then addressing Mrs. Meyrick, he added, “Mrs. Klesmer will call before Wednesday, with your permission.”

“We shall feel that to be a great kindness,” said Mrs. Meyrick.

“You will sing to her,” said Klesmer, turning again to Mirah. “She is a thorough musician. Your singing will satisfy her: ‘Vor den Wissenden sich stellen;’ you know the rest?”

“‘Sicher ist’s in alien Fällern.’” said Mirah, promptly. And Klesmer saying “Schön!” put out his hand as a good-bye.

But imagine Mab’s feeling when suddenly fixing his eyes on her, he said decisively, “That young lady is musical, I see!” She was a mere blush and sense of scorching.

“Yes,” said Mirah. “And she has a touch.”

“Oh, please, Mirah — a scramble, not a touch,” said Mab, in anguish, with a horrible fear that this dreadful divining personage might order her to sit down to the piano. But her dread turned to amazed joy when Klesmer said benignantly to Mrs.

Meyrick, "Will she like to accompany Miss Lapidoth and hear the music on Wednesday?"

"There could hardly be a greater pleasure for her," said Mrs. Meyrick.

Thereupon Klesmer bowed round to the three sisters more grandly than they had ever been bowed to before. Mrs. Meyrick left the room with him, closing the door behind her. He said in privacy, with a frowning nod—

"She will do: if she doesn't attempt too much and her voice holds out, she can make an income. I know that is the great point: Deronda told me. You are taking care of her. She looks like a good girl."

"She is an angel," said the warm-hearted woman.

"No," said Klesmer, with a playful nod; "she is a pretty Jewess. But I think she has found a guardian angel," he ended, bowing himself out in this amiable way.

The four young creatures looked at each other mutely till the door banged and Mrs. Meyrick re-entered. Then there was an explosion. Mab clapped her hands and danced; Mrs. Meyrick kissed Mirah and blessed her; and Amy said emphatically, "We can never get her a new dress before Wednesday!" Mirah had reseated herself on the music-stool, with the tears rolling down her cheeks.

"I am too happy," she said. "I feel so full of gratitude to you all; and he was so very kind."

"Yes, at last," said Mab. "But he might have said something encouraging sooner. I thought him dreadfully ugly when he sat frowning, and only said, 'Continue.' However, I forgive him everything, now he has invited me. I wonder why he fixed on me as the musical one?"

"It was your way of listening, child," said Mrs. Meyrick. "But what was that German quotation you were so ready with, Mirah — you learned puss?"

"Oh, that was not learning," said Mirah, her tearful face breaking into an amused smile. "I said it so many times for a lesson. It means that it is safer to do anything before those who understand all about it."

"That was why you were not frightened, I suppose," said Amy. "But now, we have to talk about a dress for you on Wednesday."

"I don't want anything better than this black merino," said Mirah.

"Here comes Hans," said Mrs. Meyrick, as he entered. "Hans, we want your opinion about Mirah's dress. A great event has happened. Klesmer has been here, and she is to sing at his house among grand people. She thinks this dress will do."

"Let me see," said Hans. Mirah in her childlike way turned toward him.

"This would be thought a very good stage-dress for me," she said, pleadingly, "in a part where I was to come on as a poor Jewess. I almost always had a part with a plain dress."

"That makes me think it questionable," said Hans, who had suddenly become as fastidious and conventional on this occasion as he had thought Deronda was. "It looks too theatrical. We must not make you a role of the poor Jewess." Hans had a secret desire to neutralize the Jewess in private life.

"But it is what I am. I shall never be anything else," said Mirah. "I always feel myself a Jewess."

"People don't think of me as a Christian," said Hans, his face creasing merrily. "They think of me as an imperfectly handsome young man and an unpromising painter."

"You are wandering from the dress," said Amy. "If that will not do, how are we to get another before Wednesday?"



“Indeed this will do,” said Mirah, entreatingly, looking at Hans, “even if it seems theatrical. Poor Berenice sitting on the ruins is theatrical, but I know that is just what she would do.”

“I am a scoundrel,” said Hans. “That is my invention. Nobody knows that she did that. Shall you forgive me for not saying so before?”

“Oh, yes,” said Mirah, in surprise. “You knew it was what she would be sure to do – a Jewess who had not been faithful – who was penitent. I think it is very beautiful that you should enter so into what a Jewess would feel.”

With a sense of being checkmated, Hans said decisively, “That dress will not do. She is not going to sit on ruins. You must jump into a cab with her, little mother, and go to Regent Street for a black silk dress such as ladies wear. She must not be taken for an object of charity.”

“I think Mr. Deronda would like her to have a handsome dress,” said Mrs. Meyrick, deliberating.

“Of course,” said Hans, sharply. “You may take my word for what a gentleman would feel.”

“I wish to do what Mr. Deronda would like,” said Mirah, gravely; and Hans, turning on his heel, went to Kate’s table and took up one of her drawings to inspect it.

“Shouldn’t you like to draw Klesmer’s head, Hans?” said Kate. “I suppose you have often seen him?”

“Seen him!” exclaimed Hans, immediately throwing back his mane, seating himself at the piano and looking round him as if he were surveying an amphitheatre, while he stretched his fingers down toward the keys. But then he wheeled round, looked at Mirah and said, half timidly– “Perhaps you don’t like this mimicry; you must stop my nonsense when you don’t like it.”

Mirah smiled, but with a touch of something else than amusement, as she said– “Thank you. But you have never done anything I did not like. I hardly think he could, belonging to you,” she added, looking at Mrs. Meyrick.

In this way Hans got food for his hope. How could the rose help it when several bees in succession took its sweet odour as a sign of personal attachment?

## Chapter Forty

Deronda came out of the house at Chelsea longing for some bodily exercise to relieve his temper. The sight of the waiting boats at the riverside at once determined him not to go to the City by cab, but by calling a wherry and taking an oar.

His errand was to go to Ram's book-shop, where he had yesterday arrived too late for Mordecai's midday watch, and had been told that he returned there between five and six. Deronda wished for further conversation with this remarkable inmate of the Cohens before redeeming his ring: he wished that their talk should not again end speedily with that drop of Mordecai's interest which was like the removal of a drawbridge. As he plied the oar, thinking of Mordecai, he experienced his habitual change of mental light, shifting his point of view to that of the person who was in his mind.

"If I got information about Mirah's family from Mordecai," thought Deronda, "I should be content if he did not tell me more about himself, or why he seemed to have some expectation from me which was disappointed. My curiosity would die; and yet it might be that we had neared and parted like two ships, each carrying an exile who would have recognized the other if the two met. Poor fellow; his voyage, I fancy, must soon be over."

When the wherry was approaching Blackfriars Bridge, where Deronda meant to land, it was half-past four. The grey day was dying gloriously, its western clouds broken into narrowing purple strata before a wide-spreading saffron clearness, which in the sky had a monumental calm, but on the river was reflected as a luminous, rippling movement.

Deronda gave up the oar to draw on his Inverness cape. As he lifted his head while fastening the button, his eyes caught a well-remembered face looking toward him over the parapet of the bridge – a face of emaciated eagerness illuminated by the western light into startling distinctness and brilliancy. It was the face of Mordecai, who in his watch toward the west, had caught sight of the advancing boat, and had kept it within his gaze, at first simply because it was advancing, then with a quivering presentiment, till at last the nearing figure lifted up the face of his visions – and then immediately, with white uplifted hand, beckoned again and again.

For Deronda, anxious that Mordecai should recognize and await him, had signalled, and the answer came straightway. Mordecai waved his cap, feeling in that moment that his prophecy was fulfilled. Obstacles all melted into the sense of completion which flooded his soul. The prefigured friend had come from the golden background, and had signalled to him: this actually was: the rest was to be.

In three minutes Deronda had landed, had paid his boatman, and was joining Mordecai, who stood perfectly still to wait for him.

"I was very glad to see you here," said Deronda, "for I was intending to go to the book-shop and look for you again. I was there yesterday – perhaps they told you?"

"Yes," said Mordecai; "that was the reason I came to the bridge."

This answer, made with simple gravity, was startlingly mysterious to Deronda. Did this man really have a wandering mind, as Cohen had hinted?

"You knew nothing of my being at Chelsea?" he said, after a moment.

"No; but I expected you to come down the river. I have been waiting for you these five years." Mordecai's deep-sunk eyes were fixed on those of the friend who had at last arrived with a look of affectionate dependence, at once pathetic and solemn.

Although Deronda believed the words to be based on an illusion, he could not but respond with sensitivity.

“I will be happy if I can be of any real use to you,” he answered, very earnestly. “Shall we get into a cab and drive to – wherever you wish to go? You have probably had walking enough.”

“Let us go to the book-shop. But now look up the river,” said Mordecai, speaking with what may be called an excited calm – so absorbed by a sense of fulfilment that he felt no barrier to a complete understanding between him and Deronda. “See the sky, how it is slowly fading. I have always loved this bridge: it is a meeting-place for the spiritual messengers. Here I have listened to the messages of earth and sky; when I was stronger I used to stay and watch for the stars in the deep heavens. But the sunset was always what I loved best. It has sunk into me and dwelt with me – fading, with my own decline: it paused – it waited, till at last it brought me my new life – my new self – who will live when this breath is all breathed out.”

Deronda did not speak. He felt himself strangely affected. His first suspicion that Mordecai might be liable to hallucinations, obsessed by some subject which had overstrained his diseased body, gave way to a submissive expectancy. Deronda’s nature was too large and open to rest in the easy explanation, “madness.” He would rather meet than resist any claim on him in the shape of another’s need; and the solemnity of this claim lifted Mordecai into authority, like a supernatural guide who suddenly drops his mean disguise and stands revealed as a Power, calm and resolved.

After they had stood a moment in silence Mordecai said – “Let us go now,” and when they were in the cab he added, “We will get down at the end of the street and walk to the shop. You can look at the books, and Mr. Ram will be going directly and leave us alone.” It seemed that he was alive to judgments in other minds.

Meanwhile, Deronda had not forgotten Mirah: but he was no longer confident what questions he should ask; and said inwardly, “I suppose I am in a superstitious state, as if I were awaiting the fulfilment of an oracle. But there must be some strong relation between me and this man, since he feels it strongly. Great heaven! what relation is more potent than faith, even when mistaken? Will I fulfil my part, or disappoint? – well, I will not disappoint if possible.”

In ten minutes the two men, with as intense a consciousness as two undeclared lovers, found themselves alone in the small gas-lit book-shop and turned face to face, each baring his head to see each other fully.

Imagine the pathetic stamp of consumption with its brilliancy of glance and sharply-defined features, creating a far-off look as of one getting unwillingly out of reach; and imagine it on an eager Jewish face – the face of a man little above thirty, but aged by suffering, the black hair and beard emphasising the yellow pallor of the skin. Imagine the difficult breathing, the wasted yellow hands: then give to the yearning consumptive glance something of the dying mother’s look, when her one loved son visits her bedside, and the flickering power of gladness leaps out as she says, “My boy!”

Seeing such a portrait you would see Mordecai. And opposite him was a face not more distinctively oriental than many of the Latin races; rich in youthful health, and with a forcible masculine gravity in its repose, as it met the gaze of this mysterious son of poverty who claimed him as a long-expected friend.

Deronda’s keenly perceptive sympathy was never more thoroughly tested. He did not believe in the validity of Mordecai’s impressions concerning him: what he felt was a profound sensitivity to a cry from the depths of another, and the urge to be

receptive rather than prejudice. Receptiveness is a rare and massive power, like fortitude; and this state of mind now gave Deronda's face a calm benignant force which nourished Mordecai's confidence. He began to speak.

"You are wondering what has guided me to you and brought us together at this moment."

"I am not impatient," said Deronda. "I am ready to listen."

"You see some of the reasons why I needed you," said Mordecai, speaking quietly, to reserve his strength. "You see that I am dying. The day is closing – the light is fading – soon we should not have been able to discern each other. But you have come in time."

"I rejoice that I am come in time," said Deronda. He would not say, "I hope you are not mistaken in me"; for he thought that would be cruel just then.

"But the hidden reasons why I need you began afar off," said Mordecai; "began in my early years when I was studying in another land. Then beloved ideas came to me, because I was a Jew. They were an inspiration, because I was a Jew, and I felt the heart of my race beating within me. They were my life; I was not fully born till then. I counted this heart, and this breath, and this right hand" – Mordecai pathetically stretched out his wasted fingers – "I counted my sleep and my waking but as fuel to the divine flame. But care and labour and disease came, and blocked my way, and bound me with the iron that eats into the soul. Then I said, 'How shall I save the life within me from being stifled?'"

Mordecai paused to rest, and to check his rising excitement. Deronda dared not speak. The very silence seemed alive with mingled awe and compassion before this struggling fervour. Mordecai went on –

"I speak not as an ignorant dreamer – as one bred up in the inland valleys, never having stood by the great waters where the world's knowledge passes to and fro. England is my native land; but my true life was nourished in Holland at the feet of my uncle, a learned Rabbi: and when he died I went to Hamburg to study, and afterwards to Göttingen, that I might learn about my people, and drink knowledge at all sources. And I possessed myself of a craft. For I said, let my body dwell in poverty, and my hands be as the hands of the toiler: but let my soul be as a temple of remembrance where knowledge enters and the inner sanctuary is hope. I knew what I chose. They said, 'He feeds himself on visions,' and I denied it not; for visions are the creators and feeders of the world. You see, I measure the world as it is, which the vision will create anew. I am not one who raves aloof from the lives of his fellows."

Mordecai paused, and Deronda said, "Indeed, I would not call your words raving. I listen without prejudgment. I have had experience which gives me a keen interest in the story of a spiritual destiny embraced willingly in youth."

"A spiritual destiny embraced willingly in youth?" Mordecai repeated. "Rather it was the soul fully born within me, and it came in my boyhood. It brought its own world – a mediaeval world, where men made the ancient Hebrew language live again in new psalms of exile, and yearned toward a centre for our race. One of their souls was born again within me. It travelled into Spain and Provence; it debated with Aben-Ezra; it took ship with Jehuda ha-Levi; it heard the roar of the Crusaders and the shrieks of tortured Israel. And it spoke the speech they had made alive with the new blood of their ardour and their sorrow; it sang with the cadence of their strain."

"Have you written entirely in Hebrew, then?" said Deronda, with some anxiety as to his own knowledge of that tongue.

“Yes,” said Mordecai with deep sadness: “in my youth I wandered toward that solitude, not feeling that it was a solitude. I had the ranks of the great dead around me. But soon I found that the living were deaf to me. At first I saw my life spread as a long future: I said part of my Jewish heritage is an unbreaking patience; but then I had to bow under the yoke that presses on so many: family troubles called me – I had to work, to care, not for myself alone. I was left solitary again; but already the angel of death had beckoned, and I felt his skirts continually on my path. I loosed not my effort. I besought help. I spoke; I went to men of our people – to the rich in knowledge, and in wealth. But none listened with understanding. I was rebuked for error; I was offered a small sum in charity. No wonder. I looked poor; I carried a bundle of Hebrew manuscript with me; and I said, our chief teachers are misleading the hope of our race. Scholar and merchant both scorned me.”

“But though you wrote in Hebrew, few, surely, can use English better,” said Deronda, wanting to hint at a new effort for which he could smooth the way.

Mordecai shook his head slowly, and answered–

“Too late – too late. I can write no more. My writing would be like this gasping breath.” His head bowed in melancholy: for the moment he had lost his hope. Despondency hovered above him with eclipsing wings. He had sunk into momentary darkness.

“I feel strongly with you,” said Deronda, in a clear, deep, reviving voice. “But what you have written need not lie buried. The means of publication are within reach. I can help you to that end.”

“That is not enough,” said Mordecai, quickly, looking up with recovered confidence. “That is not all my trust in you. You must be not only a hand to me, but a soul – believing my belief – moved by my reasons – hoping my hope – beholding a glory where I behold it!”

Mordecai moved nearer as he spoke, and laid his hand on Deronda’s arm with a tight grasp; his face shone like a pale flame, while he went on– “You will be my life: it will be planted afresh; it will grow. You shall take the inheritance of ages. The generations are crowding on my narrow life as a bridge: what has been and what is to be are meeting there; and the bridge is breaking. But I have found you. You have come in time. You will take the sacred inheritance of the Jew.”

Deronda had become as pale as Mordecai. Quick as an alarm, there spread within him not only a compassionate dread of discouraging this dying fellow man, but also the opposing dread of fatally feeding an illusion, and of being hurried on to a self-committal which might prove impossible to carry out. The appeal to his tenderness overcame the repulsion that most of us experience under a dominating grasp and speech. His difficulty was how to express his doubts to this ardent suffering creature. With exquisite instinct, he placed his palm gently on Mordecai’s straining hand. Then he said, without haste,–

“Do you forget what I told you when we first saw each other? Do you remember that I said I was not of your race?”

“It can’t be true,” Mordecai whispered immediately, with no sign of shock. The sympathetic hand upon him had fortified his feelings. There was a pause, Deronda feeling it impossible to answer. Mordecai, entirely possessed by the supreme importance of the relation between them, followed that assertion by a second, spoken in consequence of his long-cherished conviction– “You are not sure of your own origin.”

“How do you know that?” said Daniel, shrinking away.

Mordecai relaxed his hold. "I know it; what is my life else?" he said with a low cry of impatience. "Tell me why you deny?"

He could have no conception what that demand meant to the hearer – how probingly it touched the hidden sensibility, the reticence of years; how the uncertainty had always for Daniel held a threat of painful revelation about his mother. But Deronda felt that any evasion or refusal would be a cruel rebuff to one who was appealing to him under the shadow of a coming doom. After a few moments, he said, with a great effort–

"I have never known my mother. I have no knowledge about her. I have never called any man father. But I am convinced that my father is an Englishman."

Deronda's deep tones had a tremor in them as he uttered this confession; and he was amazed at the strange circumstances under which he uttered it.

"It will be seen – it will be declared," said Mordecai, triumphantly. "The world grows, and is knit together by the growing soul; dim, dim at first, then clearer and more clear. As thoughts move within us darkly, and shake us before they are fully discerned, so events and beings are knit with us in the growth of the world. You have risen within me like a thought not fully spelled; my soul is shaken before the words are all there. The rest will come."

"The outward event has not always been a fulfilment of the firmest faith," said Deronda hesitatingly, wishing neither to give any severe blow to Mordecai, nor to encourage him unwisely.

Mordecai's face changed from the triumphant to the firmly resistant.

"You would remind me that I may be under an illusion – that the history of our people's trust has been full of illusion. I face it all." Here Mordecai paused a moment. Then bending forward, he said, in his hoarse whisper, "*So it might be with my trust, if you would make it an illusion. But you will not.*"

The very sharpness of these words persuaded Deronda that here he must be firm.

"What my birth was does not lie in my will," he answered. "And I cannot promise you to hasten a disclosure. Feelings which have struck root through half my life may still hinder me from doing what I have never been able to do. Everything must be waited for. I must know more of the truth about my own life, and I must know more of what it would become if it were made a part of yours."

Mordecai had folded his arms, and now answered with equal firmness, though with difficult breathing–

"You *shall* know. What are we met for, but that you should know? Your doubts lie as light as dust on my belief. Man finds his pathways: at first they were foot tracks, as those of the beast in the wilderness: now they are swift and invisible: his thought dives through the ocean, and his wishes thread the air: has he found all the pathways yet? What reaches him, stays with him, rules him: he must accept it, not knowing its pathway. Say, my expectation of you is a false hope. That doubt is in your mind? Well, I expected you, and you are come. Men have died of thirst. But I was thirsty, and the water is on my lips! What are doubts to me? Even if you come to me and say, 'I reject your soul: I am not a Jew: we have no lot in common' – I shall not doubt. That hour will never come!"

Deronda heard a new, imperious chord sounding in these words. He felt a subduing influence in the certitude of the fragile creature before him, whose breath laboured under the burden of eager speech. His feeling of sympathetic obligation grew, so that he felt no desire to escape what might turn into a trying embarrassment. He answered simply–

“It is my wish to satisfy your wishes wherever that is possible. Certainly I desire not to undervalue your toil and your suffering. Let me know your thoughts. But where can we meet? At the Cohens’, where you live?”

Before Mordecai could answer, Mr. Ram re-entered the shop. He was an elderly Jew with none of Mr. Cohen’s oily cheerfulness. Mr. Ram dealt ably in books, in the same way that he would have dealt in tins of meat and other commodities – without knowledge or responsibility as to the proportion of rottenness or nourishment they might contain. But he believed in Mordecai’s learning as something marvellous, and was not sorry that his conversation should be sought by a bookish gentleman, whose visits had twice ended in a purchase. He greeted Deronda with a crabbed good-will, and, putting on large silver spectacles, appeared at once to abstract himself in the daily accounts.

But Deronda and Mordecai were soon in the street together, and without any explicit agreement, were walking toward Ezra Cohen’s.

“We can’t meet there: my room is too narrow,” said Mordecai. “But there is a tavern not far from here where I sometimes go to a club: the *Hand and Banner*, in the next street, five doors down. We can use the parlour there.”

“We can try that,” said Deronda. “But you will perhaps let me provide you with some lodging, which would give you more freedom and comfort than where you are.”

“No; I need nothing. My outer life is as nought. I will take nothing less precious from you than your soul’s brotherhood. But I am glad you are rich. You did not need money on that diamond ring. You had some other motive for bringing it.”

Deronda was startled by this clear-sightedness; but before he could reply Mordecai added– “It is all one. If you needed money, we should still meet again. But you are rich?”

“Only in the sense that everyone is rich who has more than he needs for himself.”

“I desired that your life should be free,” said Mordecai, dreamily; “mine has been a bondage.”

It was clear that he had no interest in the reason for Deronda’s appearance at the Cohens’ beyond his own purpose. Deronda, determine to put his question, said–

“Can you tell me why Mrs. Cohen, the mother, must not be spoken to about her daughter?”

There was no immediate answer: Mordecai had heard the words, but had to drag his mind away from his passionate preoccupation. After a few moments, he replied–

“I know the reason. But I will not speak of family affairs which I have heard in the privacy of the family. I dwell in their home as in a sanctuary. Their history is their own possession.”

Deronda felt the blood mounting to his cheeks at this rebuke, and he found himself painfully baffled. He became conscious of emotional strain from the excitements of the day; and although he had the money in his pocket to redeem his ring, he recoiled from the further task of a visit to the Cohens’.

“I will part from you now,” he said, before they reached Cohen’s door; and Mordecai paused, looking up at him with an anxious fatigued face.

“When will you come back?” he said.

“May I leave that unfixed? May I ask for you at the Cohens’ any evening after your hour at the book-shop? There is no objection, I suppose, to their knowing that you and I meet?”

“None,” said Mordecai. “But the days I wait now are longer than the years of my strength. Life shrinks: what was but a tithe is now the half. My hope abides in you.”

“I will be faithful,” said Deronda – he could not have left those words unuttered. “I will come the first evening I can. Trust me.”

He put out his hand. Mordecai, clasping it eagerly, said– “This is come to pass, and the rest will come.”

That was their good-bye.



## BOOK VI: REVELATIONS

### Chapter Forty-one

Imagine the conflict in a responsive and questioning mind like Deronda's, after the interview with Mordecai. The adventure might have moved a much duller young man; but it had stirred Deronda so deeply, that with his usual reaction of his intellect he began to examine his emotion, and consider how far he must resist its guidance.

The consciousness that he was dominated by Mordecai's certainty and trust alarmed him. He shrank from undervaluing an experience simply because it had come close to him, when in an historical context he would recognise it as a momentous event. If he had read of this incident as having happened centuries ago in Rome, Greece, or Asia Minor, to some young man dissatisfied with life, and wanting a special fellowship or duty to inspire him with passion for his work, it would have seemed quite natural that the meeting should have created a deep impression on him. Why should he be ashamed of his own agitated feeling merely because he dressed for dinner, wore a white tie, and lived among people who might laugh at his seriousness in the matter? But Deronda also shrank from having his course determined without the consent of reason; or from allowing his pity to hurry him along a dimly-seen path.

What, after all, had really happened? He knew what Sir Hugo would have said: "A consumptive, fanatical Jew has fixed on Deronda as the embodiment of some visionary image born of his fanatical beliefs and his despair of his own life. Fanaticism is not rare. The world is full of fanatics convinced they hold the key to unique knowledge. Scattered in every direction you might find a terrible person with a glittering eye, on the look-out for the man who must hear him; and in most cases he had volumes which he could not get printed or read. This Mordecai happened to have a more pathetic aspect, a more passionate speech than most; but still he came under the same class. It would be only right and kind to indulge him a little, to comfort him with such help as was practicable; but how likely was it that his ideas had any value? In such cases a man of the world knows what to think beforehand. As to Mordecai's conviction that he had found a new executive self, it might lead to the worst of disappointments."

Deronda's ear caught all these negative whisperings. He knew that human passion invites burlesque and parody. Many martyrs have been sacrificed to error and folly. The grandest man can appear ridiculous if reduced to an abstract statement of his qualities and efforts: to do him justice, we need to understand the subject-matter on which he is convinced, and to feel fellowship with his effort.

Deronda was familiar enough with this track of thinking to be saved from any contemptuous prejudgment of Mordecai, even without the peculiar claim made on him by the Jew. This claim, indeed, considered rationally, might seem preposterous; but it was precisely what turned Mordecai's hold on him from an appeal to his sympathy into a clutch on his struggling conscience. Our consciences are not all of the same pattern: they are as various as our memories. And Deronda's conscience was enlarged by his early habit of thinking himself imaginatively into the experience of others.

What was the claim this eager soul made upon him? "You must believe my beliefs – be moved by my reasons – hope my hopes – behold a glory where I behold it!" To see this as an obligation would have been preposterous – to have agreed to it would

have been dishonesty; and Deronda felt thankful that in his compassion he had preserved himself from the bondage of false agreements. The claim hung, too, on a supposition which was probably not true: the supposition that he, Deronda, was of Jewish blood.

But since the age of thirteen Deronda had associated his deepest affections with the assumption that Sir Hugo was his father. That theory had been the source of passionate struggle within him; by its light he had been accustomed to subdue feelings and to cherish them. He had been well used to find a motive in a belief which might be disproved; and he had been also used to imagine some revelation that might change his view of his duties. A state of scrupulous suspense was familiar to him.

And now, suppose that belief in his Jewish birth, and that extravagant demand of discipleship, to be the foreshadowing of an actual discovery: suppose that Mordecai's ideas made a real conquest over Deronda's conviction? It was possible that just as Mordecai believed he had found a renewal of himself, so Deronda might receive from Mordecai's mind the complete ideal shape of that personal duty which lay in his own thought, like sculptured fragments indicating some beauty yearned after but without a foreseeable form.

As he meditated on that possibility, he was aware that it would be called dreamy, and began to defend it. If Mordecai were some honoured professor or distinguished philosopher, would Deronda's receptiveness toward him be ridiculed? Because he was a poor Jewish workman, to be met in the *Hand and Banner*, was that a reason for deciding that there was no spiritual force within him?

There is a legend that the Emperor Domitian, having heard that a ruler of the world was to spring from a Jewish family, sent for its members in alarm, but quickly released them on observing that they had the hands of work-people; in contrast to the Rabbi who stood waiting at the gate of Rome, sure that the Messiah would be found among the destitute who entered there. Both Emperor and Rabbi were wrong to trust outward signs: poverty and poor clothes are no mark of inspiration, said Deronda to himself, but they have gone with it in some remarkable cases.

A more plausible reason for rejecting discipleship was Mordecai's visionary excitement, which made him see events as fulfilment of his overwhelming wishes. Was he capable of judging consequences wisely in such a frame of mind? But perhaps Mordecai might be able to combine wise judgment with that passionate belief which determines the consequences it believes in. Even strictly-measuring science could hardly have got on without that ardour which feels the excitement of discovery beforehand, and has a faith in its result that overcomes many failures of experiment.

At least, Deronda argued, Mordecai's visionary excitability was hardly a reason for assuming that he was not worth listening to. Are stricter reasoners free from false conclusions? The driest argument has its hallucinations; no formulas for thinking will save us imperfect mortals from mistake in our thought. We must be patient with the inevitable makeshift nature of our human thinking. Columbus was superstitious; but he had also some sound ideas, and the passionate patience of genius to make them tell on mankind. The world is rather contemptuous about those who were deaf to Columbus.

"I must not adopt their mistake on a small scale," said Deronda, "and assume that there cannot be any momentous relation between this Jew and me, simply because of his visionary ideas. What I can be to him, or he to me, may not depend on his belief about the way we came together. To me the way seems made up of plainly discernible links. If I had not found Mirah, I should not have begun to be interested in the Jews,

and certainly I should not have gone on that search after an Ezra Cohen which made me pause at Ram's book-shop. Mordecai, on his side, had his visions of a disciple, and I corresponded with the image his longing had created. He took me for one of his race. The elderly Jew at Frankfort seemed to have the same impression. Suppose that this should somehow be proved true, and that I should come to share the ideas he is devoted to? This is the only question which really concerns the effect of our meeting on my life.

"But if the result should be quite different? – well, there will be pain and crushing disappointment for the poor fellow. I had better prepare myself for that. No tenderness of mine can make his suffering lighter. Would the alternative – that I should not disappoint him – be less painful to me?"

Here Deronda wavered. Feelings had lately been at work within him which had very much modified the reluctance with which he would formerly have thought of himself as a Jew. And he was romantic. His young energy and spirit of adventure gave him a certain quivering interest in the track he might enter – especially when the track was one of thought as well as action.

But his Jewishness was no more than a bare possibility. The belief that his father was an Englishman only grew firmer under the weak assaults of unwarranted doubt. And Deronda's life-long affection for Sir Hugo made him shrink from admitting that wish.

Whatever the truth about his birth might be, he decided that he would not hasten its discovery. Rather, he cherished his present uncertainty. It might even be justifiable to use it in keeping up a suspense which would induce Mordecai to accept the friendly help that Deronda longed to urge on him.

These were the thoughts that busied Deronda in the four days before he could call on Mordecai again: Sir Hugo's demands on him continued so late as to put a trip to Holborn out of the question.

## Chapter Forty-two

“If there are ranks in suffering, Israel takes precedence of all the nations – if the duration of sorrows and the patience with which they are borne ennoble, the Jews are among the aristocracy of every land – if a literature is called rich in the possession of a few classic tragedies, what shall we say to a National Tragedy lasting for fifteen hundred years?”

Deronda had lately been reading that passage of Zunz, and he felt in contrast when visiting the Cohens that they bore no obvious stamp of distinction in sorrow or in any other form of aristocracy. Ezra Cohen was not clad in the sublime pathos of the martyr, nor was he a symbol of the great Jewish tragedy; and yet was there not something typical in the fact that a life like Mordecai’s – a frail incorporation of the national consciousness – was nested in the self-congratulatory prosperity of the Cohens?

Glistening was the gladness in their faces when Deronda reappeared among them. Cohen hinted that although the diamond ring, left a little longer, would have bred more money, he did not mind that compared with the pleasure of his family, who had “talked of nothing else” since the agreeable young gentleman’s first visit.

Young Mrs. Cohen was sorry that baby was asleep, and glad that Adelaide was not yet gone to bed, entreating Deronda to go into the parlour to see “mother and the children.” He willingly accepted, having provided himself with presents; a set of paper figures for Adelaide, and an ivory cup and ball for Jacob.

The grandmother was playing with the children. When Deronda entered and seated himself, he observed that the door to Mordecai’s quarters was now closed; but he wished to show his interest in the Cohens before disclosing his stronger interest in their singular inmate. It was not until he had Adelaide on his knee, and was making the paper figures dance on the table, while Jacob was already practising with the cup and ball, that Deronda said–

“Is Mordecai in just now?”

“He’s in the workroom there,” said Mrs. Cohen, nodding toward the closed door.

“The fact is, sir,” said Cohen, “we don’t know what’s come over him this last day or two. He’s always what I may call a little touched, you know” – Cohen pointed to his own forehead – “not quite rational; but he’s mostly regular and industrious so far as a poor creature can be. But lately he’s been moving like a sleep-walker, or else sitting as still as a wax figure.”

“It’s the disease, poor dear creature,” said the grandmother, tenderly. “I doubt whether he can stand long against it.”

“No; I think it’s only something in his head,” said Mrs. Cohen the younger. “He’s been turning over writing continually, and when I speak to him it takes him ever so long to hear and answer.”

“You may think us a little weak,” said Cohen, apologetically. “But we wouldn’t part with him if he was a still worse encumbrance. It isn’t that we don’t know the long and short of matters, but it’s our principle.”

“Oh, Mordecai carries a blessing inside him,” said the grandmother.

“He’s got something the matter inside him,” said Jacob, correcting his grandmother. “He said he couldn’t talk to me, and he wouldn’t have a bit o’ bun.”

“So far from wondering at your feeling for him,” said Deronda, “I feel something of the same sort myself. I talked to him recently at Ram’s book-shop – in fact, I promised to call for him here, that we might go out together.”

“That’s it, then!” said Cohen, slapping his knee. “He’s been expecting you, and it’s taken hold of him. I suppose he talks about his learning to you. It’s uncommonly kind of you, sir.”

Jacob said obligingly, “I’ll call Mordecai for you, if you like.”

“No, Jacob,” said his mother; “open the door, and let the gentleman go in himself. Hush! don’t make a noise.”

Jacob turned the handle of the door noiselessly, while Deronda went to stand on the threshold. The small room was lit only by a dying fire and one shaded candle. On the board under the window, various objects of jewellery were scattered: books were heaped in the corner. Mordecai sat with his back to the door, a watch propped on a stand before him. He was in a state of expectation as sickening as that of a prisoner listening for deliverance, when he heard Deronda’s voice saying, “I am come for you. Are you ready?”

Immediately he turned without speaking, seized his fur cap, and moved to join Deronda. In a moment they were both in the sitting-room, where Jacob seized him by the arm and said, “See my cup and ball!” It was a sign of the relieved tension in Mordecai’s mind that he could smile and say, “Fine, fine!”

“He’s come to life again,” said Cohen in an undertone. Then in his usual voice, “Well, sir, we mustn’t detain you; but I hope this isn’t the last time we shall see you.”

“Shall you come again?” said Jacob. “See, I can catch the ball.”

“He has clever hands,” said Deronda, looking at the grandmother. “Which side of the family does he get them from?”

But the grandmother only nodded towards her son, who said promptly, “My side,” while Jacob began to stamp about, singing.

Deronda thought, “I shall never know anything decisive until I ask Cohen point-blank whether he lost a sister named Mirah when she was six.” The decisive moment was not yet easy for him to face. Still, he felt more kindly towards these people than at first, seeing their gentle treatment of the consumptive workman.

“The Cohens seem to have an affection for you,” said Deronda, as soon as he and Mordecai had left.

“And I for them,” was the answer. “They have the heart of the Israelite within them, though they are as the horse and the mule, without understanding beyond the narrow path they tread.”

“I have caused you some uneasiness, I fear,” said Deronda, “by my slowness in fulfilling my promise. I wished to come yesterday, but it was impossible.”

“I trusted you. But it is true I have been uneasy, for the spirit of my youth has been stirred, and this body is not strong enough to bear the beating of its wings. I am as a man bound and imprisoned through long years: behold him set free, and he weeps, he totters, his joy threatens to break the tabernacle of flesh.”

“You must not speak too much in this evening air,” said Deronda, feeling painfully responsible. “We are going to the *Hand and Banner*, I suppose, to be private there?”

“No, this is the evening of the club I spoke of, and we might not have much time alone until late, when all the rest are gone. Perhaps we had better seek another place. But I am used to that one. In new places the outer world presses on me and narrows the inward vision. And the people there are familiar with my face.”

“I don’t mind the club if I am allowed in,” said Deronda. “What sort of club is it?”

“It is called ‘The Philosophers.’ They are a few poor men given to thought; but none so poor as I am. We are allowed to introduce a friend who is interested in our topics. Each orders beer or some other drink, in payment for the room. I have gone when I could, for there are other Jews who come, and I have seen a faint likeness between these poor philosophers and the Masters who handed down the thought of our race. The heart pleases itself with faint resemblances.”

“I shall be very glad to sit among them, if that will suit you,” said Deronda, relieved at the prospect of an interval before he went through the strain of his next private conversation with Mordecai.

In three minutes they were in the little parlour, where the gaslight shone through a haze of smoke on to a striking scene. Half-a-dozen men of various ages, between twenty and fifty, all shabbily dressed, most of them with clay pipes, were listening with a look of concentrated intelligence to a man in pepper-and-salt clothes, with blonde hair and broad forehead, who, holding his pipe in his left hand, and beating his knee with the right, was just finishing a quotation from Shelley:

“As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth  
Is loosened, and the nations echo round.”

The entrance of the new-comers called for a re-arrangement of seats in the narrow semicircle round the fire-place and the table. Mordecai was received with welcoming voices which had compassion in them, but naturally all glances passed immediately to his companion.

“I have brought a friend who is interested in our subjects,” said Mordecai. “He has travelled and studied much.”

“Is the gentlemen anonymous? Is he a Great ‘Unknown?’” said the quoter of Shelley, with a humorous air.

“My name is Daniel Deronda. I am unknown, but not in any sense great.” His smile caused a general indistinct murmur, equivalent to a “Hear, hear.”

“You are welcome, sir.”

Deronda sat down on the opposite side to Mordecai and the other men, several of whom seemed probably of Jewish descent.

Miller, the quoter of Shelley, was an exceptional second-hand bookseller who knew the insides of book, with grand-parents who called themselves German, and possibly far-away ancestors who denied themselves to be Jews; Buchan, the saddler, was Scotch; Pash, the watchmaker, was a small, dark, vivacious Jew; Gideon, the optical instrument maker, was a red-headed Jew easily passing for an Englishman of unusually cordial manners: and Croop, the shoemaker, was probably Celtic. Only three were obviously English: the wood-inlayer Goodwin, open-faced and pleasant-voiced; the florid laboratory assistant Marrables; and Lily, the pale, neat copying-clerk, whose light-brown hair was set up in a small parallelogram above his forehead.

Certainly a select company, not likely to amuse any gentleman in search of crime or low comedy. Deronda, even if he had not been made grave by his ponderings about Mordecai, would not have found food for laughter in the talk of these men, who had probably snatched knowledge as we snatch indulgences, making the most of scant opportunity. He looked around him with a quiet air of respect, and offered the contents of his cigar-case. That he made a decidedly winning impression on the company was proved by their being as much at ease as before, and quickly resuming their interrupted talk.

“This is what I call one of our touch-and-go nights, sir,” said Miller, who seemed to act as a sort of moderator. “Sometimes we stick pretty close to the point. But tonight our friend Pash, there, brought up the law of progress; and we got onto statistics; Lily, there, saying we knew well enough before counting that in the same state of society the same sort of things would happen, and numbers give us no instruction, only setting us to consider the causes of difference between different social states; at which we went off on the causes of social change, and when you came in I was going upon the power of ideas, which I hold to be the main transforming cause.”

“I don’t hold with you there, Miller,” said Goodwin, the inlayer. “For either you mean so many sorts of things by ideas that I get no knowledge by what you say, any more than if you said light was a cause; or else you mean a particular sort of ideas, and then I go against your meaning as too narrow. For, look at it in one way, all actions men put a bit of thought into are ideas – say, sowing seed, or making a canoe, or baking clay; and such ideas can’t go apart from the material that set them to work. It’s the nature of wood yielding to the knife that raises the idea of shaping it. Such ideas as are mixed straight away with all the other elements of life are powerful along with ’em. The slower the mixing, the less power they have. And as to the causes of social change, I see it this way – ideas are a sort of parliament, but there’s a commonwealth outside that doesn’t know what the parliament is doing.”

“But some of the least practical ideas beat everything,” said Pash. “They spread without being understood, and enter into the language without being thought of.”

“They may act by changing the distribution of gases,” said Marrables; “Instruments are getting so fine now, men may come to register the spread of a theory by changes in the atmosphere and corresponding changes in the nerves.”

“Yes,” said Pash, his dark face lighting up impishly, “take the idea of nationalities; I dare say the wild asses are snuffing it, and getting more gregarious.”

“You don’t share that idea?” said Deronda, finding a piquant incongruity between Pash’s sarcasm and the strong stamp of race on his features.

“Say, rather, he does not share that spirit,” said Mordecai, turning a melancholy glance on Pash. “Unless nationality is a feeling, what force can it have as an idea?”

“Granted, Mordecai,” said Pash good-humouredly. “And as the feeling of nationality is dying, the idea is no better than a ghost.”

“A sentiment may seem to be dying and yet revive into strong life,” said Deronda. “Nations have revived. We may live to see a great outburst of force in the Arabs, who are being inspired with a new zeal.”

“Amen, amen,” said Mordecai, looking at Deronda with delight and recovered energy.

“Maybe,” said Pash, “but in Europe the sentiment of nationality is destined to die out. It will last a little longer where oppression lasts, but nowhere else. The whole current of progress is against it.”

“Ay,” said Buchan, in a rapid, cool, Scotch tone, “ye’ve done well to bring us round to the point. Ye’re all agreed that societies change in the long run. Now, I would beg t’ observe that we have got to examine the nature of changes before we call them progress. And the questions I would put are three: Is all change in the direction of progress? if not, how shall we discern which change is progress and which not? and thirdly, how can we act upon the course of change so as to promote it where it is beneficial, and divert it where it is harmful?”

But Lily immediately said–

“Change and progress are merged in the idea of development. The laws of development are being discovered, and changes taking place according to them are necessarily progressive.”

“I really can’t see how you arrive at that certainty about changes by calling them development,” said Deronda. “There will still be degrees of wisdom in hastening or slowing; there will still remain the danger of mistaking an undesirable tendency for an inevitable law.”

“That is true,” said Mordecai. “Woe to the men who see no place for resistance in this generation! I believe in a growth, a new unfolding of life whereof the seed is more perfect, more charged with the elements that are pregnant with diviner form. The life of a people grows and is knit together in joy and sorrow, in thought and action; it absorbs the thought of other nations, and gives back the thought as new wealth to the world; it is a power and an organ in the great body of the nations. Though memories may wither, and love may be faint for the lack of them, who shall say, ‘The fountain of their life is dried up, they shall forever cease to be a nation?’ Not he who feels the life of his people stirring within his own. His very soul is resistance, and is as a seed of fire that may enkindle multitudes, and make a new pathway for events.”

“I don’t deny patriotism,” said Gideon, “but we all know you have a particular meaning, Mordecai. You know Mordecai’s way of thinking, I suppose.” Here Gideon turned to Deronda. “I’m a rational Jew myself. I stand by my people as a sort of family relations, and I am for keeping up our worship in a rational way. I am for getting rid of our superstitions and exclusiveness. There’s no reason now why we shouldn’t melt gradually into the populations we live among. That’s the order of the day in point of progress. I would as soon my children married Christians as Jews. And I’m for the old maxim, ‘A man’s country is where he’s well off.’”

“That country’s not so easy to find, Gideon,” said Pash, with a grimace. “You get ten shillings a-week more than I do, and have only half the number of children.”

Deronda inwardly wondered at Mordecai’s persistence in coming to this club. To meet continually the fixed indifference of men familiar with his enthusiasm must be like a slow martyrdom. But Mordecai gave no sign of shrinking: he cared more for the utterance of his faith than for its immediate reception. With a fervent feeling, he answered Pash:—

“Let every man keep far away from the brotherhood and inheritance he despises. Thousands of our race have mixed with the Gentiles, and they may inherit the blessing that belongs to the Gentile. You cannot follow them. You are one of the multitudes who must walk among the nations and be known as Jews, and if they say ‘I wish I had not been born a Jew, I disown any bond with my race, I will outdo the Gentile in mocking at our separateness,’ they all the while feel breathing on them the breath of contempt. What is the citizenship of him who walks among a people he has no kindred and fellowship with, and has lost the sense of brotherhood with his own race? It is a charter of selfish ambition and rivalry in low greed. He is alien in spirit; he sucks the blood of mankind, he is not a man, he shares in no love, he mocks it all. Is it not truth I speak, Pash?”

“Not exactly, Mordecai,” said Pash, “if you mean that I think the worse of myself for being a Jew. What I thank our fathers for is that there are fewer blockheads among us than among other races. But perhaps you are right in thinking the Christians don’t like me so well for it.”



“Catholics and Protestants have not liked each other much better,” said the genial Gideon. “We must wait patiently for prejudices to die out. Many of our people are on a footing with the best, and there’s been a good filtering of our blood into high families. I am for making our expectations rational.”

“And so am I!” said Mordecai with quick eagerness. “But what is it to be rational? It is to see more and more of the hidden bonds that consecrate change: the past becomes my parent and the future stretches toward me the appealing arms of children. Is it rational to drain away the sap of kindred that makes the families of men rich and various as the forests are various with the glory of the cedar and the palm? When it is rational to say, ‘I know not my father or my mother, let my children be aliens to me, that no prayer of mine may touch them,’ then it will be rational for the Jew to say, ‘I will seek to know no difference between me and the Gentile, I will not cherish our nationality – let the Hebrew cease to be, and let all his memorials be as dead as ancient wall-paintings. Let his child learn Greek by rote – let him learn to speak of nobility in that immortal tongue! For the Jew has no memories that bind him to action; let him laugh that his nation is degraded; let him hold the monuments of his law, the energy of the prophets, the fortitude of martyred generations, as mere stuff for a professorship. The business of the Jew in all things is to be even as the rich Gentile.’ ”

Mordecai threw himself back in his chair, and there was a moment’s silence. Not one member of the club shared his point of view; but his personality and speech had a strong dramatic effect upon them. Deronda reflected on what must have been the tragic pressure of outward conditions hindering this man from influencing the minds of others – like a poet among people of a strange speech, who may have a poetry of their own, but have no ear for his.

The cool Buchan was the first to speak. “I submit,” said he, “that ye’re travelling away from the questions I put concerning progress.”

“Say they’re levanting, Buchan,” said Miller, who liked his joke. “Never mind. Let us have a Jewish night; we’ve not had one for a long while. Let us take the discussion on Jewish ground. We’ve no prejudice here; we’re all philosophers; and we like our friends Mordecai, Pash, and Gideon, as well as if they were no more kin to Abraham than the rest of us. We’re all related through Adam, and if you look into history we’ve all got some discreditable forefathers. So I mean no offence when I say I don’t think any great things of the part the Jewish people have played in the world. I think they were iniquitously dealt by in past times. And I suppose we don’t want any men to be maltreated, white, black, brown, or yellow. However, I hold with the philosophers of the last century that the Jews have played no great part as a people, though Pash will have it they’re clever enough to beat all the rest of the world. But if so, I ask, why haven’t they done it?”

“For the same reason that the cleverest men in the country don’t get themselves or their ideas into Parliament,” said the ready Pash; “because the blockheads are too many for ’em.”

“That is a vain question,” said Mordecai, “whether our people would beat the rest of the world. Each nation has its own work, and is a member of the world. But it is true, as Jehuda-ha-Levi first said, that Israel is the heart of mankind, if we mean by heart the core of affection which binds a race and its families in dutiful love, and the reverence which lifts the needs of our animal life into religion, and the tenderness which is merciful to the poor and weak.”

“They’re not behind any nation in arrogance,” said Lily; “and if they have got in the rear, it has not been because they were over-modest.”

“Oh, every nation brags,” said Miller.

“Well, whatever the Jews contributed at one time, they are a stand-still people,” said Lily. “They stick obstinately to the past. They have no development in them.”

“That is false!” said Mordecai, leaning forward. “Let their history be known and examined; let the seed be sifted, let its beginning be traced to the weed of the wilderness – the more glorious will be the energy that transformed it. Where else is there a nation whose religion and law and moral life mingled and made one growth – where else a people who enlarged their spiritual store at the very time when they were hated with a hatred as fierce as a forest fire? Our race struggled like heroes to keep their place among the nations; but when the plough and the harrow had passed over their national covenant, and the fruitfulness of their land was stifled with the blood of the sowers, they said, ‘The spirit is alive, let us make it a movable habitation, so that it may be carried from generation to generation, and our sons unborn may possess a hope built on an unchangeable foundation.’ They said it and they wrought it. The Hebrew made himself envied for his wealth and wisdom; he absorbed knowledge, he diffused it. The native spirit of our tradition was not to stand still, but to use records as a seed of knowledge to be enlarged and illuminated with fresh interpretation. But the exile was forced afar among brutish people, where the consciousness of his race was dimmed. What wonder that multitudes of our people are ignorant, narrow, superstitious? What wonder?”

Mordecai’s excitement had risen, though his voice, which had begun with unusual strength, was getting hoarser.

“What wonder? The night is unto them, they have no vision; the sun is gone down over the prophets; their observances are as nameless relics. But which among the Gentile nations has not an ignorant multitude? They scorn our people’s ignorant observance; but the most accursed ignorance is that which has no observance. In the multitudes of the ignorant on three continents who observe our rites, the soul of Judaism is not dead. Revive the organic centre: let the unity of Israel be a reality. Let our dispersed people in all the ends of the earth share the dignity of a national life which has a voice among the peoples of the world – which will plant the wisdom of our race. Let that come to pass, and the living warmth will spread to the weak extremities of Israel, and superstition will vanish in the illumination of great facts which widen feeling, and make all knowledge alive as the young offspring of beloved memories.”

Mordecai’s voice had sunk, but was not the less impressive. His extraordinary excitement was certainly due to Deronda’s presence: it was to Deronda that he was speaking, and the moment had a solemnity for him which rallied all his powers.

Not that he looked at Deronda: he seemed to see nothing immediately around him. His former words came to Deronda’s mind, but now with gathered pathos:– “You must hope my hopes – behold a glory where I behold it.” Before him stood a man steeped in poverty and obscurity, weakened by disease, under the shadow of advancing death, but living an intense life in an invisible past and future, careless of his personal lot, but throwing his soul’s desire into his far-off inward vision with a passion often wanting in the healthy young.

All eyes were fixed on Mordecai as he sat down, and none unkindly; but the most kindly was the most prompted to speak in opposition. This was the genial Gideon, who said–

“You have your own way of looking at things, Mordecai. But you are as well aware as I am that the subject of a Jewish land has been mixed with a heap of nonsense both by Jews and Christians. The connection of our race with Palestine has been perverted by superstition. The raff and scum go there to be maintained like able-bodied paupers, and to be taken special care of by the angel Gabriel when they die. It’s no use fighting against facts. We must look where they point. The most learned and liberal men among us are for clearing our liturgy of all such notions as a literal fulfilment of the prophecies about restoration, and so on. Prune it of a few useless rites and literal interpretations of that sort, and our religion is the simplest of all religions, and makes no barrier, but a union, between us and the rest of the world.”

“As plain as a pike-staff,” said Pash, with an ironical laugh. “You pluck it up by the roots, strip off the leaves and bark and shave off the knots; put it where you will, it will never sprout. You may make a handle of it, or you may throw it on the bonfire.”

“No,” said Mordecai, “I praise no superstition, I praise the living fountains of enlarging belief. What is growth, completion, development? You began with that question, I apply it to the history of our people. I say that the effect of our separateness will not be completed and have its highest transformation unless our race takes on again the character of a nationality. That is the fulfilment of the religious trust that moulded them into a people. What is it to me that the ten tribes are lost untraceably, or that multitudes of the children of Judah have mixed themselves with the Gentiles? Behold our people still! Their skirts spread afar; they are torn and soiled; but there is a jewelled breastplate. Let the wealthy men, the learned, the skilful in all arts, the speakers, the counsellors who carry Hebrew blood in their veins – let them say, ‘we will unite in a labour hard but glorious, like that of Moses and Ezra, a labour which shall be worthy of the long anguish of our fathers.’ There is store of wisdom among us to found a new Jewish polity, grand, simple, just, like the old – a republic where there is equality of protection, an equality which shone like a star on the forehead of our ancient community. Then our race shall have an organic centre, a heart and brain to watch and guide and execute. And the world will gain as Israel gains. For there will be a community in the East which carries the culture and the sympathies of every great nation in its bosom: there will be a neutral land set for the halting of enmities. I know there are difficulties. But let the spirit of sublime achievement move among our people, and the work will begin.”

“Ay, we may safely admit that, Mordecai,” said Pash. “When high-flying professors convert to your doctrine, difficulties will vanish like smoke.”

Deronda, inclined to take the side of those on whom the arrows of scorn were falling, said–

“If we look at the history of efforts which have made great changes, it is astonishing how many of them seemed hopeless in the beginning. Take the unity of Italy, which we are sure soon to see accomplished. Look into Mazzini’s account of his first yearning to restore greatness to Italy; everything seemed against him; his countrymen were ignorant or indifferent, governments hostile, Europe incredulous. Of course the scorners often seemed wise. Yet you see the prophecy lay with him. As long as there is a remnant of national consciousness, there may be a new stirring of memories and hopes to inspire action.”

“Amen,” said Mordecai, revived by Deronda’s words. “What is needed is the seed of fire. The heritage of Israel is beating in the pulses of millions; it lives in their veins as a power without understanding. Let the torch of community be lit! Let the reason of Israel disclose itself in a great outward deed, and let there be another great migration,

another choosing of Israel to be a nationality whose members may still stretch to the ends of the earth, but who have a national hearth. Will any say 'It cannot be'? Baruch Spinoza had not a faithful Jewish heart, yet he confessed that he saw not why Israel should not again be a chosen nation. Who says that the history and literature of our race are dead? Are they not as living as the history and literature of Greece and Rome, which have inspired revolutions and enkindled the thought of Europe? These were an inheritance dug from the tomb. Ours is an inheritance that has never ceased to quiver in millions of human frames."

Mordecai had stretched his arms upward as he spoke. Gideon was moved, and replied more mildly than before.

"It may seem well enough to make so much of our memories and inheritance, Mordecai," he said; "but there's another side. It isn't all gratitude and harmless glory. Our people have inherited a good deal of hatred and rancour. How will you justify keeping one sort of memory and throwing away the other?"

"I seek nothing for the Jewish nation but good," said Mordecai. "Our religion does not hate anything but wrong. But what wonder if there is hatred in the breasts of Jews, since there is hatred in the breasts of Christians? Let the central fire be kindled again, and the light will reach afar. The degraded and scorned of our race will learn to think of their sacred land as a republic where the Jewish spirit manifests itself in a new order, purified and enriched by the experience of the ages. It is only two centuries since a vessel carried over the ocean the beginning of the great North American nation. What had they to form a polity with but memories of Europe, corrected by the vision of a better? A new Persia with a purified religion magnified itself in art and wisdom. So will a new Judaea, poised between East and West – a covenant of reconciliation. Will any say that the angel of progress has no message for Judaism? I say that the strongest principle of growth lies in human choice. The sons of Judah have to choose, that God may again choose them. Shall man deny his rank and say, I am an onlooker, ask no choice or purpose of me? That is the blasphemy of this time. The divine principle of our race is action, choice, resolved memory. Let us contradict the blasphemy, and help to will our own better future and the better future of the world. Let us choose our full heritage and claim the brotherhood of our nation. The vision is there; it will be fulfilled."

With the last sentence, which was no more than a whisper, Mordecai let his eyelids fall. No one spoke. The dawn of fulfilment brought to his hope by Deronda's presence had wrought Mordecai's mind into a state of impassioned conviction, and he had found strength in his excitement to pour forth the unlocked floods of emotive argument, with a sense of haste.

But now there had come with his fatigue a sort of thankful wonder that he had spoken – a contemplation of his life as a journey which had at last reached this destination. After a great excitement, the ebbing strength of impulse is apt to make us aloof from our active self. Mordecai's mind was wandering along the paths of his youth, and all the hopes which had brought him hither.

Everyone felt that the talk was ended, and made a general movement to disperse. Soon the room was empty of all except Mordecai and Deronda. "Good-nights" had been given to Mordecai, but he had not heard them; he remained rapt and motionless, and Deronda waited for him to stir.

## Chapter Forty-three

After a few minutes the stillness penetrated Mordecai's consciousness, and he looked up at Deronda with a gaze full of satisfaction. He began to speak quietly, as if he were thinking aloud.

"In the doctrine of the Cabbala, souls are born again and again in new bodies till they are perfected and purified, and a soul liberated from a worn-out body may join the fellow-soul that needs it, that they may be perfected together, and their earthly work accomplished. Then they will depart from the mortal region, and leave room for new souls to be born. It is the imperfection of the souls already born into the mortal region that hinders the birth of new souls and the preparation of the Messianic time:— thus the mind has given shape to what is hidden, and has spoken truth, though only in parable. When my long-wandering soul is liberated from this weary body, it will join yours, and its work will be perfected."

Deronda tried to answer truthfully: "Everything I can do to make your life effective I will do."

"I know it," said Mordecai with quiet certainty. "You are by my side on the mount of vision, and behold the paths of fulfilment which others deny." After a moment he went on meditatively—

"You will take up my life where it was broken. I feel myself back in that day. The bright morning sun was on the quay at Trieste — the boats were pushing off — the Greek vessel that would land us at Beirut was to start in an hour. I was going with a merchant as his clerk and companion. I said, I shall behold the lands and people of the East, and I shall speak with a fuller vision. I breathed then as you do, without labour; I had the endurance of youth. My heart exulted as if it had been the heart of Moses ben Maimon; and standing on the quay, where the ground seemed to send forth light, and the shadows had an azure glory as of spirits become visible, I felt myself in the flood of a glorious life, wherein my own small existence seemed to melt. A great sob arose within me as at the rush of waters that were too strong a bliss. So I stood there awaiting my companion; who came and said: 'Ezra, here is your letter.'"

"Ezra!" exclaimed Deronda.

"Ezra," repeated Mordecai, engrossed in memory. "I was expecting a letter from my mother. And that sound of my name recalled me to my body. I opened the letter; and the name came again as a cry that made me yearn to reach where that sorrow was — 'Ezra, my son!'"

Mordecai paused again. Deronda's mind was breathlessly suspended on what was coming. A strange possibility had suddenly presented itself. Mordecai went on—

"She was a mother whom her children would call blessed. And that letter was her cry from the depths of anguish and desolation — the cry of a mother robbed of her little ones. I was her eldest. Death had taken four babes one after the other. Then came, late, my little sister, who was the desire of my mother's eyes; and the letter was a piercing cry to me — 'Ezra, my son, I am robbed of her. He has taken her away and left disgrace behind.'"

Here Mordecai laid his hand on Deronda's arm, and said, "Mine was the lot of Israel. For the sin of the father, my soul must go into exile. For the sin of the father the work was broken, and the day of fulfilment delayed. My mother was desolate and destitute. I turned back, and travelled with hardship, to save the scant money which

she would need. I left the sunshine, and travelled into freezing cold. I spent a night exposed to cold and snow. And that was the beginning of this slow death.”

Mordecai let his eyes wander and removed his hand. Deronda resolutely repressed his urgent questions. While Mordecai was in this state of emotion, he could not ask: nay, he felt a kindred emotion which made him dread his own speech as too momentous.

“But I worked. We were destitute, and she was ill. At times she could not stand for the beating of her heart, and the images in her brain became as chambers of terror, where she beheld my sister reared in evil. In the night I heard her crying for her child. Then I rose, and we prayed together. We poured forth our souls in desire that Mirah might be delivered from evil.”

“Mirah?” Deronda repeated, wishing to assure himself that his ears had not been deceived. “Did you say Mirah?”

“That was my little sister’s name. After we had prayed for her, my mother would rest. It lasted four years, and in the minute she died, we were praying the same prayer. Her soul went out upon its wings.”

“Have you never since heard of your sister?” said Deronda.

“Never. Never have I heard whether she was delivered. I know not, I know not. The poisonous will of the wicked is strong. It poisoned my life – it is slowly stifling this breath. Death delivered my mother, and I felt it a blessing that I was alone in the winters of suffering. But now” – here Mordecai again rested his hand on Deronda’s arm, and looked at him with joy – “now there is nothing to bewail in the withering of my body. The work will be the better done. I shall live in you.”

His grasp became convulsive in its force, and Deronda, agitated as never before in his certainty that this was Mirah’s brother, felt his strong young heart beating faster and his lips paling. He shrank from speech. He feared, in Mordecai’s state of exaltation (already an alarming strain on his feeble frame), to utter a word about Mirah.

Instead, he laid his firm, gentle hand on Mordecai’s, which relaxed its grasp, and turned upward. As the two palms pressed each other Mordecai recovered some sense of his surroundings, and said–

“Let us go now. I cannot talk any longer.”

They parted at Cohen’s door without exchanging words – merely another pressure of hands.

Deronda felt a weight on him which was half joy, half anxiety. The joy of finding in Mirah’s brother a nature more than worthy of that relation to her, had the weight of solemnity and sadness; the reunion of brother and sister was in reality the first stage of a supreme parting. Then there was the weight of anxiety about the revelation of the fact on both sides, and the arrangements he would need to make beforehand. He wished to remove any jarring outwards conditions for their first meeting. Notwithstanding the Cohens’ good nature, he resolved to keep them in the background until Mirah might want to thank them for the kindness they had shown her brother.

Deronda wished also to give Mordecai surroundings more suited to his frail bodily condition, and to the prospect of Mirah’s making her home with her brother, and tending him through the precious remnant of his life. He thought this task would be difficult and delicate, especially in persuading Mordecai to change his abode.

Concerning Mirah’s feeling, he had no doubt: Mirah would understand her brother’s greatness. Yes, greatness: that was the word which Deronda now

deliberately chose to use. He said to himself, perhaps rather defiantly, that this consumptive Jewish workman in threadbare clothing, lodged by charity, had the elements of greatness; a mind energetically moving with the larger march of human destinies, but not the less full of tenderness for those nearby; capable of conceiving and choosing a life's task, yet capable too of the unapplauded heroism which turns off the road of achievement at the call of nearer duty.

Deronda felt that the brief remnant of this fervid life had become his charge. He had been particularly affected by the friendly indifference which Mordecai had met with at the club. He had experience of the small space that ardour finds in ordinary minds; and this had resulted in a reserve – a dislike of appearing unusual or of risking an ineffective insistence on his own opinion. But now, for the first time, he felt as a reality the lives that burn themselves out in solitary enthusiasm: martyrs of obscure circumstance, exiled in the rarity of their own minds, whose speech is no more than a long passionate soliloquy.

Deronda's imagination was moving in the direction of Mordecai's desires. For all his latent objection to vague schemes, he felt at one with this man who had chosen him. He had not the Jewish consciousness, but he had a yearning for the obligation of filial and social ties.

So he set about his new task ungrudgingly; and again thought of Mrs. Meyrick as his chief helper. To her first he must make known the discovery of Mirah's brother, and with her he must consult on how to bring the lost together. Then he must find a healthy lodging for Mordecai, and give it some faint likeness to a refined home, by dismantling his own chambers of his best old books, his easiest chair, and the bas-reliefs of Milton and Dante.

But was not Mirah to be there? What furniture can give such finish to a room as a tender woman's face? – and is there any harmony of tints that can delight as much as her sweet voice? Here is one good, at least, thought Deronda, that comes from Mordecai's having fixed his imagination on me. He has recovered a perfect sister, whose affection is waiting for him.

## Chapter Forty-four

And Gwendolen? She was thinking of Deronda much more than he was thinking of her – often wondering about his ideas, and how his life was occupied. But a lap-dog would be at a loss to understand the adventures of doghood at large; and Gwendolen had no conception that Deronda's life could be determined by the historical destiny of the Jews.

She imagined a larger place for herself in his thoughts than she actually held; but with her youth and solitude, she may be excused for dwelling on any signs of special interest in her shown by the one person who had impressed her into feeling submission.

What would he tell her to do? "He said, I must get more interest in others, and more knowledge – but how am I to begin?" She wondered what books he would tell her to read, recalling the famous writers that she had either not looked into or had found the most unreadable; and carried a selection to her room – Descartes, Bacon, Locke. Knowing from her education that these authors were ornaments of mankind, she felt sure that Deronda had read them, and hoped that by dipping into them, with her rapid understanding she might get a point of view nearer to his level.

But it was astonishing how little time she found for these vast mental excursions. Constantly she had to be on the scene as Mrs. Grandcourt, and to feel herself watched in that part by the exacting eyes of a husband who chose to rule her the more completely the more he discerned any opposing will in her.

And she herself, whatever rebellion might be going on within her, did not wish to fail in playing this part. She dreaded betraying her true feelings to the world: her determination to be silent in every other direction had thrown the more impetuosity into her confidences toward Deronda, to whom her thought continually turned as a help against herself. Her riding, her hunting, her visits, were all performed in a spirit of achievement which served instead of zest and young gladness, so that all around Diplo Mrs. Grandcourt was regarded as wearing her honours with triumph.

To her mother most of all Gwendolen was bent on acting complete satisfaction. Poor Mrs. Davilow was so well deceived that she took the unexpected distance at which she was kept as indifference in her daughter, now that marriage had created new interests. To be fetched to lunch and dinner along with the Gascoignes, to be driven back the next morning, and to have brief calls from Gwendolen while her husband waited for her outside, was all the intercourse allowed to her mother.

The truth was, that the second time Gwendolen proposed to invite her mother with Mr. and Mrs. Gascoigne, Grandcourt had drawled, "We can't be having those people always. Gascoigne talks too much. Country clergy are always bores."

That speech was full of foreboding for Gwendolen. Still, she could not say to her mother, "Mr. Grandcourt wants to recognize you as little as possible; and it is better you should not see much of my married life, in case you find out that I am miserable." So she waived as lightly as she could every allusion to the subject; and when Mrs. Davilow again hinted the possibility of moving closer to Ryelands, Gwendolen said,—

"It would not be so nice for you as being near the rectory here, mamma. We shall perhaps be very little at Ryelands. You would miss my aunt and uncle."

Meanwhile this contemptuous veto of her husband's on any intimacy with her family was rousing her attachment to them. She had never felt so kindly toward her uncle, so much disposed to look on his cheerful, complacent activity as a greater



comfort than the neutral loftiness which was every day chilling her. And here perhaps she was unconsciously finding some of that mental enlargement which it was hard to get from her occasional dashes into difficult authors.

It was a delightful surprise one day, when Mr. and Mrs. Gascoigne were at Offendene, for the family to see Gwendolen ride up without her husband. Even the elder ones were not without something of Isabel's sense that the beautiful sister on the splendid chestnut was a romantic heroine appearing out of her "happiness ever after."

Gwendolen sprang from her horse with an alacrity which might well signify happiness; for she was particularly bent today on setting her mother's heart at rest, and her freedom in being able to make this visit alone enabled her to bear up under the pressure of painful facts. The seven family kisses were not so tiresome as they used to be.

"Mr. Grandcourt is gone out, so I decided to fill the time by coming to you, mamma," said Gwendolen. Sitting next to her mother, she said with a playfully admonitory air, "That is a punishment to you for not wearing better lace. You didn't think I should detect you – you dreadfully careless-about-yourself mamma!" She gave a caressing touch to the dear head.

"Scold me, dear," said Mrs. Davilow, her delicate worn face flushing with delight. "But I wish you would eat after your ride. Let Jocosa make you a cup of chocolate. You used to like that."

Miss Merry immediately rose and went out, though Gwendolen said, "Oh, no, a piece of bread. I can't think about eating. I am come to say good-bye."

"What! going to Ryelands again?" said Mr. Gascoigne.

"No, we are going to town," said Gwendolen, beginning to break up a piece of bread, but putting none into her mouth.

"It is rather early to go to town," said Mrs. Gascoigne.

"Oh, there is only one more day's hunting, and Henleigh has some business in town with lawyers, I think," said Gwendolen. "I am very glad. I shall like to go to town."

"You will see your house in Grosvenor Square," said Mrs. Davilow, devouring Gwendolen's every movement with her eyes.

"Yes. And there is so much to be done in town."

"I wish, my dear Gwendolen," said Mr. Gascoigne cordially, "that you would use your influence with Mr. Grandcourt to induce him to enter Parliament. A man of his position should make his weight felt in politics. And he has now come to that stage of life when a man like him should enter into public affairs. A wife has great influence with her husband. Use yours in that direction, my dear."

To Gwendolen this speech had the flavour of bitter comedy. The wife's great influence! She had once believed in her future influence as all-powerful in managing – she did not know exactly what. But her chief concern was to give an appropriate answer.

"I should be very glad, uncle. But I think Mr. Grandcourt would not like the trouble of an election – at least, unless it could be without his making speeches. I thought candidates always made speeches."

"Not necessarily," said Mr. Gascoigne. "A man of position can get on without much of it. A county member need have very little trouble in that way, and is liked the better for not being a speechifier. Tell Mr. Grandcourt that I say so."

"Here comes Jocosa with my chocolate," said Gwendolen, escaping from a promise that would certainly have been received in a way inconceivable to the good

rector. Mr. Gascoigne had concluded that Grandcourt was a proud man, but he was not so selfish as to resent his niece's husband for keeping him haughtily at a distance. A certain aloofness must be allowed to the representative of an old family. But Mrs. Gascoigne felt Grandcourt's haughtiness as something a little blameable in Gwendolen.

"Your uncle and Anna will very likely be in town about Easter," she said. "Dear Rex hopes to come out with honours and a fellowship, and wants his father and Anna to meet him in London, that they may be jolly together, as he says. I shouldn't wonder if Lord Brackenshaw invited them; he is so very kind."

"I hope my uncle will bring Anna to stay in Grosvenor Square," said Gwendolen, in reality wishing that she need never bring any of her family near Grandcourt again. "I am very glad of Rex's good fortune."

"We must not be premature, and rejoice too much beforehand," said the rector, to whom this topic was the happiest in the world, and altogether allowable, now that the result of that little affair about Gwendolen had been so satisfactory. "However, impartial judges have the highest hopes about my son, as a singularly clear-headed young man of excellent disposition and principle."

"We shall have him a great lawyer some time," said Mrs. Gascoigne.

"How very nice!" said Gwendolen.

"Talking of Lord Brackenshaw's kindness," said Mrs. Davilow, "he has begged me to consider myself his guest in this house till I can get another. But now a house has turned up. Old Mr. Jodson is dead, and we can have his. It is just what I want; small, but with nothing hideous to make you miserable thinking about it. And it is only a mile from the Rectory."

"But you have no furniture, poor mamma," said Gwendolen.

"Oh, I am saving money for that. You know who has made me rather rich, dear," said Mrs. Davilow, laying her hand on Gwendolen's. "And Jocosa really makes so little do for housekeeping – it is quite wonderful."

"Oh, please let me go upstairs with you and arrange my hat, mamma," said Gwendolen, suddenly putting her hand to her hair. Her heart was swelling, and she was ready to cry. Her mother *must* have been worse off, if it had not been for Grandcourt.

As they entered the bedroom, she looked around, saying, "I suppose I shall never see all this again," and then throwing herself into a chair in front of the glass with a little groan. In the resolve not to cry she had become very pale.

"You are not well, dear?" said Mrs. Davilow.

"No; that chocolate has made me sick," said Gwendolen, putting up her hand to be taken.

"I should be allowed to come to you if you were ill, darling," said Mrs. Davilow, rather timidly, as she pressed the hand. Something had made her sure today that her child loved and needed her as much as ever.

"Oh, yes," said Gwendolen, leaning her head against her mother, though speaking lightly. "But I never am ill. I am as strong as possible; and you must not fret about me, but make yourself happy with the girls. They are better children to you than I have been, you know." She turned up her face with a smile.

"You have always been good, my darling."

"Why, what did I ever do that was good to you, except marry Mr. Grandcourt?" said Gwendolen, with a desperate resolve to be playful. "And I should not have done that unless it had pleased myself."

“God forbid, child! I would not have had you marry for my sake. Your happiness by itself is half mine.”

“Very well,” said Gwendolen, arranging her hat, “then please consider yourself half happy, which is more than I am used to seeing you.” She turned with her old playful smile to her mother. “Oh, mamma, Mr. Grandcourt gives me a quantity of money, and expects me to spend it, and I can’t; so here are thirty pounds. I wish the girls would spend it on little things for themselves when you go to the new house. Tell them so.” Gwendolen put the notes into her mother’s hands and moved hastily toward the door.

“God bless you, dear,” said Mrs. Davilow. “It will please them so that you should have thought of them.”

“Oh, they are troublesome things; but they don’t trouble me now,” said Gwendolen. She hardly understood her own feeling in this act toward her sisters, but did not wish it to be taken as anything serious. She was glad to get out of the bedroom without showing more emotion, and she went through the rest of her visit with a quiet propriety that made her say to herself sarcastically as she rode away, “I think I am making a very good Mrs. Grandcourt.”

She believed that her husband had gone to Gadsmere that day; and the strange conflict of feeling within her had sent her to Offendene with a tightened resolve. She wondered at her own contradictions. Why should she be bitter that Grandcourt showed concern for the beings on whose account she herself was undergoing remorse? Had she not before her marriage inwardly determined to speak on their behalf? – and since he had lately implied that he wanted to be in town to make arrangements about his will, she ought to have been glad of any sign that he kept a conscience awake toward those at Gadsmere.

Yet the sense that he was gone to Gadsmere was like a burn. She had brought on herself this indignity – this humiliating terror lest her husband should discover with what knowledge she had married him; and as she had said to Deronda, she “must go on.” After the intense moments of secret hatred toward this husband who cowed her, there always came back the spiritual pressure which made submission inevitable. Any effort at freedom would bring worse humiliation. It still seemed that the worst result would be that she should make a spectacle of herself; and her humiliation was lightened by her thinking that only Mrs. Glasher was aware of the cause.

For Gwendolen did not know about Lush’s involvement; she had never considered how news had been conveyed to Mrs. Glasher. To her mind the secret lay with Mrs. Glasher only, and she thought the horrible letter implied that Mrs. Glasher would dread disclosure to Grandcourt.

Something else, too, she thought of as more secret from her husband than it really was – namely, that suppressed struggle of desperate rebellion within her. Grandcourt could not fully imagine how things affected Gwendolen: he had no imagination of anything in her but what affected the gratification of his own will; but on this point he had the sensibility which seems like divination. What we see exclusively we are apt to see with some mistake of proportions; and Grandcourt was not infallible in his judgments concerning this wife who was governed by many shadowy powers unknown to him. He magnified her inward resistance, but that did not lessen his satisfaction in the mastery of it.

## Chapter Forty-five

The Grandcourts were in Grosvenor Square in time to receive a card for the musical party at Lady Mallinger's. It was only the third evening after their arrival, and Gwendolen made rather an absent-minded acquaintance with her new ceilings and furniture, preoccupied with the certainty that she was going to speak to Deronda again, and also to see the Miss Lapidoth who had gone through so much, and was "capable of submitting to any duty." For Gwendolen remembered nearly every word that Deronda had said about Mirah, and repeated that phrase to herself bitterly, conscious that her own submission was very different. What she submitted to was not duty, but a yoke laid on her by an action she was ashamed of, and worn with selfish motives.

The drawing-rooms in Park Lane, white, gold, and pale crimson, were not crowded when Mr. and Mrs. Grandcourt entered. Half an hour of instrumental music was being followed by an interval of movement and chat. Klesmer was there with his wife, and he generously proposed to accompany Mirah's singing of Leo's "*O patria mia*."

He was already at the piano, and Mirah was standing there, when Gwendolen, magnificent in her pale green velvet and poisoned diamonds, was ushered to a seat of honour well in view of them. While turning her glance toward Mirah, she did not neglect to exchange a bow with Klesmer as she passed. The smile seemed to each to flash back to that morning when it had been her ambition to stand as the "little Jewess" was standing – instead of which she was one of the ordinary crowd in silk and gems, whose performance must be to admire or find fault. "He thinks I am in the right road now," said the lurking resentment within her.

Gwendolen had not seen Deronda, and while she was seated in chat with Sir Hugo, she glanced round her with careful ease, bowing a recognition here and there, and fearful lest a search for Deronda might be observed by her husband, and afterward rebuked as "damnably vulgar." Amongst the eyes that met Gwendolen's, forcing her into a slight bow, were those of Mr. Lush, who was standing near her husband.

At this moment, for the first time, there darted through Gwendolen the disagreeable idea that this man knew all about her husband's life. When banished from her sight, he had sunk into the background of her thoughts; but now there sprang up in her, like an instantaneously fabricated memory in a dream, the sense of his being connected with the secrets that made her wretched. With an effort she turned her head away from him, trying to continue her survey with an indifferent manner, till she discovered Deronda. But he was not looking toward her, and she withdrew her eyes, consoling herself with the assurance that he must have seen her come in.

He was standing by Hans Meyrick; and they were both anxious that Mirah should be heard to advantage. Deronda felt on the brink of betraying emotion. He had escaped as soon as he could from Lady Pentreath, who had said in her deep voice—

"Well, your Jewess is pretty – there's no denying that. But where is her Jewish impudence? She looks as demure as a nun. I suppose she learned that on the stage."

He was beginning to feel on Mirah's behalf what he had felt as a boy, when Sir Hugo asked him if he would like to be a great singer – an indignant dislike to her being remarked on in a free and easy way, as if she were a commodity disdainfully paid for by the fashionable public.

In this susceptible mood he saw the Grandcourts enter, and was immediately appealed to by Hans about “that Vandyke duchess of a beauty.” Deronda felt a momentary renewal of his first repulsion from Gwendolen, as if she and her beauty and her failings were to blame for the undervaluing of Mirah. To Hans he answered sarcastically—

“I thought you could admire no style of woman but your Berenice.”

“That is the style I worship – not admire,” said Hans. “Other styles of women I might make myself wicked for, but for Berenice I could make myself – well, pretty good, which is much more difficult.”

“Hush,” said Deronda, for the singing was going to begin.

He had never before heard Mirah sing “*O patria mia*.” He knew well Leopardi’s fine Ode to Italy (when Italy sat like a disconsolate mother in chains, hiding her face and weeping), and the words were filled for him with an inspiring grandeur. Mirah singing this, made Mordecai more than ever one presence with her.

Her singing was equal to his wishes. During the general applause, Klesmer gave a more valued testimony, audible to her only— “Good, good – the crescendo better than before.” But her chief anxiety was to know that she had satisfied Mr. Deronda. She looked toward him in the distance; but he remained where he was, while streams of admirers closed round her.

Gwendolen was taken up to be introduced by Mrs. Klesmer. Easier now about “the little Jewess,” Daniel relented toward poor Gwendolen in her splendour, and his memory went back over all the confessions that she too needed a rescue, and one much more difficult than that of the wanderer by the river – a rescue for which he felt himself helpless. He resolved not to turn away from her, but to show his regard for her past confidences at the first opportunity, in spite of Sir Hugo’s hints.

Klesmer stood near Gwendolen and Mirah for a little while, smiling at the piquant contrast of the two charming young creatures seated on the red divan.

“I must say how much I am obliged to you,” said Gwendolen to Mirah. “I had heard from Mr. Deronda that I should have a great treat in your singing, but I was too ignorant to imagine how great.”

“You are very good to say so,” answered Mirah, contemplating this genuine grand lady with genuine jewels.

“We shall all want to learn of you – I, at least,” said Gwendolen. “I sing very badly, as Herr Klesmer will tell you,” – here she glanced at him rather archly.

Mirah said with naïve seriousness—

“If you think I could teach you, I shall be very glad. I am anxious to teach, but I have only just begun.”

Gwendolen was too uncertain about herself to be prepared for this simple promptitude of Mirah’s, and in her wish to change the subject, said, with some lapse from good taste—

“You have not been long in London, I think? – but you were perhaps introduced to Mr. Deronda abroad?”

“No,” said Mirah; “I never saw him before I came to England in the summer.”

“But he has seen you often and heard you sing a great deal, has he not?” said Gwendolen, led on partly by the wish to hear anything about Deronda, and partly by the common awkwardness of making small talk. “He spoke of you to me with the highest praise. He seemed to know you quite well.”

“I was poor and needed help,” said Mirah, with feeling, “and Mr. Deronda has given me the best friends in the world. That is the only way he came to know me –

because he was sorry for me. I had no friends when I came. I was in distress. I owe everything to him.”

Poor Gwendolen, who had wanted to be a struggling artist herself, could nevertheless not help feeling that her questions bordered on the rude. The only effect on Mirah, as on any mention of Deronda, was to stir her reverential gratitude towards him.

But both he and Hans, who were noticing the pair from a distance, would have felt rather indignant if they had known that Mirah had been led to represent herself in this light of neediness. However, she was prompted by the delicate feeling, which perhaps she could not have stated explicitly, that she ought not to allow anyone to assume that Deronda had a less generous interest in her than actually existed. Her answer was delightful to Gwendolen, who found Deronda’s ready compassion confirmed; and with the signals that Klesmer was about to play she moved away in much content.

With her usual alternation from resolute care of appearances to the rash indulgence of an impulse, she did not go to her former seat, but placed herself on a settee where she could only have one neighbour. She was near to Deronda: was it surprising that he came up to shake hands before the music began – and that after a little while, he sat down?

But when at the end of Klesmer’s playing there came the outburst of talk under which Gwendolen had hoped to speak freely to Deronda, she observed that Mr. Lush was within hearing, leaning against the wall. Despite her flush of anger, she tried to assume an air of polite indifference in saying–

“Miss Lapidoth is everything you described her to be.”

“You have been very quick in discovering that,” said Deronda, ironically.

“I have not found out all the excellencies you spoke of – I don’t mean that,” said Gwendolen; “but her singing is charming, and herself, too. Her face is lovely – not in the least common; and she is such a complete little person. I should think she will be a great success.”

This speech was grating on Deronda, and he would not answer it, but looked gravely before him. She knew that he was displeased, and she was getting so impatient with the presence of Mr. Lush, which prevented her from saying any word she wanted to say, that she remained silent, too. For a long while, neither Gwendolen nor Deronda looked at the other, till Lush slowly relieved the wall of his weight, and moved away.

Gwendolen immediately said, “You despise me for talking artificially.”

“No,” said Deronda, looking at her coolly; “I think that is quite excusable sometimes. But I did not think what you were last saying was altogether artificial.”

“There was something in it that displeased you,” said Gwendolen. “What was it?”

“It is impossible to explain such niceties of word and manner,” said Deronda.

“You think I am shut out from understanding them,” said Gwendolen, with a slight tremor in her voice, which she tried to conquer. “Have I shown myself so very dense to everything you have said?” There was an indescribable look of suppressed tears in her eyes, which were turned on him.

“Not at all,” said Deronda, his voice softening. “I have had plenty of proof that you are not dense.” He smiled at her.

“But one may feel things and not be able to do anything better for all that,” said Gwendolen, not smiling in return. “I begin to think we can only get better by having people about us who raise good feelings. I think it is too late for me to alter. I don’t know how to set about being wise, as you told me to be.”

“I seldom find I do any good by my preaching. I should not have meddled,” said Deronda.

“Don’t say that,” said Gwendolen, hurriedly, feeling that this might be her only chance of speaking, and dreading the increase of her own agitation. “If you despair of me, I shall despair. Your saying that I should not go on being selfish and ignorant has been some strength to me. If you say you wish you had not meddled – that means you despair of me, and decide for me that I shall not be good. You might have made me different by keeping as near to me as you could, and believing in me.”

She had not been looking at him as she spoke, but at the handle of her fan. She rose and left him, returning to her former place, while everyone settled into quiet expectation of Mirah’s voice, which presently, with that wonderful, searching quality of subdued song in which the melody seems simply an effect of the emotion, gave forth, *Per pietà non dirmi addio*.

In Deronda’s ear the song was almost a continuance of Gwendolen’s pleading: a painful urging of something vague and difficult, and yet cruel to resist. However strange the mixture in her of resolute pride and worldliness with guileless indiscretion, he was quite sure now that the mixture existed. For all Sir Hugo’s hints, he knew that Gwendolen did not dream that he might misinterpret her. He dimly foresaw some painful collision: on the one side the grasp of Mordecai’s dying hand, with all the ideals and prospects it aroused; on the other the fair creature in silk and gems, with her hidden wound and her self-dread, making a trustful effort to lean on him. It was as if he saw himself besought with outstretched arms and cries, while he was compelled to board a ship bound for a far-off coast. That was the feeling inspired by Mirah’s song; but when it ceased he stood up with the reflection that he had been falling into an exaggeration of his own importance, and a ridiculous readiness to accept Gwendolen’s view of himself, as if he could really have any decisive power over her.

“What an enviable fellow you are,” said Hans to him, “sitting on a sofa with that young duchess, and having an interesting quarrel!”

“Quarrel?” repeated Deronda, rather uncomfortably.

“Oh, about theology, of course; nothing personal. But she told you what you ought to think, and then left you with an admirably grand air. I should like to paint her and her husband.”

Deronda devoutly hoped that Hans’s impression of his dialogue with Gwendolen was no more than his usual fantasising.

And Gwendolen thought that her husband’s eyes might have been on her, extracting something to reprove – some offence against her dignity as his wife; for she was aware that she had not kept the perfect air of equability in public which was her ideal. But all Grandcourt said as they were driving home was –

“Lush will dine with us tomorrow. You will treat him civilly.”

Gwendolen’s heart began to beat violently. She wanted to retaliate with the words: “You are breaking your promise to me – your first promise.” But she dared not utter them. The prospect of a quarrel frightened her. After a pause, she said in the tone of defeat –

“I thought you did not intend him to visit the house again.”

“I want him just now. He is useful to me; and he must be treated civilly.”

Silence. There may come a moment when even an excellent husband who has pledged to drop smoking during courtship, for the first time will introduce his cigar-smoke between himself and his wife, with the tacit understanding that she will have to put up with it. Mr. Lush was, so to speak, a very large cigar.

If these are the sort of lovers' vows at which Jove laughs, he must have a merry time of it.



## Chapter Forty-six

The time had come to prepare Mordecai for the revelation of the restored sister and for the change of abode which was desirable before Mirah's meeting with her brother. Mrs. Meyrick had helped Deronda to find a suitable lodging in Brompton, not far from her own house, so that the brother and sister would be within reach of her motherly care. She had kept the secret from the girls as well as from Hans, as any betrayal to them might reach Mirah and cause her agitation that would spoil the important opening of the work which was to secure her independence.

And both Mrs. Meyrick and Deronda had private reasons for desiring that Mirah should be able to maintain herself. "The little mother" felt some dubiousness about the remarkable brother described to her; and certainly if she felt any joy, it was due to her faith in Deronda's judgment. Mordecai's consumption was a sorrowful fact that appealed to her tenderness; but how was she to be glad of his antique brand of Jewish zeal? She was anything but prosaic, and had her share of Mab's delight in the romance of Mirah's story; but the romantic in real life requires some adaptation. We sit up at night to read about St. Francis, or Oliver Cromwell; but whether we should be glad for them to call on us the next morning, is quite another matter.

Besides, Mrs. Meyrick had hoped, as her children did, that the intensity of Mirah's feeling about Judaism would slowly subside in the loving interchange with her new friends. In fact, her secret hope had been no discovery of Jewish relations, but concerned the feelings she perceived in Hans. And now, here was a brother who would dip Mirah's mind again in the deepest dye of Jewish sentiment. She could not help saying to Deronda—

"I am glad that the pawnbroker is not her brother: it is a comfort to think that all Jews are not like those shopkeepers who will not let you get out of their shops: and besides, what the brother said to you about his mother and sister makes me bless him. I am sure he's good. But I never did like anything fanatical. I suppose I heard a little too much preaching in my youth and lost my taste for it."

"I don't think you will find that Mordecai preaches," said Deronda. "He is not what I should call fanatical. I call a man fanatical when his enthusiasm is narrow and hoodwinked, so that he has no sense of proportion, and becomes unsympathetic to men who are out of his own track. Mordecai is an enthusiast; one of those who care supremely for general benefits to mankind. He is not a strictly orthodox Jew, and is full of allowances for others. The people he lives with are as fond of him as possible, though they can't in the least understand his ideas."

"Well, I will take your word for it. At least Mirah's brother will have good bedding — that I have taken care of; and I shall have this extra window pasted up to prevent draughts." (The conversation was taking place in the destined lodging.)  
"When the children know, we shall be able to make the rooms much prettier."

"The next stage is to tell all to Mordecai, and get him to move — which may be difficult," said Deronda.

"Let me tell Hans and the girls the evening before, and they will be away the next morning. I shall persuade them so hard to be glad, that I shall convert myself."

Deronda was anxiously preoccupied with the question of how to move Mordecai without wounding the Cohens. Mordecai had made it evident that he would be keenly alive to any injury to their feelings. After due reflection, Deronda wrote to him asking to see him in his own home the next evening for a particular purpose, if the Cohens

would not regard it as an intrusion. He would call with the understanding that if there were any objection, Mordecai would accompany him elsewhere. Deronda hoped in this way to create a little preparatory expectation.

He was received with the usual friendliness, and a slight air of wondering which the Cohens did not allow to pass the bounds of silence. But when Deronda said, "I suppose Mordecai is expecting me," Jacob said, "What do you want to talk to him about?"

"Something that is very interesting to him," said Deronda, pinching the lad's ear, "but that you can't understand."

"Can you say this?" said Jacob, immediately reciting a string of his rote-learned Hebrew verses, with a sense of giving formidable evidence which might alter their mutual position.

"No," said Deronda, keeping grave; "I can't say anything like it."

"I thought not," said Jacob, performing a dance of triumph, while he took various objects out of his pockets as a hint of his resources; after which, running to the door of the workroom, he opened it wide, and said, "Mordecai, here's the young swell" – copying his father's phrase.

He was called back with hushes, and Deronda, entering and closing the door behind him, saw that a bit of carpet had been laid down, a chair placed, and the fire and lights attended to, in sign of the Cohens' respect. As Mordecai rose to greet him, Deronda was struck with the air of solemn expectation in his face. Neither of them spoke, till Deronda had drawn the vacant chair to seat himself near to Mordecai, who then said, in a tone of fervid certainty–

"You are coming to tell me something that my soul longs for."

"It is true I have something very weighty to tell you – something I trust that you will rejoice in," said Deronda, on his guard against the probability that Mordecai expected something quite different from the fact.

"It is all revealed – it is made clear to you," said Mordecai eagerly, clasping his hands. "You are as my brother – the heritage is yours – there is no doubt to divide us."

"I have learned nothing new about myself," said Deronda. The disappointment was inevitable: better not to delay it.

Mordecai sank back in his chair, unable for the moment to care what was really coming. All day his mind had been in a state of tension toward one fulfilment. The reaction was sickening and he closed his eyes.

"Except," Deronda went on gently, – "except that I had some time ago come into another hidden connection with you, besides the one in your own feeling."

The eyes were not opened, but there was a fluttering in the lids.

"I met one in whom you are interested."

Mordecai opened his eyes and fixed them quietly on Deronda.

"One who is closely related to your departed mother," Deronda went on, wishing to make the disclosure gradual; but noticing a shrinking movement in Mordecai, he added – "whom she and you held dear above all others."

Mordecai, with a sudden start, laid a spasmodic grasp on Deronda's wrist; there was a great terror in him. And Deronda divined it. With a tremor in his clear tones he said–

"What was prayed for has come to pass: Mirah has been delivered from evil."

Mordecai's grasp relaxed, but he was panting with a tearless sob.

Deronda went on: "Your sister is worthy of the mother you honoured." He waited, and Mordecai again closed his eyes, murmuring for some minutes in Hebrew, and

then subsiding into a happy-looking silence. Deronda could have imagined that he was speaking with some beloved object: his face held a new sweetness, and for the first time Deronda thought he discerned a family resemblance to Mirah.

When Mordecai was ready to listen, the rest was told. But in describing Mirah's flight he made the statement about the father's conduct as vague as he could, and emphasised her yearning to come to England to find her mother. Also he kept back Mirah's intention to drown herself, and his rescue of her, merely describing the home she had found with friends of his. What he dwelt on was Mirah's feeling about her mother and brother; and about this he tried to give every detail.

"It was in search of them," said Deronda, smiling, "that I turned into this house: the name Ezra Cohen was just then the most interesting in the world to me. Perhaps you will forgive me now for having asked you that question about the elder Mrs. Cohen's daughter. I cared very much what I should find Mirah's friends to be. But I found a brother worthy of her disguised under the name of Mordecai."

"Mordecai is really my name – Ezra Mordecai Cohen."

"Is there any kinship between this family and yours?" said Deronda.

"Only the kinship of Israel. My soul clings to these people, who have sheltered me out of the affection that abides in Jewish hearts. It is good for me to bear with their ignorance and be bound to them in gratitude, that I may keep in mind the spiritual poverty of the Jewish millions, and not put impatient knowledge in the stead of loving wisdom."

"But you don't feel bound to continue with them now there is a closer tie to draw you?" said Deronda, fearing he might find an obstacle to overcome. "It seems to me right that you should live with your sister; and I have prepared a home for you near her friends, that she may join you there. Pray grant me this wish. It will enable me to be with you often in the hours when Mirah is obliged to leave you. That is my selfish reason. But the chief reason is, that Mirah will desire to watch over you, and you ought to give her the guardianship of a brother's presence. You shall have books, and I shall want to learn from you, and take you out to see the river and trees. And you will have the rest and comfort that you will be more and more in need of. This is the claim I make on you, now that we have found each other."

Deronda spoke in a tone of earnest, affectionate pleading, such as he might have used to a venerated elder brother. Mordecai's eyes were fixed on him, and he was silent for a little while. Then he said, almost reproachfully—

"And you would have me doubt whether you were born a Jew! Have we not from the first touched each other like the leaves from a common stem? I am stricken, I am dying. But our souls know each other. They gazed in silence as those who have long been parted and meet again, but when they found voice they were assured, and all their speech is understanding. The life of Israel is in your veins."

Deronda sat perfectly still, but felt his face tingling. He waited, hoping for a more direct answer; and eventually Mordecai said—

"What you wish of me I will do. Our blessed mother would have wished it. I will accept what your loving kindness has prepared, and Mirah's home shall be mine." He added in a more melancholy tone, "But I shall grieve to part from this family. You must tell them, for my heart would fail me."

"I felt that you would want me to tell them. Shall we go now?" said Deronda, much relieved.

"Yes; let us not defer it," said Mordecai, rising with the air of a man who must perform a painful duty. "But do not dwell on my sister more than is needful."

When they entered the parlour he said to the alert Jacob, "Ask your father to come. My friend has something to say," he continued, turning to the elder Mrs. Cohen. The two women politely begged Deronda to seat himself in the best place, while Cohen said with satisfaction, "Well, sir! I'm glad you're doing us the honour to join our family party again."

And when all were seated on the hearth the scene was worth peeping in upon: on one side Baby being rocked by the young mother, and Adelaide Rebekah seated on the grandmother's knee; on the other, Jacob between his father's legs; while the two markedly different figures of Deronda and Mordecai were in the middle – Mordecai shaded from the firelight, anxious to conceal his agitation.

"I have just been telling Mordecai of an event that makes a great change in his life," Deronda began, "but I hope you will agree with me that it is a joyful one. Since he thinks of you as his best friends, he wishes me to tell you at once."

"Relations with money, sir?" burst in Cohen.

"No; not exactly," said Deronda, smiling. "But a very precious relation wishes to be reunited to him – a good and lovely young sister, who will care for his comfort in every way."

"Married, sir?"

"No, not married."

"But with an income?"

"With talents which will secure her an income. A home is already provided for Mordecai."

There was silence for a moment before the grandmother wailed–

"Well! so you're going away from us, Mordecai."

"To where there's no children," said the mother, catching the wail. "No Jacob, no Adelaide, and no Eugenie!"

"Ay, Jacob's learning will wear out of him. He must go to school. It'll be hard times for Jacob," said Cohen decisively.

To Jacob these words sounded like a doom. His face had shown a wondering sorrow at the notion of Mordecai's going away: but at the mention of "hard times for Jacob" he broke forth in loud lamentation. Adelaide Rebekah always cried when her brother cried, and now began to howl with astonishing suddenness, whereupon baby awaking contributed angry screams, and required to be taken out of the cradle.

A great deal of hushing was necessary, and Mordecai, feeling the cries pierce him, put out his arms to Jacob. His father, who had been comforting him, released him, and he went to Mordecai, who laid his cheek on the little black head without speaking. But Cohen, wishing to make some apology for all this weakness, addressed Deronda:–

"We're not people to grudge anybody's good luck, sir. I'm not an envious man, and if anybody offered to set up Mordecai in a shop of my sort two doors lower down, I shouldn't make wry faces about it. I'm not one of them that is frightened at anybody else getting a chance. And though, as I may say, you're taking some of our good works from us, which is property bearing interest, I'm not saying but we can afford that, though my mother and my wife had the good will to do for Mordecai to the last. And as to the extra outlay in schooling, I'm neither poor nor greedy. But the truth is, the women and children are fond of Mordecai. A Jewish man is bound to thank God, day by day, that he was not made a woman; but a woman has to thank God that He has made her according to His will. And we all know what He has made her – a child-bearing, tender-hearted thing is the woman of our people. So you must excuse present

company, sir, for not being glad all at once. We shall be glad for Mordecai's sake by-and-by."

Before Deronda could answer, Mordecai exclaimed—

"Friends, friends! For food and shelter I would not have sought better than you have given me; and it would be a joy to me even in my last months to go on teaching the lad. For no light matter would I have turned away from your kindness. But the reward of one duty is the power to fulfil another – so said Ben Azai. You have made your duty a joy to you and me; and your reward shall be that you will have the joy of like deeds in time to come. And may Jacob come and visit me?"

Jacob, who had been gradually calmed, now began to see some daylight on the future, the word "visit" having the lively charm of cakes. He danced away from Mordecai, and stood in the hearth with his hands in his knickerbockers.

"Well," said the grandmother, with a sigh of resignation, "I hope there'll be nothing in the way of your getting kosher meat, Mordecai."

"That's all right, you may be sure, mother," said Cohen. "So, sir," he added, turning a look of amused enlightenment to Deronda, "it was more than learning that you had to talk to Mordecai about! I wondered at the time."

"Mordecai will perhaps explain to you why I was seeking him," said Deronda, rising to go.

Mordecai begged to walk with him to the end of the street, and wrapped himself in his coat. It was a March evening, and Deronda did not mean to let him go far, but he understood the wish to be outside with him in communicative silence, after the excitement of the last hour. No word was spoken until Deronda said—

"Mirah would wish to thank the Cohens for their goodness. Should she come and see them?"

Mordecai paused before saying—

"I cannot tell. I fear not. There is a family sorrow, and the sight of my sister might re-open those wounds. There is a daughter who will never be restored as Mirah is. But who knows the pathways? We are all of us denying or fulfilling prayers. In my ears I have the prayers of generations past and to come. And I am only another prayer – which you will fulfil."

Deronda pressed his hand, and they parted.

## Chapter Forty-seven

Deronda, having provided new clothes for Mordecai, was pleased with the effect of the fine grey flannel shirts and a dressing-gown like a Franciscan's brown robe, with Mordecai's head above them. He knew that Mirah would see her brother's distinction through any appearance of poverty; but there were the Meyricks to be propitiated, and Deronda found himself putting out of sight everything that might feed their repugnance.

This inclination would have been confirmed if he had heard the dialogue round Mrs. Meyrick's fire in the evening, after Mirah had gone to her room. Hans had stayed late, and Mrs. Meyrick said—

"Now, Kate, put out your candle, and all come round the fire cosily. I have something wonderful to tell."

"As if I didn't know that, ma. I have seen it in your eye ever so long," said Kate, while the girls came up to put their feet on the fender, and Hans sat astride his chair.

"Well, then, if you are so wise, perhaps you know that Mirah's brother is found!" said Mrs. Meyrick.

"Oh, confound it!" said Hans.

"Hans, that is wicked," said Mab. "Suppose we had lost you?"

"I cannot help being rather sorry," said Kate. "And her mother?— where is she?"

"Her mother is dead."

"I hope the brother is not a bad man," said Amy.

"Nor a fellow all smiles and jewellery," said Hans, in the worst humour.

"Were there ever such unfeeling children?" said Mrs. Meyrick. "You don't think about Mirah's joy in the matter."

"Mirah hardly remembers her brother," said Kate.

"People who are lost for twelve years should never come back again," said Hans. "They are in the way."

"Hans!" said Mrs. Meyrick, reproachfully.

"But it's nice finding people — there is something to tell," said Mab, clasping her knees. "Did Prince Camaralzaman find him?"

Then Mrs. Meyrick, in her neat way, told all she knew without interruption. "Mr. Deronda has the highest admiration for him," she ended,— "and he says Mirah is just the sister to understand this brother."

"Deronda is getting perfectly preposterous about those Jews," said Hans, standing up in disgust. "He wants to do everything he can to encourage Mirah in her prejudices."

"Oh, for shame, Hans!— to speak in that way of Mr. Deronda," said Mab. And Mrs. Meyrick's face showed an under-current of expression not allowed to surface.

"And now we shall never be all together," Hans went on, walking about with his hands thrust into his pockets, "but we must have this prophet Elijah to tea with us, and Mirah will think of nothing but sitting on the ruins of Jerusalem. Everything will be spoiled. I shall take to drinking."

"Oh, really, Hans," said Kate, impatiently. "I do think men are the most contemptible animals in all creation. Every one of them must have everything to his mind, else he is unbearable."

“What is the good of going to university and knowing everything, if you are so childish, Hans?” said Amy. “You ought to be kind to a man that Providence sends you.”

“I hope you will like the Lamentations of Jeremiah – that’s all,” said Hans, seizing his hat. “I can’t endure the company of those men with a fixed idea, staring blankly at you, and requiring all your remarks to be foot-notes to their text.” Then abruptly, “Good night, little mother,” bending to kiss her brow, and condescendingly, on his way to the door, “Good-night, girls.”

“Suppose Mirah knew how you are behaving,” said Kate. But her answer was a slam of the door. “I should like to see Mirah when Mr. Deronda tells her,” she went on to her mother. “She will look so beautiful.”

But Deronda, on second thoughts, had written a letter which Mrs. Meyrick received next morning, begging her to make the revelation instead of waiting for him. He shrank from telling a story in which he seemed to make himself important; but he told Mrs. Meyrick that he wished to remain with Mordecai while she brought Mirah on a visit to see him.

Deronda secretly felt anxious as to how much tender interest in his sister Mordecai might be able to feel, after years of solitary preoccupation with ideas. He had shown affection for the Cohens, and especially little Jacob; but he had known them for years; and Deronda noticed that Mordecai asked no new questions about Mirah, but was unusually silent and submissive. He donned the new clothes obediently, but said to Deronda, with a faint smile, “I must keep my old garments for a remembrance.” And when they were seated, awaiting Mirah, he uttered no word, keeping his eyelids closed, but yet with restless hands and face.

In fact, Mordecai was undergoing that nervous upheaval only known to those whose minds have long moved in one direction, when they are suddenly compelled into a new channel. They may dread an interview that imperiously revives the past, as they would dread a threatening illness. Joy may be there, but joy, too, is terrible.

When Deronda heard the doorbell, he went out to greet Mirah beforehand. He was startled to find that she had on the hat and cloak in which he had first seen her – the cloak that had been wetted for a winding-sheet. She had told Mrs. Meyrick, “My brother is poor, and I want to look as much like him as I can, else he may feel distant from me” – imagining that she should meet him in workman’s dress. Deronda felt secretly rather ashamed of his own fastidious arrangements. They shook hands silently, for Mirah looked pale and awed.

When Deronda opened the door, Mordecai had risen, and turned his eyes toward it with an eager gaze. Mirah took two or three steps, and then stood still. They looked at each other, motionless. They were meeting first in memories, compared with which touch was no union. Mirah was the first to break the silence.

“Ezra,” she said, in exactly the same tone as when she was telling of her mother’s call to him.

Mordecai suddenly advanced and laid his hands on her shoulders. He was a head taller, and looked down at her tenderly, saying, “That was our mother’s voice. You remember her calling me?”

“Yes, and how you answered her – ‘Mother!’ – and I knew you loved her.” Mirah threw her arms round her brother’s neck, and kissed his face with childlike lavishness. Her hat fell backward on the ground, disclosing her curls.

“Ah, the dear head!” said Mordecai, in a low loving tone, laying his thin hand gently on the curls.

“You are very ill, Ezra,” said Mirah, with sad observation.

“Yes, dear child, I shall not be long with you in the body,” was the quiet answer.

“Oh, I will love you and we will talk to each other,” said Mirah, her words as sweet and spontaneous as bird-notes. “I will tell you everything, and you will teach me to be a good Jewess – what she would have liked me to be. I shall always be with you when I am not working. For I work now. I shall get money to keep us. Oh, I have had such good friends.”

Here Mirah turned with the prettiest attitude to look at Mrs. Meyrick and Deronda. The little mother’s happiness in witnessing this meeting had already won her to Mordecai, who had more dignity and refinement than she had expected.

“See this dear lady!” said Mirah. “I was a poor wanderer, and she believed in me, and has treated me as a daughter.” Taking Mrs. Meyrick’s hand and putting it in Mordecai’s, she pressed them both with her own before lifting them to her lips.

“The Eternal Goodness has been with you,” said Mordecai.

“I think we will go now, and return later,” said Deronda, laying a gentle pressure on Mrs. Meyrick’s arm. He felt no uneasiness now at the brother and sister being alone together.



## Chapter Forty-eight

Grandcourt's importance as a subject of this realm was of the grandly passive kind which consists in the inheritance of land. Political and social movements touched him only through his rents. He glanced over the best newspaper columns, and his views can hardly be said to have wanted breadth, since he embraced all Germans, commercial men, and voters liable to use the wrong kind of soap, under the general epithet of "brutes;" but he took no action on these questions beyond looking from under his eyelids at any man who mentioned them, and retaining an intimidating silence.

But Grandcourt, within his own sphere of interest, showed some of the qualities of an international diplomat.

No movement of Gwendolen in relation to Deronda escaped him. He would have denied that he was jealous; because jealousy implied some doubt of his own power to hinder what he had determined against. That his wife should prefer another man's society to his own would not pain him: what he required was that she should know that she was helpless to defy him. However much he may have vacillated before marrying, there was no vacillating in his interpretation of the bond. He had not repented of his marriage; it had brought him new objects to exert his will upon; and he had not repented of his choice. His taste was fastidious, and Gwendolen satisfied it: he would not have liked a wife who outranked him; nor one who did not command admiration by her beauty, or who was unable to make spirited answers.

These requirements may not seem too exacting to equally fastidious contemporaries; but fewer perhaps may follow him in his contentment that his wife should be in a temper which would make her fly out if she dared, and that she should have married him because of other feelings than passionate attachment. Still, for those who prefer command to love, one does not see why the habit of mind should change precisely at the point of matrimony.

Grandcourt did not feel that he had chosen the wrong wife; and having taken on the part of husband, he was not going to allow himself to look a fool. This was his state of mind – not jealousy; although the result in his behaviour was very much the same.

He had come up to town earlier than usual to make arrangements about his will, and complete the transaction with his uncle about Diplow, which the bait of ready money had finally won him to agree upon. But he also wished to present himself in town with the beautiful bride whom he had chosen to marry in spite of what other people might have expected.

It is true that Grandcourt believed that he did not care a languid curse for anyone's admiration: but this state of not-caring, just as much as desire, required a world of admiring or envying spectators: for if you are fond of looking stonily at smiling persons, the persons must be there and they must smile. Grandcourt had his non-caring attitude enlarged by splendid receptions and conspicuous rides and drives with his wife on all distinguished occasions. He wished her to be sought after; he liked that "fellows" should be eager to talk with her within his sight; he would not even have objected to lofty coquetry on her part. But what he did not like were her ways in relation to Deronda.

After the musical party at Lady Mallinger's, when Grandcourt had observed the dialogue on the settee, he invited Deronda along with the Mallingers, to make it clear

that Deronda's presence or absence was not of the least importance to him; and he said nothing to Gwendolen on her behaviour that evening, lest his expression of disgust should be a little too strong to satisfy his own pride. But a few days afterward he remarked,—

“Nothing makes a woman more of a gawky than looking out for people and showing tempers in public. A woman ought to have fine manners. Else it's intolerable to appear with her.”

Gwendolen understood him, and felt some alarm at the notion of being a gawky. For she, too, required admirers. But the sense of overhanging rebuke only intensified the anticipation of meeting Deronda. The excitement of her town life was like the hurry and constant change of foreign travel; there was always something to do, and not without pleasure. But the rare occasions on which she could exchange any words with Deronda became magnified in her consciousness, and enlarged the place she imagined herself to have in his mind.

How could Deronda help this? He certainly did not avoid her; rather he wished to let her know that her confidence in him had not lowered his respect. Moreover he liked being near her — how could it be otherwise? She was a lovely woman, and he cared about her fate perhaps all the more because he saw his own future lying far away from this splendid sad-hearted creature, who had turned to him with a beseeching need.

Gwendolen considered taking singing lessons from Mirah as a sort of obedience to Deronda's advice, but as day followed leisurely day, Grandcourt's presence seemed to flatten every effort to the level of his own boredom. His negative mind was as diffusive as fog, clinging to all objects, and spoiling all contact.

But one morning at breakfast, Gwendolen, determined to show her old spirit, said—

“I think of making myself accomplished while we are in town, and having singing lessons.”

“Why?” said Grandcourt, languidly.

“Why?” echoed Gwendolen, playing at sauciness; “because I can't smoke, and I can't go to the club — I want a variety of *ennui*. What would be the most convenient time, when you are busy with your lawyers, for me to have lessons from that little Jewess whose singing is all the rage?”

“Whenever you like,” said Grandcourt, pushing away his plate, and leaning back while he looked at her with his most lizard-like expression and played with the ears of the tiny spaniel on his lap (Gwendolen had taken a dislike to the dogs because they fawned on him). “Though I don't see why a lady should sing. Amateurs make fools of themselves. One doesn't want to hear squalling in private.”

“Frankness seems to me a husband's great charm,” said Gwendolen, lifting a prawn before her, to look at the boiled ingenuousness of its eyes as preferable to the lizard's. “But I suppose you don't object to Miss Lapidoth's singing at our party on the fourth? I thought of engaging her. Lady Brackenshaw had her, you know. And Mr. Deronda, who is a first-rate judge, says there is no singing in such good taste as hers for a drawing-room. I think his opinion is an authority.”

She meant to sling a small stone at her husband in that way.

“It's very indecent of Deronda to go about praising that girl,” said Grandcourt in a tone of indifference.

“Indecent!” exclaimed Gwendolen, reddening in startled wonder, unable to reflect on the falsity of the phrase *to go about praising*.

“He ought to hold his tongue about her. Men can see what is his relation to her.”

“Men who judge of others by themselves,” said Gwendolen, turning white after her redness, and immediately smitten with a dread of her own words.

“Of course. And a woman should accept their judgment,” said Grandcourt deliberately. “I suppose you take Deronda for a saint.”

“Oh dear no!” said Gwendolen, desperately summoning her self-control, and speaking in a high hard tone. “Only a little less of a monster.”

She rose, pushed her chair away without hurry, and walked out of the room with something like the care of a man who is afraid of showing that he has taken more wine than usual. She turned the keys inside her dressing-room doors, and sat down for some time looking pale and quiet, but with cruel sensations.

Deronda unlike what she had believed him to be, was a hideous and painful image. It had grasped her before she could consider whether it were true; and now came the sudden perception, how very little she knew about him – how childish she had been in her confidence. His severity to her began to seem odious; and the grave beauty of his face seemed an unpleasant mask.

All this went rapidly through her mind, until she started into resistance. Suddenly from out the grey morning a stream of sunshine came, wrapping her in warmth and light. She rose, stretching her arms upward and clasping her hands, her habitual attitude in seeking relief from oppressive feeling, and walked about the room in the flood of sunbeams.

“It is not true! What does it matter whether Grandcourt believes it?” This is what she repeated to herself, in a desperate cry of faith. How could she go on through the day in this state? Her impetuous imagination flew to wild actions by which she would convince herself of what she wished: she would question Lady Mallinger; she would write to Deronda and upbraid him with making the world wicked and hopeless to her.

No; she would go to Mirah. This path was more definitely practicable, and quickly became imperious. She had the pretext of asking Mirah to sing at her party on the fourth. What was she going to say beside? She did not wait to foresee. She rang her bell, and on finding that Mr. Grandcourt had gone out, she ordered the carriage, and dressed for the drive. Then she went down, and walked about the drawing-room like an imprisoned animal, not recognizing herself in the glass panels. Her husband would probably find out where she had been, and punish her somehow – but all that mattered just now was the assurance that she had not been deluded in her trust.

She had Mirah’s address, and soon was on the way with a palpitating heart. She was heedless of everything till she found herself in a room with folding-doors, and heard Deronda’s voice behind it. Frightened at her own agitation, she began to unbutton her gloves that she might button them again, biting her lips, until the door opened, and Mirah appeared with a sweet smile of recognition. There was relief in the sight of her face, and Gwendolen was able to smile in return; and as she seated herself, all the while hearing the voice, she felt some return of energy in the confused sense that the truth could not be anything that she dreaded.

Mirah drew her chair very near, as if she felt that their conversation should be quiet, and looked at her visitor in expectation. Gwendolen began in a low, almost bashful tone—

“Perhaps you wonder to see me – I ought to have written – but I have a particular request.”

“I am glad to see you instead of a letter,” said Mirah, wondering at the agitated manner of the “Vandyke duchess.”

Gwendolen went on— “I thought — I hoped you would not object to sing at our house on the 4th — in the evening — at a party. I should be so much obliged.”

“I shall be very happy to sing for you. At ten?” said Mirah, while Gwendolen seemed to get more instead of less embarrassed.

“At ten, please,” she answered; then paused. She had nothing more to say, yet she could not go. Deronda’s voice was in her ears. She must say it—

“Mr. Deronda is in the next room.”

“Yes,” said Mirah. “He is reading Hebrew with my brother.”

“You have a brother?”

“Yes, a dear brother who is consumptive, and Mr. Deronda is the best of friends to him, as he has been to me,” said Mirah.

“Tell me,” said Gwendolen, putting her hand on Mirah’s, and speaking hardly above a whisper— “tell me the truth. You are sure he is quite good. You know no evil of him. Any evil that people say of him is false.”

Could the proud-spirited woman have behaved more like a child? But the strange words penetrated Mirah with nothing but solemnity and indignation. With a sudden light in her eyes and a trembling voice, she said—

“Who says evil of him? I would not believe any evil of him, if an angel came to tell it me. He found me when I was going to drown myself; I looked so poor and miserable, you would have thought I was a beggar. And he treated me as if I had been a king’s daughter. He took me to the best of women. He found my brother for me. And he honours my brother, though he too was poor. And my brother honours him, which is no light thing, for my brother is very learned and great-minded. Mr. Deronda says there are few men equal to him.” Some Jewish defiance flamed into her indignant gratitude.

But Gwendolen was like one parched with thirst and drinking fresh water. She did not notice Mirah’s anger; she was not conscious of anything but of the sense that Deronda was no more like her husband’s conception than the dawn was like gas-light. Her whole state of feeling was changed.

She pressed Mirah’s hand, and said, “Thank you, thank you,” in a hurried whisper, then rose, adding, “I must go, I shall see you on the 4th — I am so much obliged” — bowing herself out, while Mirah, opening the door for her, wondered at her sudden chilly retreat.

Gwendolen, indeed, had no feeling to spare for Mirah. The passionate need for confirmation of Deronda’s goodness, which had over-ridden everything else, was no sooner satisfied than she wanted to be gone. She began to dread Deronda’s seeing her.

And once in the carriage, she had the vision of what awaited her at home. When she drew up in Grosvenor Square, her husband was arriving with a cigar between his fingers. He threw it away and handed her out, accompanying her upstairs. She turned into the drawing-room and sat down wearily, taking off her gloves, rubbing her forehead, and ignoring his presence as much as possible. But he sat in front of her, where she could not avoid looking at him.

“May I ask where you have been at this extraordinary hour?” said Grandcourt.

“I have been to Miss Lapidoth’s, to ask her to come and sing for us,” said Gwendolen, laying her gloves on the table.

“And to ask her about her relations with Deronda?” said Grandcourt, with the coldest possible sneer in his low voice.

For the first time since their marriage she flashed out upon him without check. Turning her eyes full on his she said, in a biting tone—

“Yes; and what you said is a low, wicked falsehood.”

“She told you so – did she?” returned Grandcourt, with a more pronounced sneer.

Gwendolen was mute. The daring anger within her was turned dumb. What reasons for her belief could she give? All her reasons would be shrivelled up under her husband’s breath. There was no proof to offer but her own impression, which would seem to him her own folly. She turned and looked away from him angrily: she would have risen, but he was in her way.

Grandcourt saw his advantage. “It’s of no consequence so far as her singing goes,” he drawled. “Have her to sing, if you like.” After a pause, he added in his lowest imperious tone, “But you will please to observe that you are not to go near that house again. As my wife, you must take my word about what is proper. When you undertook to be Mrs. Grandcourt, you undertook not to make a fool of yourself. You have been making a fool of yourself this morning; and if you were to go on this way, you might get yourself talked of at the clubs in a way you would not like. What do *you* know about the world? You have married *me*, and must be guided by my opinion.”

Every slow sentence of that speech had a terrific mastery in it for Gwendolen. If it had come from a physician telling her that she had a fatal disease, she could not have been more helpless against it. But she was permitted to move now, and her husband never again spoke of what had occurred. He knew the force of his own words, and did not flinch from ruthlessness.

Gwendolen did not, for all this, part with her recovered faith:— rather, she kept it with a more anxious tenacity, as a Protestant of old kept his Bible hidden or a Catholic his crucifix, according to the side in favour at the time; and it was characteristic of her that apart from the information gained about Deronda, Mirah and her brother did not enter her thoughts. The phrase “reading Hebrew” had fled across her sense of hearing without leaving any impression.

But the result of that visit, as it regarded her husband, was the cause of a change in her perhaps not observed by anyone except Deronda. As the weeks went on bringing occasional transient interviews with her, he thought that he perceived an intensifying of her superficial hardness and resolute display, which made her abrupt betrayals of agitation the more marked and disturbing.

In fact, she was undergoing a sort of unwilling discipline for the refractory which bent her with a terrible strain. Grandcourt had divined this refractoriness in her, and suspected that it increased whenever she happened to see Deronda: there was some “confounded nonsense” between them. He did not imagine it exactly as flirtation, and his imagination in other branches was rather restricted; but it evidently kept up a kind of simmering in her mind which might turn out to be disagreeable. Grandcourt had a vague perception of threatening moods in Gwendolen which his views of marriage required him peremptorily to check.

Among the means he chose, one was peculiar, and was less ably calculated than usual.

He determined that she should know the contents of the will he was making, but he could not tell her himself, because it involved the fact of his relation to Mrs. Glasher; and any open recognition of this between Gwendolen and himself was supremely repugnant to him. Like all proud, closely-wrapped natures, he shrank from explicitness on personal matters. And clashing was intolerable to him; he preferred to use the quiet massive pressure of his rule. But he wished Gwendolen to know that before he made her an offer, he knew that she was aware of his relations with Lydia.

Some men in his place might have thought of writing this to her, in the form of a letter. But Grandcourt hated writing: even writing a note was a bore to him, and he had long been accustomed to have all his writing done by Lush: who, to his mind, was as much of an implement as pen and paper.

But here too Grandcourt was reserved, and would not utter a word likely to encourage Lush in an impudent sympathy about his marriage. Grandcourt had always allowed Lush to know his affairs and debts indiscriminately; he had only used discrimination about what he would allow his confidant to say to him; and he had been so accustomed to this human tool, that having him at call in London was a recovery of lost ease. It followed that Lush knew the provisions of the will more exactly than Grandcourt himself.

Grandcourt did not doubt that Gwendolen, since she was a woman who could put two and two together, knew or suspected Lush to be the contriver of her interview with Lydia, and that this why she had requested his banishment. But here Grandcourt lacked the knowledge that could have saved him from mistake – namely, some experience of the passions concerned. He had correctly divined the half of Gwendolen's dread that related to her personal pride; but the remorseful half was as much out of his imagination as the other side of the moon. What he believed her to feel about Lydia was solely jealousy, and what he believed Lydia to have written with the jewels was the fact that she had once been used to wearing them. He aimed to aggravate the jealousy and yet smite it dumb: and Lush was the only possible envoy.

Grandcourt's view of things was considerably fenced in by his lack of sympathy. This lack would make even Mephistopheles stupid: thrown upon real life, and obliged to manage his own plots, he would inevitably make blunders.

One morning Grandcourt went to Gwendolen in her boudoir, hat and gloves in hand, and said with his most persuasive drawl, looking down on her as she sat with a book on her lap–

“A – Gwendolen, there's some business about property to be explained. I have told Lush to explain it to you. I am going out. He can come up now. I suppose you'll not mind.”

“You know that I do mind,” said Gwendolen, angrily. “I shall not see him.” She started up toward the door, but Grandcourt was prepared for her anger and was there before her, saying:–

“It's no use making a fuss. There are plenty of brutes in the world that one has to talk to. One shouldn't make a fuss about such things. If I employ Lush, the proper thing for you is to take it as a matter of course. Not to make a fuss about it. Not to toss your head about people of that sort.”

The drawling and the pauses in this speech gave time for crowding reflections in Gwendolen. What was there to be told her about property? It might concern her mother, or Mrs. Glasher. What would be the use if she refused to see Lush? She knew Grandcourt would not tell her himself. The humiliation of standing a prisoner, with her husband barring the door, was not to be borne any longer, and she turned away.

“Shall I tell Lush he may come up now?” he said.

Yet another pause before she could say “Yes” – her eyes cast down.

“I shall come back in time to ride, if you like to get ready,” said Grandcourt. No answer. “She is in a desperate rage,” thought he. But the rage was silent, and therefore not disagreeable to him. He turned her chin and kissed her, while she still kept her eyelids down, and she did not move them until he was gone.

What was she to do? Her romantic illusions in marrying this man had turned on her power of using him as she liked. He was using her as he liked.

She sat awaiting the announcement of Lush as a sort of searing operation that she had to go through. The thought of what her husband knew burned through her. It was all a part of that new gambling, in which the losing was not simply a *minus*, but a terrible *plus* that had never entered into her reckoning.

Grandcourt had told Lush, "Don't make yourself more disagreeable than nature makes you."

"That depends," thought Lush. But the idea of an interview did not wholly displease him, and he said, "I will write a brief abstract of the will for Mrs. Grandcourt to read."

Some provision was made for himself in the will, and he had no reason to be in a bad humour. He was sure that he knew all the secrets of the situation; but he had no diabolical delight in it, only a gratified resentment in discerning that this marriage, as he had foreseen, was not as satisfactory as the supercilious young lady had expected it to be, and as Grandcourt wished to pretend that it was. While he had no active goodwill, he had little active malevolence, being chiefly occupied in his own particular pleasures. Nevertheless, he was not indifferent to the prospect of being treated uncivilly by a beautiful woman, or to having the official power of humiliating her.

By the time that Mr. Lush was announced, Gwendolen had resolved that he should not witness the slightest betrayal of her feeling. She invited him to sit down with stately quietude. After all, what was this man to her? He was not in the least like her husband. Her power of hating a coarse, familiar, clumsy man, was now relaxed by the intensity with which she hated his contrast.

Lush held a small paper in his hand while he spoke. "I need hardly say that I should not have presented myself to you if Mr. Grandcourt had not expressed a strong wish to that effect."

From some voices that speech might have sounded apologetic, but to Gwendolen's ear his words held as much insolence as his prominent eyes, and the pronoun "you" was too familiar. He ought to have addressed the folding-screen, and have spoken of her as Mrs. Grandcourt. She gave the smallest bow, and Lush went on.

"My having been in Mr. Grandcourt's confidence for fifteen years gives me a peculiar position. He can speak to me of matters that he could not mention to anyone else; and he could not have employed anyone else in this affair. I have accepted the task out of friendship for him. Which is my apology for accepting the task – if you would have preferred some one else."

He paused, but she made no sign. Lush opened the folded paper, and looked at it vaguely before he began to speak again.

"This paper contains some information about Mr. Grandcourt's will, if you'll be good enough to cast your eyes over it. But there is something I had to say by way of introduction – which I hope you'll pardon me for, if it's not quite agreeable." Lush found that he was behaving better than he had expected, and had no idea how insulting he made himself with his "not quite agreeable."

"Say what you have to say without apologizing, please," said Gwendolen, with the air she might have bestowed on a dog-stealer come to claim a reward for finding the dog he had stolen.

"I have to remind you of something that occurred before your engagement to Mr. Grandcourt," said Lush, some willing insolence rising in exchange for her scorn.

“You met a lady in Cardell Chase, if you remember, who spoke to you of her position with regard to Mr. Grandcourt. She had children with her – one a very fine boy.”

Gwendolen was pale. This man’s speech was like a knife-edge drawn across her skin: and other feelings crowded in, dim and alarming as ghosts.

“Mr. Grandcourt was aware that you were acquainted with this unfortunate affair, and he thinks it only right that his intentions regarding property should be made clear to you. If you have any objection, you should mention it to me – he would rather not speak about it himself. If you will be good enough to read this.” Lush presented the paper to her.

When Gwendolen resolved that she would betray no feeling, she had not prepared herself to hear that her husband knew the silently accepted terms on which she had married him. She dared not raise her hand to the paper that he held out, lest it should tremble. She said haughtily–

“Lay it on the table. And go into the next room, please.”

Lush obeyed, thinking, “My lady winces considerably. She didn’t know what would be the charge for that superfine article, Henleigh Grandcourt.” But it seemed to him that as a penniless girl, she had done better than she had any right to expect, and that she had been uncommonly knowing. Her words to Lydia had meant nothing, and her running away had probably been planned: it had turned out a master-stroke.

Meanwhile Gwendolen was rallying her nerves. She must read the paper. Her pride, her rebellion, her remorseful conscience all made her need to know what the paper contained.

At first it was not easy to take in the meaning of the words. When she succeeded, she found that in the case of her having no son, Grandcourt had made the small Henleigh his heir; that was all she cared to extract from the paper with any distinctness. The other statement as to what provision would be made for her in the same case, she hurried over, getting only a confused perception of thousands and Gadsmere. It was enough. This inheritance was meant as a final humiliation, but she could dismiss the man in the next room with the defiant energy which it inspired.

Thrusting the paper between the leaves of her book, she walked with her stateliest air into the next room, where Lush immediately arose. She said in a high tone, while she swept him with her eyelashes–

“Tell Mr. Grandcourt that his arrangements are just what I desired” – passing on without haste, and leaving Lush to mingle some admiration of her graceful back with a half-amused sense of her impertinence. He really did not want her to be worse punished, and he was glad that it was time to go and lunch on lobster salad at his club.

When her husband returned he found Gwendolen in her riding-dress, ready to ride out with him. She was not again going to be hysterical. She was going to act in the spirit of her message, and not to give herself time to reflect. Doubtless her husband had meant to produce a great effect on her: by-and-by perhaps she would let him see an effect the very opposite of what he intended; but at present all that she could show was a defiant satisfaction. To show anything that could be interpreted as jealousy would be the worst self-humiliation. She was not clear about her future action, except that she would match her husband in indifference.

So she not only rode, but went out with him to dine, contributing nothing to alter their usual manner; and curiously enough she rejected a handkerchief on which her maid had put the wrong scent – a scent that Grandcourt had once objected to. Gwendolen would not have liked to be an object of disgust to this hated husband: she liked all disgust to be on her side.



But to defer thought in this way proved impossible. After nine or ten hours she seemed to have gone through a labyrinth of reflection, in which every path was a dead end. Already she was undergoing some hardening effect from feeling that she was viewed solely in the light of her lowest motives. She recalled the scenes of her courtship, with the new bitter consciousness of what had been in Grandcourt's mind – certain that he had a triumph in conquering her repugnance, and a cold exultation in knowing her fancied secret. Her imagination exaggerated every tyrannical impulse he was capable of.

“I will insist on being separated from him” – was her first darting determination; then, “I will leave him whether he consents or not. If this boy becomes his heir, I have made an atonement.”

But those scenes would be unendurable. How could she run away to her own family, causing them distress and scandal? What future lay before a Mrs. Grandcourt gone back to her mother, and made destitute by the rupture of the marriage whose chief excuse had been that it had brought that mother a maintenance? What could she say to justify her flight? Her uncle would tell her to go back. Her mother would cry. Her aunt and Anna would look at her with wondering alarm. Her husband would have power to compel her. She had absolutely nothing that she could allege against him.

And to “insist on separation!” With Grandcourt, that was easier to say than do. How was she to begin? What was she to say that would not condemn herself? “If I am to have misery,” was her bitter refrain, “I had better keep it secret.” Moreover, her capability of rectitude told her again and again that she had no right to complain of her contract, or to withdraw from it.

And always among the images that drove her back to submission was Deronda. The idea of herself separated from her husband gave Deronda a changed, disturbing place in her mind: instinctively she felt that the separation would be from him too. In the prospect of herself as a solitary, dubiously-regarded woman, she felt some tingling bashfulness when she remembered her behaviour towards him.

What would he say if he knew everything? Probably that she ought to bear what she had brought on herself, unless she were sure that she could make herself a better woman by taking any other course. And what sort of woman would she be, solitary, sick of life, looked at with suspicious pity? Mrs. Grandcourt “run away” would be a more pitiable creature than Gwendolen Harleth condemned to teach the bishop's daughters, and to be inspected by Mrs. Mompert.

One characteristic trait in her conduct is worth mentioning. She would not look a second time at the paper Lush had given her, but locked it away, proudly resolved against curiosity about what was allotted to herself – feeling herself branded in her husband's mind with the meanness that would accept marriage and wealth on any conditions, however dishonourable.

Day after day she thought along the same lines, and nothing changed. May turned into June, and still Mrs. Grandcourt was presenting herself with the accustomed grace, beauty, and costume, whether at church or the opera. Church was not distinguished in her mind from the other forms of self-presentation, for the brilliant Mrs. Grandcourt was, so far as pastoral care and religious fellowship were concerned, in as complete a solitude as a man in a lighthouse.

Can we wonder at the submission which hid her rebellion? The combination is common enough. Poor Gwendolen had both too much and too little mental power and dignity to make herself exceptional. No wonder that Deronda now saw some

hardening in a look and manner which were schooled daily to the suppression of feeling.

For example. One morning, riding in Rotten Row with Grandcourt, she saw standing against the railing, facing them, a dark-eyed lady with a little girl and a blonde boy, whom she at once recognized as Mrs. Glasher. Gwendolen had not presence of mind to do anything but glance away from the piercing dark eyes toward Grandcourt, who wheeled past the group with an unmoved face, giving no sign of recognition.

Immediately she felt a rising rage against him mingling with her shame, and the words, "You might at least have raised your hat to her," flew to her lips – but did not pass them. She was filling Mrs. Glasher's place: how could she be the person to reproach him? She was dumb.

It was not chance, but design, that had brought Mrs. Glasher there with her boy. Her interviews with Lush had made her think her ultimate triumph was probable. Let her keep quiet, and she might live to see the marriage dissolve itself, Lush hinted, leaving the succession assured to her boy. She had had an interview with Grandcourt, too, who had as usual told her to behave like a reasonable woman, and threatened punishment if she were troublesome; but had, also as usual, been lavish with his money. Lydia, feeding on the probabilities in her favour, devoured her wrath; but she could not resist making a Medusa-apparition before Gwendolen, in a vindictive outlet of venom. Hence, after finding out from Lush the likely time for Gwendolen to be riding, she had watched at that place.

Her appearance was made effective beyond her conception by the shock it gave Gwendolen actually to see Grandcourt ignoring this woman, who had once been the nearest in the world to him, along with his children. And this dark shadow thus cast spread itself over her visions of a solitary future. What possible release could there be for her, but death? Not her own death. Gwendolen could not easily think of her own death as a near reality. It seemed more possible that Grandcourt should die:– and yet not likely.

No! she foresaw him always living, and her own life dominated by him; the "always" of her young experience not stretching beyond the next few years that seemed immeasurably long with her passionate weariness. The thought of his dying would not subside: it turned as with a dream-change into the terror that she should die with his throttling fingers on her neck avenging that thought. Fantasies moved within her like ghosts, dark rays doing their work invisibly in daylight.

An evening or two after that encounter in the Park, there was a grand concert at Klesmer's, who was living rather magnificently now in one of the large houses in Grosvenor Place. Gwendolen had looked forward to this occasion as one on which she was sure to meet Deronda, and she had been meditating how to put a question to him which, without shaming herself, would yet be explicit enough for him to understand it. She struggled with opposite feelings: the very idea of Deronda's relation to her discouraged her from taking any desperate step towards freedom, but she longed for some word of his to enforce a resolve. Because any conversations with him had always to be snatched in the doubtful privacy of large parties, she lived through them many times beforehand, imagining what she would say.

Her irritation was great when no opportunity came; and this evening at Klesmer's she included Deronda in her anger, because he looked as calm as possible at a distance from her, while she was in danger of betraying her impatience. She found her only safety in a chill haughtiness which made Mr. Vandernoodt remark that Mrs.

Grandcourt was becoming a perfect match for her husband. When at last Deronda was near her, Sir Hugo and Mrs. Raymond were close by and could hear every word she said. No matter: her husband was not near, and her irritation passed without check into a fit of daring which restored her self-possession. Deronda was there at last, and she would compel him to do what she pleased.

Standing rather queenly in her white lace and green leaves she threw a royal permissiveness into her request, "I wish you would come and see me tomorrow between five and six, Mr. Deronda."

There could be but one answer: "Certainly."

Afterward it occurred to Deronda that he would write a note to excuse himself. He had always avoided making a call at Grandcourt's. But his excuse might be taken as an indifference that would hurt her, so he kept his promise.

Gwendolen had declined to ride out on the last-minute plea of not feeling well – not without alarm lest her husband should say that he too would stay at home. But Grandcourt accepted her excuse without remark, and rode off.

When Gwendolen found herself alone, and had sent down the order that only Mr. Deronda was to be admitted, she began to feel a growing agitation in the thought that he would soon appear, and she should be obliged to speak: yet what she had been for hours determining to say seemed impossible. For the first time, she felt timid, and was shaken by the possibility that he might think her invitation unbecoming. If so, she would have sunk in his esteem. But immediately she resisted this fear as an infection from her husband's way of thinking.

In her struggle between agitation and the effort to suppress it, she was walking up and down the length of two drawing-rooms, where at one end a long mirror reflected her in her black dress, with her white pillar of a neck shown to advantage. Some consciousness of this made her turn hastily and hurry to the boudoir, where she tied a large piece of black lace so as completely to conceal her neck, and leave only her face looking out from the black frame. However, the lace did not take away the uneasiness from her eyes and lips.

She was standing in the middle of the room when Deronda was announced, and as he approached her she perceived that he too for some reason was not his usual self. He looked less happy than usual, and appeared to be under some effort in speaking to her. They both said, "How do you do?" quite curtly; and Gwendolen moved to a little distance, while Deronda stood where he was, – both feeling it difficult to say any more, though the preoccupation in his mind could hardly have been more remote from Gwendolen's idea. She naturally saw in his embarrassment some reflection of her own. Forced to speak, she began with unusually timid awkwardness –

"You will wonder why I begged you to come. I wanted to ask you something. You said I was ignorant. That is true. And what can I do but ask you?"

At this moment she was feeling it utterly impossible to put the questions she had intended. Something new in her nervous manner roused Deronda's anxiety lest there might be a new crisis. He said with sad affection in his voice –

"My only regret is, that I can be of so little use to you."

The words touched a new spring in her, and she went on with more sense of freedom, yet still not saying anything she had designed to say.

"I wanted to tell you that I have always been thinking of your advice, but is it any use? I can't make myself different, because things give me bad feelings – and I must go on – I can alter nothing – it is no use."

She paused, conscious that she was not finding the right words, but began again hurriedly, "But if I go on I shall get worse. I want not to get worse. I should like to be what you wish. There are people who are good and enjoy great things – I know there are. I am a contemptible creature. I feel as if I should get wicked with hating people. I have tried to think that I would go away from everybody. But I can't. You think, perhaps, that I don't mind. But I do mind. I am afraid of everything. I am afraid of getting wicked. Tell me what I can do."

She had forgotten everything but that helpless misery which she was trying to convey to Deronda. Her brilliant, tearless eyes had a look of smarting; there was a subdued sob in her voice, which sank to hardly above a whisper. Her tightly-clasped fingers pressed against her heart.

The feeling Deronda endured in these moments was horrible. Words seemed to have no more rescue in them than if he had been beholding a vessel in peril of wreck, beaten by an inescapable storm. How could he grasp her wretchedness? – how change it with a sentence? He was afraid of his own voice. The words that rushed into his mind seemed feeble and trite. The thought that urged itself foremost was – "Confess everything to your husband; conceal nothing;" – but before he had begun to speak, the door opened and the husband entered.

Grandcourt had deliberately gone out and turned back to satisfy a suspicion. What he saw was Gwendolen's face of anguish, framed black like a nun's, and Deronda standing three yards from her with a look of deep sorrow. Without any show of surprise Grandcourt nodded to Deronda, gave a second look at Gwendolen, passed on, and seated himself easily at a little distance, crossing his legs, and trifling elegantly with his handkerchief.

Gwendolen had shrunk on seeing him, but she did not move from her place. She could not feign anything: the passion of her last speech was still too strong within her. She felt a dull despairing sense that her interview with Deronda was at an end.

But he, naturally, was urged into self-possession and effort by thinking of what might follow for her from being seen by her husband in this agitation; and as any pretence of ease would only exaggerate Grandcourt's possible conjectures, he merely said –

"I will not stay longer now. Good bye."

He put out his hand, and she let him press her poor little chill fingers; but she said no good-bye.

When he had left, Gwendolen threw herself into a seat, with a dull expectation that she was going to be punished. But Grandcourt took no notice: he was satisfied to have let her know that she had not deceived him, and to keep an omniscient silence. He went out that evening, and her plea of feeling ill was accepted without even a sneer.

The next morning at breakfast he said, "I am going yachting to the Mediterranean."

"When?" said Gwendolen, with a leap of hope.

"The day after tomorrow. The yacht is at Marseilles. Lush is gone to get everything ready."

"Shall I have mamma to stay with me, then?" said Gwendolen, the new sudden possibility of peace and affection filling her mind like a burst of morning light.

"No; you will go with me."

## Chapter Forty-nine

Deronda, in parting from Gwendolen, did not tell her he was going away, lest Grandcourt should infer that the fact was important to her.

He was actually going abroad under circumstances so momentous that when he called on her, he was already affected by solemn emotion.

Sir Hugo had sent a note to his chambers—“Come immediately. Something has happened.” Expecting bad news on entering the baronet’s study, he was relieved to be received with affection. However, there was a subdued emotion in Sir Hugo’s voice, as he said—

“Sit down, Dan. I have something to say.”

Deronda obeyed, not without presentiment. It was extremely rare for Sir Hugo to show so much serious feeling.

“I hardly expected that this would ever happen. There have been reasons why I have never prepared you for it, and never told you anything about your parentage.”

Sir Hugo paused, but Deronda could not trust his voice to speak, with so much hanging on this moment when the secrecy was to be broken. Sir Hugo went on with anxious tenderness.

“I have acted in obedience to your mother’s wishes. The secrecy was her wish. But now she desires to see you. This letter, which you can read later, will tell you what she wishes you to do, and where you will find her.”

Sir Hugo held out a letter written on foreign paper, which Deronda thrust into his breast-pocket, relieved that he was not called on to read it immediately. His composure shaken, Sir Hugo found it difficult to say more. And Deronda’s whole soul was possessed by a question which was the hardest in the world to utter. Yet he could not bear to delay it. At last he looked at Sir Hugo, and said, with a tremulous reverence in his voice, dreading to convey any reproach—

“Is my father also living?”

The answer came: a low emphatic “No.”

Some light had fallen on the past for Sir Hugo too in this interview. The baronet said, in a tone of confession—

“Perhaps I was wrong, Dan, to undertake what I did. I liked having you all to myself. But if you have had any pain, I ask you to forgive me.”

“The forgiveness has long been there,” said Deronda. “The chief pain has always been on account of my mother. But my affection for you has made a large part of my life.”

And with one impulse the two men clasped each other’s hands.

## BOOK VII: THE MOTHER AND THE SON

### Chapter Fifty

This was the letter which Sir Hugo gave to Deronda:—

‘TO MY SON, DANIEL DERONDA.

‘My good friend, Sir Hugo Mallinger, will have told you that I wish to see you. My health is shaken, and I desire to lose no time before I deliver to you what I have long withheld. Be at the *Albergo dell’ Italia* in Genoa by the fourteenth of this month. Wait for me there. I am uncertain when I shall be able to make the journey from Spezia, where I shall be staying. That will depend on several things. Wait for me: the Princess Halm-Eberstein. Bring with you the diamond ring that Sir Hugo gave you. I shall like to see it again. Your unknown mother,

‘LEONORA HALM-EBERSTEIN.’

This letter with its colourless wording gave Deronda no clue to what awaited him. He could not help imagining possibilities, but he refused to regard any of them as likely. He simply attempted to prepare himself to meet the fact bravely, whatever it might turn out to be.

He could not tell anyone the reason for his absence, least of all Mordecai, whom it would affect as powerfully as it did himself, only in a different way. If he were to say, “I am going to learn the truth about my birth,” Mordecai’s hopes might be dangerously excited. So he spoke of his journey as being undertaken by Sir Hugo’s wish, with as much indifference and vagueness as he could.

“I will ask to have the child Jacob to stay with me,” said Mordecai.

“I will ask Mrs. Cohen to let him come,” said Mirah.

“The grandmother will deny you nothing,” said Deronda. “I’m glad you were wrong,” he added, smiling at Mordecai. “You thought that old Mrs. Cohen would not bear to see Mirah.”

“I undervalued her heart,” said Mordecai. “She is capable of rejoicing that another’s plant blooms though her own be withered.”

“Oh, they are dear good people; I feel as if we all belonged to each other,” said Mirah, with merriment.

“What should you have felt if *that* Ezra had been your brother?” said Deronda mischievously.

Mirah looked at him with slight surprise, and said, “He is not a bad man – I think he would never forsake anyone.” Then she blushed deeply, glancing timidly at Mordecai: her father was in her mind. “If he should find us!” was a thought which sometimes haunted Mirah.

Deronda understood the blush, for her feelings about her parent seemed near to his own. That letter which had brought his mother nearer in reality had made her more remote in his affections. The tender yearning after an imagined mother had long been secretly present within him in his observation of all women. But it seemed now that this picture of his mother might not fit the facts: her enigmatic letter had thrust away that image created by his longing.

When Deronda arrived at the *Italia* in Genoa, no Princess Halm-Eberstein was there; but there was a letter for him, saying that she might arrive within a week or two, and entreating him to wait patiently.

Under this suspense, Deronda set about the difficult task of seeking amusement as a means of quieting his excitement and giving patience a lift over a weary road. He spent the cooler hours in wandering about to observe the streets and the quay; and he often took a boat to enjoy the magnificent view of the city from the sea.

Mordecai and Mirah were ever-present in his thoughts; and while his boat was pushing about within view of the grand harbour, he imagined the multitudinous Spanish Jews centuries ago, driven destitute and starving from their homes into crowded ships, and allowed only a brief rest on this grand quay of Genoa. Inevitably, dreamy constructions of his possible ancestry would weave themselves with this history, which had acquired a new interest for him since meeting Mirah and Mordecai. He had never yet fully admitted to himself that he wished the facts to verify Mordecai's conviction: he inwardly repeated that he had no choice in the matter, and that wishing was folly. He had simply to accept the fact.

Across these thoughts, there came continually another anxiety which he made no effort to banish. Rather, he dwelt on it with a mournfulness which often seems to us the best atonement we can make to one whom we have been unable to help. The anxiety was for Gwendolen. His feeling for her was not passionate love, yet was not the same as friendship, or a merely benevolent regard. A man may express this feeling in the words, "I should have loved her, if...": the "if" covering some circumstance set against the emotions ready to quiver out of balance.

Deronda had never throughout his relations with Gwendolen been free from the nervous consciousness that there was something to guard against, not only on her account but on his own – that any impulsive action on his part would ruin her trust in him, which worked upon him now like the retreating cry of a creature snatched and carried out of his reach. How could his feelings for Gwendolen ever be exactly like his feelings for other women, even when there was one by whose side he desired to stand? Although Deronda did not imagine himself to be of supreme importance to any woman, Gwendolen's insistence that he must "remain near her – must not forsake her" continually recurred to him with piercing clearness.

Day after day passed, and in Genoa, the noons were getting hotter, the outer roads getting deeper with white dust, the oleanders in the tubs along the wayside gardens looking more and more like fatigued holiday-makers, and the sweet evening sowing the paths with happy tinklings of mule-bells and thrumming of strings, light footsteps and voices; while the encircling heights, crowned with forts, skirted with gardens, seemed to come forth in fullness of beauty after their long siesta, till all strong colour melted in the moonlight. Then slowly with the descending moon all sank in deep night and silence, and nothing shone but the port lights of the great Lanterna in the blackness below, and the glimmering stars in the blackness above.

Deronda, in his suspense, watched this revolving of the days as he might have watched a wonderful antique clock, and found himself contemplating all activity with the aloofness of a prisoner awaiting ransom. In his letters to Mordecai and Hans, he avoided writing about himself, but he was really in that state of mind in which all subjects become personal; and the few books he had brought with him were unreadable in his agitating uncertainty.

On many nights, he gazed from the open window of his room on the double, faintly pierced darkness of the sea and the heavens; often struggling under the oppressive scepticism which made him think of his lot as of no more lasting effect than a dream; sometimes with an emotional reaction which gave even to disappointment the nature of a satisfied energy, and spread over his young future,

whatever it might be, the attraction of devoted service; sometimes with a sweet irresistible hopefulness that the very best of human possibilities might befall him – the blending of a complete personal love with a larger duty; and sometimes again in a mood of rebellion against things in general because they are thus and not otherwise, a mood in which Gwendolen and her fate moved as busy images of what was amiss in the world along with the concealments in his own life, which now afflicted him with doubt about the mother who had announced herself coldly and still kept away.

But at last she was come. One morning in his third week of waiting there was a knock at the door. A liveried servant entered and delivered the message that the Princess Halm-Eberstein had arrived, that she was going to rest during the day, but would be obliged if Monsieur would be at liberty at seven, when she would be able to receive him.



## Chapter Fifty-one

When Deronda presented himself at the door of his mother's apartment he felt some revival of his boyhood agitations. The two servants looked a little surprised that the doctor their lady had come to consult was this striking young gentleman in evening dress. But Deronda could notice nothing until he found himself in the presence of a figure who stood awaiting his approach.

She was covered, except her face and fore-arms, with black lace. Her arms, adorned with rich bracelets, were folded before her, and the fine poise of her head made it look handsomer than it really was. Deronda held the hand she had put out and raised it to his lips. She looked at him examiningly; he was conscious that her eyes were piercing and her face so mobile that the next moment she might look like a different person.

Deronda felt himself changing colour, and yet wondering at his own lack of emotion; he had lived through so many ideal meetings with his mother, and they had seemed more real than this! He could not even conjecture in what language she would speak to him. Suddenly, she let fall his hand, and placed both hers on his shoulders, while a flash of admiration in her face seemed to restore its youth.

"You are a beautiful creature!" she said, in a low melodious voice, with a foreign but agreeable pronunciation. "I knew you would be." Then she kissed him on each cheek, and he returned the kisses. But it was something like a greeting between royalties.

She paused a moment and then said in a colder tone, "I am your mother. But you can have no love for me."

"I have thought of you more than of any other being in the world," said Deronda, his voice trembling nervously.

"I am not like what you thought I was," said the mother decisively, withdrawing her hands, and folding her arms again, looking at him as if she invited him to observe her. He saw her likeness to himself, but with striking differences. She was a remarkable looking being, but she gave him a painful sense of aloofness; her worn beauty had a strangeness in it as if she were not quite a human mother, but a Melusina of some other world.

"I used to think that you might be suffering," he said, anxious not to wound her. "I used to wish that I could comfort you."

"I *am* suffering. But with a suffering that you can't comfort," said the Princess, in a harder voice, moving to a sofa. "Sit down." She pointed to a seat near her; and then added, more gently, "I am not suffering at this moment. I am at ease now, and able to talk."

Deronda seated himself and waited for her to speak again. It seemed as if he were in the presence of a mysterious Fate rather than the longed-for mother. He was beginning to watch her with wonder, from the spiritual distance to which she had thrown him.

"I did not send for you to comfort me. I could not know what you will feel toward me. I have not the foolish notion that you can love me merely because I am your mother, when you have never seen me. But I did not think I deprived you of anything worth having."

"You cannot wish me to believe that your affection would not have been worth having," said Deronda.

“I don’t mean to speak ill of myself,” said the princess proudly, “But I had not much affection to give you. I wanted to live out the life that was in me, and not to be hampered with other lives. I was no princess then.” She rose with a sudden movement, and Deronda rose too; he felt breathless.

“I was a great singer, and I acted as well as I sang. All the rest were poor beside me. Men followed me from one country to another. I was living a myriad lives. I did not want a child.”

There was a passionate self-defence in her tone. She seemed to fling out the last words against some possible reproach in the mind of her son, who had to stand and hear them – clutching his coat-collar as if he were keeping himself above water by it. She went on with the same intensity.

“I did not want to marry. I was forced into marrying by my father’s commands; and besides, it was my best way of getting some freedom. I could rule my husband, but not my father. I had a right to seek freedom from a bondage that I hated.”

She seated herself again, and after a moment looked up at him with a less defiant pleading as she said–

“I wanted to keep you from that bondage that I hated. What better could the most loving mother have done? I relieved you from the bondage of being born a Jew.”

“Then I *am* a Jew?” Deronda burst out. “My father was a Jew, and you are a Jewess?”

“Yes, your father was my cousin,” said the mother, watching him as if she saw something that she might have to be afraid of.

“I am glad of it,” he said impetuously. He could not have dreamed beforehand that he would say that in opposition to his mother. He was shaken by a mixed anger against this woman, who it seemed had borne him unwillingly, had willingly made herself a stranger to him, and perhaps was now making herself known unwillingly.

But the mother was equally shaken by an anger differently mixed, and with her the shaking was visible. She said violently–

“Why do you say you are glad? You are an English gentleman. I secured you that.”

“You did not know what you secured me. How could you choose my birthright for me?” said Deronda, throwing himself into his chair again, while he looked away.

He was now trying hard to master himself and keep silence. A horror had swept in upon his anger lest he should say something too hard in this unique moment. There was a pause before his mother spoke again, in firmly resistant tones:

“I chose for you what I would have chosen for myself. How could I know that you would have the spirit of my father in you? How could I know that you would love what I hated?– if you really love to be a Jew.” The last words held such bitterness that any listener might have supposed some hatred had arisen between mother and son.

But Deronda had recovered his fuller self. He was recalling what life was like for her whose best years were gone, and who with a suffering frame was now exerting herself to tell him of a past which was not his alone but also hers. His face regained some of its penetrative calm; yet it seemed to have a strangely agitating influence over her: her eyes were fixed on him with a sort of fascination.

“Forgive me, if I speak hastily,” he said. “Why have you resolved now on disclosing the facts to me? Why – since you seem angry that I should be glad?”

“Oh – reasons!” said the Princess, with sarcastic scorn. “When you are as old as I am, it will not seem so simple a question. I am not a monster, but I have not felt exactly what other women feel – or say they feel, for fear of being thought unlike

others. When you reproach me for sending you away, you mean that I ought to say I felt about you as other women say they feel about their children. I did *not* feel that. I was glad to be freed from you. But I did well for you, and I gave you your father's fortune. As for reasons, a fatal illness has been growing in me for a year. I will not pretend to love where I have no love. But shadows are rising round me. If I have wronged the dead – I have but little time to do what I left undone.”

The speech was in fact a piece of sincere acting; this woman's nature was one in which all feeling and experience immediately passed into drama, and she acted her own emotions. It would not be true to say that she felt less because of this: she felt all the more, but with a difference; each pain or pleasure had a deep atmosphere of the spiritual intoxication which at once exalts and deadens.

But Deronda made no reflection of this kind. All his thoughts hung on his mother's meaning. He longed for her to tell him of the strange mental conflict under which it seemed he had been brought into the world; but his compassionate nature forbade any further question. She paused, with her brow knit, her head turned away. He must wait for her to speak again. She did so with strange abruptness, turning her eyes upon him suddenly, and saying–

“Sir Hugo has written much about you. He tells me you have a wonderful mind – you are wiser than he is with all his sixty years. You say you are glad that you were born a Jew. I am not going to tell you that I have changed my mind about that. Your feelings are against mine. You don't thank me for what I did. Shall you comprehend your mother, or only blame her?”

“I wish only to comprehend her,” said Deronda, meeting her sharp gaze solemnly. “It is a bitter reversal of my longing to think of blaming her. What I have been trying to do for fifteen years is to have some understanding of those who differ from myself.”

“Then you are unlike your grandfather,” she said, “though you look like him. He never comprehended me; he only thought of fettering me into obedience. I was to be what he called ‘the Jewish woman’: to feel everything I did not feel, and believe everything I did not believe. I was to feel awe for the bit of parchment in the *mezuzah* over the door; to dread lest a bit of butter should touch a bit of meat;– to adore the wisdom of such silly laws. I was to love the long prayers in the ugly synagogue, and the dreadful fasts, and the tiresome feasts, and my father's endless discoursing about our people, which was a thunder without meaning in my ears. I did not care about Israel: I cared for the wide world. I hated living under the shadow of my father's strictness. ‘You must be this,’ ‘you must not be that’ pressed on me like a frame that got tighter and tighter as I grew. I wanted freedom. Ah!” – her tone changed to bitter incisiveness – “you are glad to have been born a Jew, because you were not brought up as a Jew. It seems sweet to you because I saved you from it.”

“Did you mean that I should never know my origin?” said Deronda. “You have changed your mind on that point.”

“I did mean that. And it is not true to say that I have changed. Things have changed in spite of me. I am still the same Leonora” – she pointed with her forefinger to her breast – “here within me is the same will, but events come upon us like evil enchantments. I obey something tyrannic: I am forced to feel pain, to be dying slowly. I have been forced to obey my dead father. I have been forced to tell you that you are a Jew, and deliver to you what he commanded me to deliver.”

“Please tell me what moved you to take the course you did,” said Deronda, trying to escape the heart-rending piteousness of this suffering and defiance. “I gather that

my grandfather opposed your wish to be an artist. I can imagine the hardship of your struggle.”

“No,” said the Princess, shaking her head and folding her arms. “You are not a woman. You may try – but you can never imagine what it is to have a man’s force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl. To have a pattern cut out – ‘this is the Jewish woman; this is what you must be; a woman’s heart must be of such a size and no larger, else it must be pressed small, like Chinese feet; her happiness is to be made as cakes are, by a fixed recipe.’ That was what my father wanted. He wished I had been a son; he cared for me as a make-shift link. His heart was set on his Judaism. He hated that Jewish women should be singers and actresses for the Christian world. As if we were not the more enviable for that chance of escaping from bondage!”

“Was my grandfather a learned man?” said Deronda eagerly.

She answered impatiently, “Oh, yes, a clever physician – and good: I don’t deny that. A man to be admired in a play – grand, with an iron will. But such men turn their wives and daughters into slaves. They would rule the world if they could; but since they cannot, they throw all the weight of their will onto women. But nature sometimes thwarts them. My father had no other child, and I was like himself.

“Your father was different. Unlike me – all lovingness and affection. I knew I could rule him; and I made him secretly promise me, before I married him, that he would not hinder my being an artist. My father was on his deathbed when we were married: from the first he had fixed his mind on my marrying my cousin Ephraim. I meant to have my will in the end, but I could only have it by seeming to obey. I was in awe of my father – I wished I could defy him open; but I knew I could not succeed in that. And I never would risk failure.”

This last sentence was uttered with abrupt emphasis. Her son was listening to her with feelings more and more highly mixed; the first sense of being repelled by her frank coldness; the indignation at what shocked his most cherished principles – these feelings were subsiding, and making room for that effort at just allowance and admiration of a forcible nature which he would have felt if she had been a stranger. Still it was impossible to be dispassionate: he trembled lest her next words should be still more repugnant to him. He almost wished he could say, “Tell me only what is necessary,” and yet he felt a fascination which made him listen eagerly.

“Where was my grandfather’s home?”

“Here in Genoa; and his family lived here generations ago. But my father had been in various countries.”

“You must surely have lived in England?”

“My mother was English – a Jewess of Portuguese descent. My father married her in England. Through that marriage he thwarted his own plans. My mother’s sister was a singer who married a merchant of Genoa, and they lived here. My mother died when I was eight, and my father allowed me to be with my Aunt Leonora and be taught here, as if he had not minded her encouraging my wish to be a singer. But I saw it again and again in my father:– he did not guard against consequences, because he felt sure he could hinder them if he liked. My father knew my inclination. That was nothing to him: he meant that I should obey his will. And he was resolved that I should marry my cousin Ephraim. I wanted not to marry, but I found that I could rule my cousin, and I consented. My father died three weeks after we were married, and then I had my way!” She uttered these words almost exultantly; but after a little pause

her face changed, and she said bitingly, "It has not lasted, though. My father is getting his way now."

She looked more contemplatively at her son, and said—

"You are like him – but milder – there is something of your own father in you; and he devoted himself to me. He wound up his money-changing and banking, and lived to wait upon me. As I loved my art, so he loved me. Let me look at your hand again, with the ring on. It was your father's ring."

He gave her his hand. As he felt the smaller hand holding his, as he saw nearer to him the face so like his own, his tender nature made him say fervently—

"Mother! take us all into your heart – the living and the dead. Forgive everything that hurts you. Take my affection."

She looked at him admiringly rather than lovingly, then kissed him on the brow, and saying sadly, "I reject nothing, but I have nothing to give," she released his hand and sank back on her cushions. Deronda turned pale; and noticing this, she said—

"It is better so. We must part again soon, and you owe me no duties. I parted with you willingly. When your father died I resolved that I would have no more ties. I was the singer Alcharisi you have heard of: men courted me. Sir Hugo Mallinger was one who wished to marry me.

"One day I asked him, 'Is there a man capable of doing something for love of me, and expecting nothing in return?' He said: 'What is it you want done?' I said, 'Take my boy and bring him up as an Englishman, and never let him know anything about his parents.' You were little more than two years old, and were sitting on his foot. At first he thought I was not serious, but I convinced him. He agreed that it would be for your good. A great singer and actress is a queen, but she gives no royalty to her son.

"I made Sir Hugo the trustee of your fortune. I had a joy in doing it. My father had tyrannized over me – he cared more about a grandson to come than he did about me: I counted as nothing. You were to be such a Jew as he; you were to be what he wanted. But you were my son, and it was my turn to say what you should be. I said you should not know you were a Jew."

"And for months events have been preparing me to be glad that I am a Jew," said Deronda, his opposition roused again. "It would have been better if I had known the truth. I have always been rebelling against the secrecy that looked like shame. It is no shame to have Jewish parents – the shame is to disown it."

"I have no reason to be ashamed," said his mother, with a flash of new anger. "I rid myself of the Jewish gibberish that makes people nudge each other at sight of us. I delivered you from the pelting contempt that pursues Jewish separateness. I am not ashamed that I did it. It was the better for you."

"Then why have you now undone it? Why have you now sent for me to tell me that I am a Jew?" said Deronda, feeling almost bitter.

"Why?" said the Princess, rising quickly and walking across the room. "I can't explain. I don't love my father's religion now any more than I did then. I have not repented. But yet" – here she stood still, her voice subdued – "It is illness, I don't doubt – my mind has gone back. It has come fast. Sometimes I am in an agony of pain – I dare say I shall be to-night. Then it is as if my will forsakes me and leaves me alone in memories, and I can't get away: my pain keeps me there. My childhood – my wedding day – the day of my father's death – there seems to be nothing since. Then a great horror comes over me. I cannot go into the darkness without satisfying my father. I have hidden what was his. I thought once I would burn it, but I have not burned it, I thank God!"

She threw herself on her cushions again, visibly fatigued. Deronda, moved strongly by her suffering, entreated—

“Let us leave the rest till tomorrow.”

“No,” she said decisively. “I will confess it all. Often when I am at ease it fades away; my whole self comes back; but when my strength goes, some other right forces itself upon me like iron in an inexorable hand. Even when I am at ease, it is beginning to make ghosts upon the daylight. And what reproach is there against me,” she added bitterly, “since I have made you glad to be a Jew? Joseph Kalonymos reproached me: he said you had been turned into a proud Englishman, who resented being touched by a Jew. I wish you had!”

“Who is Joseph Kalonymos?” said Deronda, recalling the Jew who touched his arm in the Frankfort synagogue.

“He was my father’s friend. He knew of your birth: he knew of my husband’s death, and twenty years ago, he came to see me and inquire about you. I told him that you were dead. If I had said that you were living, he would have interfered with my plans, and caused trouble. He believed me and begged that I would give up to him the chest that my father had charged me and my husband to deliver to our eldest son. I knew what was in the chest – things that had been dinned in my ears since I had any understanding. Once, after my husband died, I was going to burn it. But it was difficult to burn; and burning a chest and papers looks like a shameful act. So I had kept the chest, and I gave it to Joseph Kalonymos. He went away mournful, saying, ‘If you marry again, and if another grandson is born to him who is departed, I will deliver up the chest to him.’ I bowed in silence. I meant not to marry again.”

She ceased speaking, and looked vaguely before her: her thought was travelling through the years. When she spoke again, it was in a tone of distress.

“But months ago this Kalonymos saw you in the synagogue at Frankfort. He saw you enter the hotel, and he went to ask your name. There was nobody else in the world to whom the name meant anything.”

“Then it is not my real name?” said Deronda.

“Oh, as real as another,” said his mother, indifferently. “The Jews have always been changing their names. My husband was a Charisi; when I came out as a singer, we made it Alcharisi. But there had been an obscure branch of the family who called themselves Deronda, and when I wanted a name for you, I thought of Deronda. Joseph Kalonymos had heard my father speak of the Deronda branch, and the name confirmed his suspicion.

“He found out where I was. He journeyed into Russia to see me; he found me weak and shattered. He raged against me, and said I was going down to the grave clad in falsehood. His words were like lion’s teeth upon me. My father’s threats eat into me with my pain. If I tell everything – what else can be demanded of me? I cannot make myself love the people I have never loved – is it not enough that I lost the life I did love?”

She had leaned forward in pleading, her arms and hands stretched out beseechingly. Deronda’s soul was absorbed in the anguish of compassion. His pity made a flood of forgiveness within him. He knelt by her and took her hand gently, saying,

“Mother, take comfort!”

She did not repulse him now, but let him fold her hands in his. Gradually tears gathered: she pressed her handkerchief against her eyes and then leaned her cheek against his brow, as if she wished that they should not look at each other.

“Is it not possible that I could be near you often and comfort you?” said Deronda.

“No,” she answered, withdrawing her hand. “I have a husband and five children. None of them know of your existence.”

Deronda felt painfully silenced. He rose and stood at a little distance.

“You wonder why I married,” she went on presently. “I meant never to marry again. I meant to be free and to live for my art. I was a queen. But something befell me. I began to sing out of tune. They told me of it. I could not endure the prospect of failure and decline. It was horrible to me.” She shuddered. “It drove me to marry. I made believe that I preferred being the wife of a Russian noble to being the greatest lyric actress of Europe. I acted that part because I felt my greatness sinking away, as I feel my life sinking now. I would not wait till men said, ‘She had better go.’”

Looking at the evening sky, she went on: “I repented. That singing out of tune was only like a fit of illness; it went, and I repented; but it was too late. I could not go back.”

A new haggardness had come in her face. The light was perceptibly fading as she turned to him and said—

“I can bear no more now. I cannot bear to be seen when I am in pain.” She drew forth a pocket-book, and took out a letter. “This is addressed to the banking-house in Mainz, where you are to go for your grandfather’s chest. It is a letter written by Joseph Kalonymos.” Then she said, with effort but more gently than before, “Kneel again, and let me kiss you.”

He obeyed, and she kissed him solemnly on the brow. “You see, I had no life left to love you with,” she said, in a low murmur. “But there is more fortune for you. Sir Hugo kept it in reserve.”

“If you had needed anything I would have worked for you,” said Deronda, conscious of a shutting out forever from long vistas of affectionate imagination.

“I need nothing that man can give me,” said his mother, perusing his features. “But perhaps now I have satisfied my father’s will, your face will come instead of his – your young, loving face.”

“But you will see me again?” said Deronda, anxiously.

“Yes – perhaps. Leave me now.”

## Chapter Fifty-two

Among Deronda's letters the next morning was one from Hans Meyrick, in the small, beautiful handwriting which ran in the Meyrick family.

'MY DEAR DERONDA, I am consoling myself for your absence by finding my advantage in it – shining like Hesperus when Hyperion has departed; sitting with our Hebrew prophet, and making a study of his head, in the hours when he used to be occupied with you – getting credit with him as a learned young Gentile, and agreeing with him in the general principle, that whatever is best is for that reason Jewish. Our prophet is an uncommonly interesting sitter – a better model than Rembrandt had for his Rabbi – and I never come away from him without a new discovery.

'For one thing, it is a constant wonder to me that, with all his fiery feeling for his race and their traditions, he is no strait-laced Jew, spitting after the word Christian. I confess that I have always held lightly by your account of Mordecai; but now I have given ear to him in person, I find him really a sort of philosophical-allegorical-mystical believer, and yet so sharp that any argumentative rattler of peas in a bladder might soon be pricked into silence by him. In fact, his mind seems so broad that I find my own correct opinions lying in it quite commodiously. If I like the look of an opinion, I treat it civilly, without suspicious inquiries. I have quite a friendly feeling toward Mordecai's notion that a whole Christian is three-fourths a Jew, and that from the Alexandrian time downward the most comprehensive minds have been Jewish; for I think of pointing out to Mirah that there is really little difference between me and Maimonides. If Mirah's ways were less distracting, and it were less of a heaven to be in her presence, I must long ago have flung myself at her feet, and requested her to tell me whether she wished me to blow my brains out. My Hope wanders among the orchard blossoms, feels the warm snow falling on it through the sunshine, and is in doubt of nothing; but, catching sight of Certainty in the distance, sees an ugly Janus-faced deity, and turns quickly away.

'But you, with your supreme reasonableness, and self-nullification – you know nothing about Hope, that immortal, delicious maiden, whom fools have called deceitful, as if it were Hope that carried the cup of disappointment, whereas it is her deadly enemy, Certainty. (You observe my new vein of allegory?) Seriously, however, I must be permitted to allege that truth will prevail, that prejudice will melt before it, that no virtuous aspiration will be frustrated – all of which implies that the Jewess I prefer will prefer me.

'I am less convinced that my society makes amends to Mordecai for your absence, but another substitute occasionally comes in the form of Jacob Cohen. It is worth while to catch our prophet's expression when he has that remarkable young man on his knee, and pours forth some Semitic inspiration with a sublime look of melancholy devoutness. Sometimes it occurs to Jacob that Hebrew will be more edifying if he stops his ears with his palms, and imitates the venerable sounds as heard through that muffled medium. When Mordecai gently draws down the little fists, Jacob's features take on an extraordinary activity, as if he was walking through a menagerie and trying to imitate every animal in turn, succeeding best with the owl and the peccary. He looks at me as a second-hand Christian commodity, likely to come down in price; remarking on my disadvantages with a frankness which seems to imply some thoughts of future purchase. He brings sugar-plums to share with Mordecai, filling his own



mouth to rather an embarrassing extent, and watching how Mordecai deals with a smaller supply. It is pretty, though, to see the change in him if Mirah comes in. He turns child suddenly – his age usually strikes one as being near forty. But I wish I did not imagine that Mirah gets a little sadder, and tries to hide it. It is natural enough, of course, while she has to watch the slow death of this brother, whom she worships with such loving devoutness that I am ready to wish myself in his place.

‘For the rest, we are a little merrier than usual. Rex Gascoigne – you remember a head you admired among my sketches, good upper lip – has got some rooms in town not far off, and has had a neat sister (upper lip also good) staying with him the last fortnight. I have introduced them to my mother and the girls, who have found out from Miss Gascoigne that she is cousin to your Vandyke duchess!!! I put the notes of exclamation to mark the surprise that the information at first produced on my feeble understanding. On reflection I discovered that there was not the least ground for surprise, unless I believed that nobody could be anybody’s cousin without my knowing it.

Gascoigne wants me to go down with him to his father’s rectory in August. But I think self-interest will take me to Topping Abbey, for Sir Hugo has invited me to make a picture of his three daughters sitting on a bank – as he says, in the Gainsborough style. He came to my studio the other day and recommended me to apply myself to portraits, meaning, of course that my attempts at the historic and poetic are simply pitiable. But Sir Hugo’s manner of implying that one’s gifts are not of the highest order is so exceedingly good-natured that I begin to feel it an advantage not to be among those poor fellows at the tip-top. And his kindness to me tastes all the better because it comes out of his love for you, old boy. His chat is uncommonly amusing. By the way, he told me that your Vandyke duchess is gone with her husband yachting to the Mediterranean. Shall you by chance have an opportunity of continuing your theological discussion with the fair duchess? (Stage direction. While D. is reading, a profound scorn gathers in his face till at the last word he flings down the letter, grasps his coat-collar in a statuesque attitude and so remains with a look generally tremendous.)

‘One fact I have omitted – that the Klesmers on the eve of their departure have behaved magnificently, shining forth as might be expected from the planets of genius and fortune. Mirah is rich with their oriental gifts.

‘What luck it will be if you come back to the Abbey while I am there! I am going to behave with consummate discretion and win golden opinions. But I shall run up to town now and then, just for a peep into Gan Eden. You see how far I have got in Hebrew lore. If Mirah commanded, I would go to a greater depth. But while her brother’s life lasts I suspect she would not listen to a lover, even one whose “hair is like a flock of goats on Mount Gilead” – and I flatter myself that few heads bear that comparison better than mine. So I stay with my hope among the orchard-blossoms.

‘Your devoted,  
HANS MEYRICK.’

Some months before, this letter from Hans would have irritated Deronda, with its romancing about Mirah. But things had altered since March. Mirah was no longer so critically placed with regard to the Meyricks, and Deronda’s own position had been undergoing a change. The revelation about his birth shed new lights, and influenced his mood toward past and present; hence, what Hans called his hope now seemed to Deronda, not a mischievous unreasonableness, but an unusually persistent bird-dance

of extravagant fancy, and he would have pitied any consequent suffering of his friend's, if he had believed he would suffer. But he thought that Hans Meyrick's nature was not one in which love or disappointment could strike deep roots: it was too restless, too excited by novelty, too theatrical.

"He is playing at love: he is taking the whole affair as a comedy," said Deronda to himself; "he knows very well that there is no chance for him. Just like him – never imagining any objection I could have to his outpourings about Mirah. Poor old Hans! And yet he is affectionate, and active enough in imagining what goes on in other people – but he always imagines it to fit his own inclination."

The news about Gwendolen suggested a disturbing sequel to his own strange parting with her. But there was one sentence in the letter which raised a more immediate anxiety. Hans's suspicion of a hidden sadness in Mirah was not likely to be in his imagination, and Deronda wondered about its cause. Was it some event that had occurred during his absence, or only the growing fear of some event? Was it something in the new position which had been made for her? Or had Mordecai told her of those cherished hopes about Deronda, and had her sensitive nature been hurt by the idea that he had been coerced into friendship – been hurt by the fear that Deronda pitied Mordecai rather than regarding him as an equal? She would be pained to think that Deronda condescended to her brother.

In this last conjecture Deronda was not wrong about how much Mirah valued being treated with equality. Her gratitude to him was all the greater because of the contrast of his behaviour with the treatment she had been used to in her former life. But he was not near the truth in guessing that Mordecai had broken his characteristic reticence. To no soul but Deronda had he yet breathed the story of their relation to each other, or his confidence that his friend was born a Jew.

"Ezra, how is it?" Mirah one day said to him – "I am continually going to speak to Mr. Deronda as if he were a Jew?"

He smiled quietly, and said, "I suppose it is because he treats us as if he were our brother. But he loves not to have his birth dwelt upon."

"He has never lived with his parents, Mr. Hans says," continued Mirah.

"Seek not to know such things from Mr. Hans," said Mordecai, gravely, laying his hand on her curls. "What Daniel Deronda wishes us to know about himself is for him to tell us."

Mirah felt herself rebuked; but to be rebuked in this way by Mordecai made her rather proud.

"I see no one so great as my brother," she said to Mrs. Meyrick one day when she called at the Chelsea house, and found the little mother alone. "It is difficult to think that he belongs to the same world as those people I used to live amongst. They made life seem like a madhouse; but Ezra makes me feel that his life is a great good, though he has suffered so much; not like me, who wanted to die because I had suffered a little. His soul is so full, it is impossible for him to wish for death as I did. I get the same sort of feeling from him as I do from sunlit grass and flowers after the sweet rain has fallen, and everything looks so pure and beautiful."

A note of melancholy in this speech caused Mrs. Meyrick to examine Mirah. She sat opposite her friend in her habitual attitude, feet and hands crossed, in apparent serenity. But Mrs. Meyrick discerned a new look of suppressed suffering in her face.

"Is there any fresh trouble on your mind, my dear?" she said.

Mirah hesitated before she said, "I am too ready to speak of troubles, I think. Perhaps I am too hasty and fearful."

“Oh, my dear, mothers are made to like trouble for their children’s sake. Is it because the singing lessons are so few? Success in these things can’t come all at once.” Mrs. Meyrick did not believe that she was touching the real grief; but a guess that could be corrected would make an easier channel for confidence.

“No, not that,” said Mirah. “I have been a little disappointed because so many ladies said they wanted me to give their daughters lessons, and then I never heard of them again. But perhaps after the holidays I shall teach in some schools. Besides, you know, I am as rich as a princess now, with the hundred pounds that Mrs. Klesmer gave me; and I should never be afraid that Ezra would be in want, because Mr. Deronda said, ‘It is the chief honour of my life that your brother will share anything with me.’”

“But there is some other fear on your mind,” said Mrs. Meyrick. “Have you any more reason for being anxious now than you had a month ago?”

“Yes, I have,” said Mirah. “I have kept it from Ezra. I have not dared to tell him. It is five days ago now. I am quite sure I saw my father.”

Mrs. Meyrick shrank into a smaller space, inwardly pelting that father with her worst epithets.

“The year has changed him,” Mirah went on. “He had already been much altered in the time before I left him. He sometimes used to cry. He was always excited one way or the other. Ezra said that my father had taken to gambling, which makes people easily distressed, and then exalted. And now – it was only a moment that I saw him – his face was more haggard, and his clothes were shabby. He was with a much worse-looking man, and they were hurrying after an omnibus.”

“He did not see you, I hope?”

“No. I was waiting to cross near the Marble Arch. Soon he was on the omnibus and out of sight. It was a dreadful moment. My old life seemed to have come back again, worse than ever. I could not help feeling glad that he was gone without knowing that I was there. And yet it hurt me that I felt so. For where might my father be going? What may become of him? I felt weak – I don’t know how I called a cab. Then I began to think, ‘Ezra must not know.’”

“You are afraid of grieving him?” Mrs. Meyrick asked.

“Yes – and there is something more,” said Mirah, hesitatingly. “I want to tell you; I cannot tell anyone else. I feel shame for my father, and it is strange, but the shame is greatest before Ezra. I told him all about my life, but it hurts to know that those things about my father are in Ezra’s mind. And when the thought haunts me that my father might reappear, what seems to scorch me most is seeing my father shrinking before Ezra. I can’t help thinking that I would rather try to maintain my father in secret, if I could prevent him from meeting my brother.”

“You must not encourage that feeling, Mirah,” said Mrs. Meyrick, hastily. “It would be very dangerous; it would be wrong. You must not have that concealment.”

“But ought I to tell Ezra that I have seen my father?”

“No,” Mrs. Meyrick answered, doubtfully. “I don’t think that is necessary. Your father may go away with the birds: you may never see him again. And then your brother will be spared a useless anxiety. But promise me that if your father finds you, you will let us know. Promise me that solemnly, Mirah.”

Mirah reflected, then put her hands in Mrs. Meyrick’s, saying, “I promise. But shame for my father burns me when I think of his meeting Ezra.” She was silent a moment, and then said, with yearning compassion, “And we are his children – and he was once young – and my mother loved him. Oh! it is cruel.”

Sorrow filled her voice. Mrs. Meyrick, with all her loving insight, did not quite understand her. She could conceive that a mother would have a clinging pity for a reprobate son, but had no patience with Mirah's feeling on behalf of this father, whom she would prefer to see locked up.

This was the only reason that Mirah could have stated for her hidden sadness. Of another reason she could have given no definite account: it was as dim as the sense of an approaching weather-change. Perhaps the first uneasiness was caused by Gwendolen's behaviour on that visit which could have no other motive than the strange questioning about Deronda. The memory of that visit made Mirah aware of Deronda's relations with a society which she glimpsed frequently without belonging to it. Her peculiar life and education had produced in her an extraordinary mixture of unworldliness and knowledge of the world's evil, which was supplemented by her theatrical study.

Some of that imaginative knowledge began now to weave itself around Mrs. Grandcourt; and though Mirah would allow nothing to affect her reverence for Deronda, she could not avoid a new, painfully vivid association of his life with a different world, where he might become involved with a woman like Gwendolen, who was increasingly repugnant to her. If she had felt any unease that Deronda's deepest care might not be for her, nor even for her brother, she would have rebuked herself by telling herself that she was only one person who had shared his kindness; and his attachment to Mordecai would be short, and surely others would follow.

But her uneasiness had not reached that point of self-recognition in which she thought of him as her possible lover. That had never entered her mind. Likewise, Mrs. Meyrick and the girls were so impressed by his mission as her deliverer that they would have held it an offence for him to have any other relation toward her. But Mirah's disturbance was owing precisely to this innocence of the Meyricks. The first occasion could hardly have been more trivial, but it prepared her for what happened afterward.

It was when Anna Gascoigne, visiting the Meyricks, was led to speak of Gwendolen. The visit had been arranged so that Anna might see Mirah; the three girls were at home with their mother, and there was naturally much talk among six feminine creatures. Anna Gascoigne felt herself at home with the Meyrick girls, who knew what it was to have a brother, and to be regarded as of minor importance in the world, although they seemed to her alarmingly clever. Mirah had lately come in, and there was a complete bouquet of young faces around the tea-table. Hafiz, seated aloft with large eyes on the alert, regarded the whole scene as an apparatus for supplying his allowance of milk.

"Think of our surprise, Mirah," said Kate. "We were speaking of Mr. Deronda and the Mallingers, and it turns out that Miss Gascoigne knows them."

"I have not seen them," said Anna, a little flushed. "But some months ago, my cousin married Sir Hugo Mallinger's nephew, Mr. Grandcourt, who lived near us."

"There!" exclaimed Mab, clasping her hands. "Mrs. Grandcourt, the Vandyke duchess, is your cousin?"

"Oh, yes; I was her bridesmaid," said Anna. "Her mamma and mine are sisters. My aunt was much richer before last year, but then she and mamma lost all their fortune. Papa is a clergyman, you know, so it makes very little difference to us. But it was very sad for poor Aunt Davilow, who has four daughters besides Gwendolen; but then, when Gwendolen married Mr. Grandcourt, it did not signify so much, because of his being so rich."

“Oh, this finding out relationships is delightful!” said Mab. “It is like a Chinese puzzle. And Mr. Deronda? – have you never seen Mr. Deronda?”

“No,” said Anna; “but I have heard my aunt speaking of him to papa, about him living with Sir Hugo Mallinger, and being so nice. But I remember, when I asked Gwendolen what she thought of Mr. Deronda, she said, ‘Don’t mention it, Anna: but I think his hair is dark.’ That was her droll way of answering. It is really rather wonderful that Mr. Hans should know Rex, and I have the pleasure of knowing you,” Anna ended, with shy grace.

“The pleasure is on our side too; but the wonder would have been, if you had come to this house without hearing of Mr. Deronda – wouldn’t it, Mirah?” said Mrs. Meyrick.

Mirah smiled but said nothing, feeling a confused discontent.

“My son calls Mrs. Grandcourt the Vandyke duchess,” continued Mrs. Meyrick to Anna; “he thinks her so striking.”

“Yes, Gwendolen was always beautiful – people fell dreadfully in love with her. I thought it a pity, because it made them unhappy.”

“And how do you like Mr. Grandcourt?” said Mrs. Meyrick.

“Papa approved of Gwendolen’s accepting him, and my aunt says he is very generous,” said Anna, with a virtuous intention of repressing her own feelings; but then, unable to resist a rare occasion for speaking freely, she went on – “else I should have thought he was not very nice – rather proud, and not lively, like Gwendolen. But, perhaps, having a brother who seems to us better than anyone makes us think worse of others.”

“Wait till you see Mr. Deronda,” said Mab, nodding significantly. “Nobody’s brother will do after him. Who would ever think of his marrying?”

“I have,” said Kate. “When I drew a wedding for a frontispiece, I made a likeness of him for the bridegroom, and I looked for a grand woman who would do for his countess, but I saw none that would match him.”

“You should have seen this Mrs. Grandcourt then,” said Mrs. Meyrick. “Hans says that she and Mr. Deronda set each other off when they are side by side. She is tall and fair. But you know her, Mirah – what do you think of Mrs. Grandcourt?”

“I think she is the Princess of Eboli in *Don Carlos*,” said Mirah, thinking of an association unintelligible to her hearers.

“Your comparison is a riddle, my dear,” said Mrs. Meyrick, smiling.

“You said that Mrs. Grandcourt was tall and fair,” continued Mirah, slightly paler. “That is quite true.”

Mrs. Meyrick’s quick eye and ear detected something unusual, but immediately explained it to herself. “Mrs. Grandcourt had thought of having lessons of Mirah,” she told Anna. “But many have talked of having lessons, and then have found no time. Fashionable ladies have too much work to do.”

And the chat went on without further mention of the Princess of Eboli. That comparison escaped Mirah’s lips under the urgency of a pang unlike anything she had felt before. The conversation had confirmed her secret conviction that this woman had some hold on Deronda’s lot. For a long while afterward she felt as if she had had a jarring shock through her frame.

In the evening, putting her cheek against her brother’s shoulder as she was sitting by him, while he sat propped up under a new difficulty of breathing, she said—

“Ezra, does it ever hurt your love for Mr. Deronda that so much of his life was hidden from you – that he cares for persons so unlike us?”

“Assuredly no,” said Mordecai. “Rather it is a precious thought to me that he has a preparation which I lacked.”

Mirah mused a little. “Still,” she said, “it would try your love for him if he became entangled in that other part of his life, and were carried away from you. How should you bear that?”

“Not well, my sister – but it will never happen,” said Mordecai, with a tender smile.

Mirah said no more. She felt petty compared to her brother. Why could she not be satisfied with what satisfied his larger judgment? She felt a painful sense of unfitness – but in what? One name and one figure had the wandering persistency of a blot in her vision. Here lay the vaguer source of the hidden sadness noted by Hans, some diminution of that ready joy which had come with her new sense of freedom and safety.

She thought herself ungrateful, and threw all the more energy into her singing – the energy of indignation against herself. In that mood she said, “Shall I tell you the difference between you and me, Ezra? You are a spring in the drought, and I am an acorn-cup; the waters of heaven fill me, but the least little shake leaves me empty.”

“Why, what has shaken thee?” said Mordecai.

“Thoughts,” said Mirah; “thoughts that come like the breeze and shake me.”

This was the only voluntary sign she made of her inward care.

## Chapter Fifty-three

On the third morning after his meeting with his mother, Deronda had a note from her saying, "I leave today. Come and see me at once."

He was shown into the same room as before, but darkened with blinds. The Princess presently entered, dressed in a loose wrap of dusky orange silk, with black lace about her head. Her face seemed even more impressive in the sombre light, the eyes larger, the lines more vigorous. You might have imagined her a sorceress.

She kissed Deronda on both cheeks, then seated herself among her cushions, and told Deronda to sit down by her.

"Is there anything more that you would like to ask me?" she said with a queenly air.

"Can I find the house in Genoa where you used to live with my grandfather?" said Deronda.

"No, it is pulled down. But you will find out about our family from the papers in the chest. My father was a physician. My mother was a Morteira. You will find all these things. I was born amongst them without my will. I banished them as soon as I could."

Deronda tried to hide his pained feeling, and said, "Is there anything else you wish to tell me?"

"I think I have told you everything that could be demanded of me," said the Princess coldly. It seemed as if she had exhausted her emotion in their former interview. The fact was, she had said to herself, "I have confessed all. I will not go through it again."

But to Deronda the moment was cruel; it made the filial yearning of his life a disappointed pilgrimage to a ruined shrine. He said, with some tremor in his voice—

"Then are we to part and I never to be anything to you?"

"It is better so," said the Princess, in a softer voice. "There could be nothing but hard duty for you. You would not love me. Don't deny it," she said, abruptly, putting up her hand. "I know the truth. You are angry with me. You think I robbed you of something. You are on your grandfather's side, and you will always condemn me in your heart."

Deronda stood up in silence. But his mother now looked at him with a new admiration in her glance, saying—

"You are wrong to be angry. You are the better for what I did. What shall you do? What difference will it make that I have told you about your birth?"

"A very great difference," said Deronda, emphatically.

"What shall you do then?" said the Princess, more sharply. "Make yourself into a Jew just like your grandfather?"

"That is impossible. The effect of my education can never be done away with," said Deronda. "But it is my duty and my impulse to identify myself, as far as possible, with my hereditary people, and if I can do any work for them that I can give my soul and hand to, I shall do it."

His mother studied him with a wondering speculation, as if she could read a difficult language in his face, while he bore her gaze with firm resolution. She said—

"You are in love with a Jewess."

Deronda coloured. "My reasons would be independent of any such fact."

“I know better. I have seen what men are,” said the Princess. “Tell me the truth. She is a Jewess who will not accept anyone but a Jew. There *are* a few such,” she added, with a touch of scorn.

Deronda remained silent, and she presently said, with rising passion—

“You love her as your father loved me, and she draws you after her as I drew him. But I was leading him the other way. And now your grandfather is getting his revenge.”

“Mother, don’t let us think of it in that way. I admit that there may come some benefit from the education you chose for me. I prefer cherishing the benefit, to dwelling with resentment on the injury. I think it would have been right that I should have been brought up knowing that I was a Jew, but I had a good upbringing. And now, you have restored my inheritance – you have been saved from robbing me of my duty: can you not bring yourself to consent to this?”

His mother slowly shook her head, and he said, more urgently,

“You have told me that you sought what you held the best for me: open your heart and relent toward my grandfather, who sought what he held the best for you.”

“Not for me, no,” she said, shaking her head, and folding her arms tightly. “He never thought of his daughter except as an instrument. Because I had wishes outside his purpose, I was to be put in a frame and tortured. If that is the right law for the world, I will not say that I love it. If my acts were wrong – well, I have told everything. I have done what I could. I have after all been the instrument my father wanted – ‘I desire a grandson who shall have a true Jewish heart.’”

“Were those my grandfather’s words?” said Deronda.

“Yes, yes. I wanted to thwart him,” said the Princess, with a sudden outburst of passion. “You would have me love what I have hated since I was small. But what does it matter? His yoke has been on me, whether I loved it or not. You are the grandson he wanted. You speak as men do – as if you felt yourself wise. What does it all mean?”

Her tone was abrupt and scornful. Deronda, pained, had to remember their relationship, lest his words should become cruel.

“Mother, don’t say that I feel myself wise. I think only the truth can bring us guidance toward duty. Your will was strong, but my grandfather’s trust in you – what you call his yoke – is the expression of something stronger, with deeper roots. You renounced me – you banish me as a son” – there was an involuntary indignation in Deronda’s voice – “but that stronger Something has determined that I shall be the grandson whom you willed to annihilate.”

His mother was watching him fixedly, and again her face gathered admiration.

“Sit down again,” she said, and he obeyed. She laid her hand on his shoulder and went on—

“You rebuke me. You are angry because I banish you. What could you do for me but weary your own patience? Your mother is a shattered woman. You reproach me that I parted with you. I had joy enough without you. Now you are come back to me, and I cannot make you a joy. Have you the cursing spirit of the Jew in you? Are you not able to forgive me? Shall you be glad to think that I am punished?”

“How can you ask me that?” said Deronda, remonstrantly. “Have I not sought to be a son to you? My grief is that you have declared me helpless to comfort you. I would give up much to soothe your anguish.”

“You shall give up nothing,” said his mother, agitated. “You shall be happy. I shall have done you no harm. You have no reason to curse me. You shall pray that I



may be freed from suffering. And I shall see you instead of always seeing your grandfather. If you think *Kaddish* will help me, say it. You will come between me and the dead. When I am in your mind, you will look as you do now – as if you were a tender son – as if I had been a tender mother.”

Her hand trembled on his shoulder. Deep compassion hemmed in his words. Putting his arm around her, he pressed her head tenderly to his. They sat so for some moments. Then she lifted her head and rose from her seat with a sigh.

“Is she beautiful?” she said, abruptly.

“Who?”

“The woman you love.”

He was obliged to say, “Yes.”

“Not ambitious?”

“No, I think not.”

“She is not like that?” said the Princess, taking from her wallet a miniature. It was her own portrait in youth, and as Deronda looked at it with admiring sadness, she said, “Had I not a rightful claim to be more than a mere daughter and mother? The voice and the genius matched the face. Whatever else was wrong, acknowledge that I had a right to be an artist.”

“I do acknowledge that,” said Deronda.

“Will you take the portrait?” said the Princess, more gently. “Teach her to think of me kindly.”

“I shall be grateful for the portrait,” said Deronda, “but I have no assurance that she whom I love will have any love for me. I have kept silence.”

“Who and what is she?”

“She was brought up as a singer for the stage,” he said reluctantly. “Her father took her away early from her mother, and her life has been unhappy. She is only twenty. Her father wished to bring her up in disregard of her Jewish origin, but she has clung with affection to the memory of her mother and her people.”

“Ah, like you. She is attached to the Judaism she knows nothing of,” said the Princess, peremptorily. “Is her singing worth anything?”

“Her singing is exquisite. But her voice is not suited to the stage, and the artist’s life has been made repugnant to her.”

“Why, she is made for you then. Sir Hugo said you were bitterly against being a singer.”

“I repeat,” said Deronda, emphatically, “that I have no assurance of her love for me. Other painful issues lie before me. I have always felt that I should prepare myself to renounce, not cherish that prospect. But whether happiness may come or not, one should prepare one’s self to do without it.”

“Do you feel in that way?” said his mother. “Poor boy! I wonder how it would have been if I had kept you with me – whether we should have quarrelled – your grandfather would have been in you – and you would have hampered my life.”

“I think my affection might have lasted through our quarrelling,” said Deronda, saddened, “and that surely would have enriched your life.”

“Not then, I did not want it then. I might have been glad of it now,” said the mother, with a bitter melancholy.

“But you love your other children, and they love you?” said Deronda, anxiously.

“Oh, yes. But I am not a loving woman. That is the truth. I know what love makes of men and women – it is subjection. I was never willingly subject to any man. Men have been subject to me. For a few years I was happy. What then? It is all over.

Another life! Men talk of ‘another life,’ as if it only began on the other side of the grave. I have long entered on another life.” Her eyes were closed, her voice was smothered: in her dusky flame-coloured garment, she looked like a visitant from some land of the dead.

Deronda was no longer quite master of himself. He gave an audible sob. His mother, opening her eyes, said—

“Good-bye, my son, good-bye. We shall hear no more of each other. Kiss me.”

He clasped his arms round her neck, and they kissed each other.

Deronda did not know how he got out of the room. He felt an older man. All his boyish yearnings about his mother had vanished. He had gone through a tragic experience which must forever solemnize his life.

## Chapter Fifty-four

Gwendolen was now at the height of her entanglement in those fatal meshes which are woven more closely within than without, and make the inward torture far worse than the apparent outward cause.

In taking his wife with him on a yachting expedition, Grandcourt wanted to feel that she was his to do as he liked with, and to make her feel it also. Moreover, he was very fond of yachting: its dreamy do-nothing absolutism, unmolested by social demands, suited his disposition. He had his reasons for carrying Gwendolen out of reach: he suspected a growing spirit of opposition in her, and his feeling about the inclination she betrayed for Deronda was what in another man he would have called jealousy. In himself it seemed merely a resolution to put an end to such foolery.

And Grandcourt might have pleaded that he was perfectly justified in taking care that his wife should fulfil her obligations. Her marriage was a contract where all the apparent advantages were on her side, and it was only right for her husband to hinder her from any unsuitable behaviour. He knew quite well that she had not married him out of love; he had won her by the rank and luxuries he had to give her, and these she had got: he had fulfilled his side of the contract.

And Gwendolen, we know, was thoroughly aware of the situation. She could not excuse herself by saying that that she had meant to rule and have her own way. With all her early indulgence, she was not one of those narrow-brained women who regard all their own selfish demands as rights, and every claim upon themselves as an injury. She had a root of conscience in her, and the process of purgatory had begun: she knew that she had been wrong.

But now enter into the soul of this young creature as she found herself, with the blue Mediterranean dividing her from the world, on the tiny plank-island of a yacht, the domain of the husband to whom she had sold herself, and had been paid the strict price: the husband to whom she had sold her truth and justice, so that he held them throttled into silence, collared and dragged behind him, without remonstrance.

What had she to complain of? The yacht was of the prettiest; the cabin fitted up to perfection, smelling of cedar, soft-cushioned, hung with silk, expanded with mirrors; the crew such as suited an elegant toy; and Mr. Lush was not there, for he had returned to England. Moreover, Gwendolen liked the sea: it did not make her ill; and to observe the rigging of the vessel and forecast its adjustments was a sort of amusement that might have gratified her enjoyment of imaginary rule; the weather was fine, and they were coasting southward, where one may float between blue and blue in an open-eyed dream that the world has done with sorrow.

But what can still that hunger of the heart which sickens the eye for beauty, and makes sweet-scented ease an oppression? What sort of paradise would quiet the terrible fury of repulsion, which, like a torture, concentrates the mind in poisonous misery? While Gwendolen, throned on her cushions at evening, and beholding the glory of sea and sky softening as if with boundless love around her, was hoping that Grandcourt in his march up and down was not going to pause near her or speak to her, some woman living in poverty, under a smoky sky, was listening for the music of a footstep that would remove all risk from her foretaste of joy.

Had Grandcourt the least conception of what was going on in his wife's mind? He conceived that she did not love him; but was that necessary? She was under his power. But he did not understand that she could have any special repulsion for him

personally. How could she? He himself knew what personal repulsion was – nobody better; his mind was much furnished with a sense of what brutes his fellow-creatures were, what odious familiarities they had, what smirks, what foolish modes of flourishing their handkerchiefs. In this critical view of mankind there was an affinity between him and Gwendolen before their marriage, and she was attracted by the refined negations he presented to her. Hence he understood her repulsion for Lush.

But how was he to understand her present repulsion for Henleigh Grandcourt? He had all his life had reason to take a flattering view of his own attractiveness to women of taste. He had no idea of moral repulsion, and could not have believed that there may be a disgust which will gradually make beauty more detestable than ugliness, through exasperation at that outward advantage in which hateful things can affect superiority.

How, then, could Grandcourt divine what was going on in Gwendolen's breast?

For their behaviour to each other scandalized no observer: the staff and crew regarded them as a model couple in high life. Their companionship consisted chiefly in a well-bred silence. Grandcourt had no humorous observations at which Gwendolen could refuse to smile. He was perfectly polite in arranging a garment over her when needful, and in handing her any object that he perceived her to need, and she could not fall into the vulgarity of rejecting such politeness rudely.

Grandcourt put up his telescope and said, "There's a plantation of sugar-canes there; should you like to look?"

Gwendolen said, "Yes, please," remembering that she must try and interest herself in sugar-canes as something outside her personal affairs. Then Grandcourt would walk up and down and smoke, pausing occasionally to point out a sail on the horizon, and at last would seat himself and look at Gwendolen with his narrow immovable gaze, as if she were part of the yacht; while she was exerting her ingenuity not to meet his eyes.

At dinner he would remark that the fruit was getting stale, and they must put in somewhere for more; or, observing that she did not drink the wine, asked if she would like another kind better. A lady was obliged to respond to these things suitably; and in any case, quarrelling with Grandcourt was impossible; she might as well have made angry remarks to a dangerous serpent ornamentally coiled in her cabin.

Grandcourt had intense satisfaction in leading his wife captive after this fashion; it gave their life on a small scale a royal representation which satisfied his taste for despotism.

To Gwendolen, the medium that now thrust itself everywhere before her view was this husband and her relation to him. The beings closest to us, whether in love or hate, are often our interpreters of the world, and some feather-headed gentleman or lady who barely passes for a human being, with petty standards, low suspicions and loveless boredom, may be acting as a melancholy theory of life in the minds of those who live with them. Gwendolen had that kind of window before her.

Some unhappy wives are soothed by the possibility of becoming mothers; but Gwendolen felt that to desire a child would have meant consenting to the completion of the injury she had been guilty of. She dreaded becoming a mother. It was not the image of a new sweetly-budding life that came as a vision of deliverance: her only gleams of hope came in the form of some possible accident. To dwell on an accident was a refuge from worse temptation.

The embitterment of hatred is often, like devoted love, out of direct relation with any outward causes. Passion finds nourishment within, directs all currents toward

itself, and makes the whole life its tributary. And the intensest form of hatred is that rooted in fear, which compels to silence and leads to an imaginary annihilation of the detested object, like hidden rites of vengeance.

Such rites went on in the secrecy of Gwendolen's mind, with the effect of a struggling terror. Side by side with the dread of her husband had grown the self-dread, which urged her to flee from the images wrought by her pent-up impulse. The vision of her past wrong-doing cast a ghastly illumination over every imagined deed that was a rash effort at freedom.

Moreover, she had learned to see all her acts through the impression they would make on Deronda, and the judgment of her that would be created in his mind. She could not recall one word of flattery or indulgence from him that might weaken his restraining power over her (in this way Deronda's effort over himself was repaid); and amid the dreary uncertainties of her spoiled life, the possible remedies in his mind, and her feeling for him, made her only hope. He seemed to her a terrible-browed angel, from whom she could not think of concealing any deed.

But her vision of what she had to dread took more decidedly than ever the form of some fiercely impulsive deed, committed as in a dream that she would instantaneously wake from to find the effects: to find death under her hands, guilt and terror – a white dead face from which she was forever trying to flee and forever held back. She remembered Deronda's words: they were continually recurring in her thought–

“Turn your fear into a safeguard. Keep your dread fixed on the idea of increasing your remorse. Take your fear as a safeguard, like quickness of hearing, that will warn you of consequences.”

And so it was. In Gwendolen's consciousness temptation and dread met and stared like two pale phantoms, while her fuller self beheld the apparitions and sobbed for deliverance from them.

Inarticulate prayers often swept out from her into the vast silence, unbroken except by her husband's breathing or the splash of the wave; but if ever she thought of help, it took the form of Deronda's presence and words, of his sympathy and direction. It was sometimes after a white-lipped temptation with murdering fingers had made its demon-visit that these best moments of inward crying for rescue would come to her, and she would lie with wide-open eyes in which the rising tears seemed a blessing, and the thought, “I will not mind if I can keep from getting wicked,” seemed an answer to her prayer.

So the days passed, taking them with light breezes about the Balearic Isles, and then to Sardinia, and then persuading them northward toward Corsica. But this peaceful, gentle-wafted existence was becoming a nightmare to Gwendolen.

“How long are we to be yachting?” she ventured to ask one day after they had touched at Ajaccio, and the mere fact of going ashore was a relief.

“What else should we do?” said Grandcourt. “I'm not tired of it. I don't see why we shouldn't stay out any length of time. And where would you go to? I'm sick of foreign places. Would you rather be at Ryelands?”

“Oh, no,” said Gwendolen, indifferently, finding all places alike undescribable as soon as she imagined her husband in them. “I only wondered how long you would like this.”

“I like yachting longer than anything else,” said Grandcourt. “I suppose you are beginning to tire of it. Women are so confoundedly whimsical. They expect everything to give way to them.”

“Oh, dear, no!” said Gwendolen, letting out her scorn in a flute-like tone. “I never expect you to give way.”

She made up her mind to a length of yachting that she could not see beyond; but the next day, after a squall which had made her rather ill for the first time, he said—

“There’s been the devil’s own work in the night. The skipper says we shall have to stay at Genoa for a week while things are set right.”

“Do you mind that?” said Gwendolen, who lay looking very white.

“I should think so. Who wants to be broiling at Genoa?”

“It will be a change,” said Gwendolen, made a little incautious.

“I don’t want any change. The place is intolerable. I shall go out in a boat, and manage it myself for a few hours every day instead of striving in a damnable hotel.”

Gwendolen thought with hope of hours when she would be alone, since Grandcourt would not want to take her in the said boat; and in her exultation at this unlooked-for relief, she had wild fancies of running away as an escape from her worse self.

The fresh expectation revived her energies, and gave her an air of cheerfulness that was noticed by her husband. She watched the sinking of the moon with a vague impression that in this mighty frame of things there might be some preparation of rescue for her. This possibility of hope was like a first return of hunger to the long-languishing patient.

The next morning she woke from dreams of meeting Deronda to find they had cast anchor in the port of Genoa. And an hour or so from that dream she actually met Deronda, on the palatial staircase of the *Italia*, with her husband by her side.

Deronda started in surprise before raising his hat and passing on without further greeting. He was doubtful whether Grandcourt would be civilly inclined to him.

The doubt might have been a disagreeable certainty, for Grandcourt, on this unaccountable appearance of Deronda at Genoa, immediately tried to conceive how there could have been an arrangement between him and Gwendolen. It is true that he quickly saw how difficult it would have been to make such an arrangement, being too cool-headed to believe that Gwendolen had posted a letter to Deronda from Marseilles or Barcelona, advising him to travel to Genoa on the chance of meeting her there – which must have implied a miraculous foreknowledge in her, and in Deronda a bird-like facility in flying about.

For all that, Grandcourt was not disposed to admit that Deronda’s presence was a mere accident. It was a disgusting fact; that was enough; and no doubt she was well pleased. A man out of temper does not wait for proofs before feeling all things to be in a conspiracy against him. Grandcourt felt as if Gwendolen and Deronda conspired against him; and what he took for certain – and in this he guessed the truth – was that Gwendolen was counting on an interview with Deronda whenever her husband’s back was turned.

As he sat taking his coffee at a convenient angle for observing her, he discerned some fresh ease in her movements, some peculiar meaning in her eyes. Certainly her troubles had not marred her beauty. Mrs. Grandcourt was handsomer than Gwendolen Harleth: her inward experience had given new play to her features; her person and air had the nameless something which often makes a woman more interesting after marriage than before, less confident that all things are according to her opinion, and yet with less of deer-like shyness – more fully a human being.

This morning, as she rose from the table, she had no art to conceal her joyous expectation. Just as a terrier may perceive its master’s purpose by the slightest signs,

and scuttle to the door ready to go out, so, in dog fashion, Grandcourt discerned the signs of Gwendolen's intentions.

"A – just ring, please, and order some dinner for us at three," said Grandcourt, as he too rose and stretched his hand toward his hat. "I'm going to send Angus to find a little sailing-boat for us to go out in; one that I can manage, with you at the tiller. It's uncommonly pleasant these fine evenings."

Gwendolen turned cold. There was not only the cruel disappointment; there was the immediate conviction that her husband had determined to take her because he would not leave her out of his sight; and probably this dual solitude in a boat was the more attractive to him because it would be wearisome to her.

"I would rather not go in the boat," she said. "Take some one else."

"Very well; if you don't go, I shall not go," said Grandcourt. "We shall stay suffocating here, that's all."

"I can't bear to go in a boat," said Gwendolen, angrily.

"That is a sudden change," said Grandcourt, with a slight sneer. "But, since you decline, we shall stay indoors."

He laid down his hat again, lit a cigar, and walked up and down the room. Gwendolen knew that Grandcourt would not go without her; but if he must tyrannize over her, he should not do it as he chose. She would oblige him to stay in the hotel. Without speaking, she passed into the bedroom and threw herself angrily into a chair, feeling that the wave of evil had rushed back upon her, and dragged her away from her momentary breathing-space.

Presently Grandcourt came in and sat down in front of her, saying, in his drawl–

"Have you come round yet? or do you find it agreeable to be out of temper? You make things uncommonly pleasant for me."

"Why do you want to make them unpleasant for *me*?" said Gwendolen, feeling the hot tears rise.

"Now, what do you have to complain of?" said Grandcourt, using his most inward voice. "Is it that I stay indoors when you stay?"

She could not answer. In her despair and humiliation she began to sob – something she had never done before in her husband's presence.

"I hope this is useful," said Grandcourt, after a moment. "All I can say is, it's most confoundedly unpleasant. What the devil women can see in this kind of thing, I don't know. All I can see is, that we are shut up here when we might be having a pleasant sail."

"Let us go, then," said Gwendolen, impetuously. "Perhaps we shall be drowned." She began to sob again.

This extraordinary behaviour, which had evidently some relation to Deronda, gave more definiteness to Grandcourt's conclusions. He drew his chair close to her, and said, in a low tone, "Just be quiet and listen, will you?"

Gwendolen shrank and ceased to sob. She kept her eyelids down and clasped her hands tightly.

"I know very well what this nonsense means," said Grandcourt. "But if you suppose I am going to let you make a fool of me, just dismiss that notion from your mind. There is disgrace for you, if you like to have it, but as to Deronda, it's quite clear that he hangs back from you."

"It's all false!" said Gwendolen, bitterly. "You don't in the least imagine what is in my mind. You had better leave me at liberty to speak with anyone I like. It will be better for you."

“You will allow me to judge of that,” said Grandcourt.

Gwendolen’s words had so clear and tremendous a meaning for herself that she thought they must have expressed it to Grandcourt, and had no sooner uttered them than she dreaded their effect. But his soul was garrisoned against fears: he had the confidence of domination, and he was perfectly satisfied that he held his wife with bit and bridle. By the time they had been married a year she would cease to be restive. He stood with his air of indifference, till she felt him like an immovable obstruction in her life.

“What decision have you come to?” he said presently.

“Oh, let us go,” said Gwendolen. The walls had begun to be an imprisonment, and while there was breath in this man he would have the mastery over her. It was stupid to resist.

So the boat was ordered. She even went down to the quay with him to see it before midday. Grandcourt had recovered his temper, and had a scornful satisfaction in the attention given to the *milord*, who being an Englishman was naturally at home on the sea. The sort of exultation he had discerned in Gwendolen this morning she now discerned in him; and it was true that he had set his mind on this boating with the gratified impulse of a strong will which had nothing better to exert itself upon. He had remarkable physical courage, and was proud of it. Moreover, he was ruling that Gwendolen should go with him.

And when they came down again at five o’clock, equipped for their boating, beholders admired this handsome, fair-skinned English couple, both of them proud, pale, and calm, without a smile on their faces. The husband’s physique showed very well in his close-fitting dress, and the wife was declared to be like a statue.

Some suggestions were proffered concerning a possible change in the breeze, and the necessary care in putting about, but Grandcourt’s manner made the speakers understand that they were too officious, and that he knew better than they.

Gwendolen was not afraid of any outward dangers – she was afraid of her own wishes which were taking shapes possible and impossible, like a cloud of demon-faces. She was afraid of her own hatred, which under his cold iron touch today had gathered a fierce intensity. As she sat guiding the tiller under her husband’s eyes, doing just what he told her, the strife within her seemed like her own effort to escape from herself.

She clung to the thought of Deronda: he would not go away while she was there – he knew that she needed help. The sense that he was there would save her from doing wrong. And yet quick, quick, came images, plans of evil, like furies preparing the deed that they would straightway avenge.

They were taken out of the port and carried eastward by a gentle breeze. Some clouds tempered the sunlight, and the supreme beauty of evening was approaching. Sails larger and smaller made a cheerful companionship. The grand city shone, and the mountains looked out above it in stillness. Suddenly Gwendolen let her hands fall, and said in a scarcely audible tone, “God help me!”

“What is the matter?” said Grandcourt.

“Oh, nothing,” said Gwendolen, rousing herself and resuming the ropes.

“Don’t you find this pleasant?” said Grandcourt.

“Very.”

“You admit now we couldn’t have done anything better?”

“No – I see nothing better. I think we shall go on always, like the Flying Dutchman,” said Gwendolen wildly.



Grandcourt gave her one of his narrow examining glances, and then said, "If you like, we can go to Spezia in the morning."

"No; I shall like nothing better than this."

"Very well: we'll do the same tomorrow. But we must be turning in soon. I shall put about."

## Chapter Fifty-five

When Deronda met Gwendolen and Grandcourt on the staircase, he was seriously preoccupied. He had just been summoned to the second interview with his mother.

Two hours after his parting from her, the Princess Halm-Eberstein left the hotel, and he might himself have set off to Mainz, to deliver the letter from Joseph Kalonymos, and get possession of the family chest. But indefinite reasons stopped him from departing.

Long after the farewell he was kept passive by a weight of memory. He lived again through the exciting scenes which seemed past only in the sense of preparation for their actual presence in his soul. He allowed himself in solitude to weep over that woman's life so near to his, and yet so remote. He beheld the world changed for him by the ties that altered his hopes and fears and gave him a new sense of fellowship, as if by darkness he had joined the wrong band of wanderers, and found with the rise of morning that the tents of his kindred were far off. He imagined the grandfather who had been moved by the same strong impulses as were now being roused from slumber within himself. And through all this passionate meditation, Mordecai and Mirah were always present.

When the persistent ringing of a bell reminded him of the hour, he thought of looking at the railway timetable, but made no movement. He was drawn to Mainz, and to London and his strong attachments there; but other wishes clung to Genoa, with the force of lingering final farewell. He did not formally say, "I will stay over tonight, because it is Friday, and I should like to go to the evening service at the synagogue where they must all have gone; and besides, I may see the Grandcourts again." But he sat doing nothing at all, thinking of the synagogue and also of Gwendolen. He half admitted that it would be cruel to go away without making some effort, in spite of Grandcourt's dislike, to show his sympathy with her.

In this state of mind he ate his dinner, rose from it quickly to find the synagogue, and in passing the porter asked if Mr. and Mrs. Grandcourt were still in the hotel. The porter told him they were gone out boating.

That information had somehow power enough over Deronda to divide his thoughts with the memories wakened among the keen dark faces of worshippers whose way of praying made him reflect that his grandfather must have been almost as exceptional a Jew as Mordecai. But were not men of ardent zeal and hope everywhere exceptional? They were the creators and feeders of the world – moulding and feeding the more passive life which without them would shrivel into the narrow tenacity of insects, unshaken by thoughts beyond the reach of their antennae.

Some solicitude about Gwendolen caused him to hasten from the synagogue and choose to take his evening walk toward the quay, thinking it possible that he might be in time to see the Grandcourts come in from their boating. In this case, he resolved to greet them deliberately, and ignore any grounds that the husband might have for wishing him elsewhere.

The sun had set behind a bank of cloud, and the waves were agitated by an active breeze. Deronda, sauntering slowly, observed the groups upon the strand watching a sailing-boat which was advancing swiftly landward, being rowed by two men. Amidst the clamorous talk in various languages, Deronda elbowed his way to the foreground to see what was happening.

Telescopes were being used, and loud statements made that the boat held somebody who had been drowned. One said it was the *milord* who had gone out in a sailing boat; another maintained that the prostrate figure he could see was *miladi*; a Frenchman said that *milord* had probably taken his wife out to drown her, according to the national practice – a remark which an English skipper immediately condemned as nonsense. Deronda watched in fear, seeing swift visions of possible events which might have happened – if this woman apparently snatched from the waters were really Mrs. Grandcourt.

But soon there was no doubt: the boat was pulled to land, and he saw Gwendolen half raising herself under her heavy covering of tarpaulin – pale as one of the sheeted dead, shivering, with wet hair streaming and wild amazed eyes, as if she had waked up in a world where some judgment was impending, and the beings she saw around were coming to seize her. The sailors, close about the boat, hindered Deronda from advancing, and he could only look on while Gwendolen, seeming to shrink with terror, was tenderly helped out by the strong arms of those rough, bronzed men, her wet clothes clinging about her limbs. Suddenly her wandering eyes fell on Deronda, standing before her, and as if she had been expecting him, she tried to stretch out her arms, saying–

“It is come, it is come! He is dead!”

“Hush, hush!” said Deronda, in a tone of authority; “quiet yourself.” Then to the men who were assisting her, “I am a connection of this lady’s husband. If you will get her to the *Italia* as quickly as possible, I will undertake everything else.”

He stayed behind to hear the account of one of the boatmen, who told Deronda that her husband had gone down irrecoverably, and his boat was left floating empty. He and his comrade had heard a cry, had come up in time to see the lady jump in after her husband, and had got her out fast enough to save her from much damage.

Deronda then hastened to the hotel to assure himself that the best medical help would be provided; and he telegraphed the event to Sir Hugo and also to Mr. Gascoigne, as the nearest way of getting the information to Gwendolen’s mother. He remembered that in agitated moments, Gwendolen had spoken of her mother’s presence as a possible help, if she could have had it.

## Chapter Fifty-six

Deronda did not take off his clothes that night. Gwendolen, after insisting on seeing him again, had been perfectly quiet, and had only asked him, with a whispering eagerness, to promise to come to her in the morning. Fearing a fever, he told her attendant that he was ready to be called if there were any alarming change of symptoms, making it understood that he was in communication with her friends in England. He felt bound to take care of her – a position which was easy for him to assume, because he was well known to Grandcourt's valet.

When fatigue at last sent Deronda to sleep, his dreams came as a tangled web of yesterday's events, and finally waked him.

Still, it was morning, and there had been no summons – an augury which cheered him while he dressed. On sending enquiries, he learned that Gwendolen had passed a wakeful night, but had shown no violent agitation, and was at last sleeping. He wondered at her strength; for he had an impression that even under the effects of a severe physical shock she was mastering herself with a determination of concealment.

For his own part, he thought that his sensibilities had been blunted by his meetings with his mother: his passionate sympathy was lacking. He had lately been living so keenly in his own world that his cares for Gwendolen were like a revisiting of past scenes, and his response to her was not yet revived.

Meanwhile he got a formal, legal statement from the fishermen who had rescued Gwendolen. Few details came to light. Grandcourt's boat had been found drifting with its sail loose, and had been towed in. The fishermen thought it likely that he had been knocked overboard by the sail while putting about, and that he had not known how to swim; but their attention had been first arrested by his cry of distress, and while they were hastening with their oars, they heard a shriek from the lady, and saw her jump in.

On re-entering the hotel, Deronda was told that Gwendolen had risen, and desired to see him. He was shown into a darkened room, where she was sitting wrapped in a white shawl, her long hair carefully coiled and her little ear-rings still in place. As she stood, he saw a purple line under her eyes. With the expression of one accused and helpless, she looked like the unhappy ghost of that proud Gwendolen Harleth whom he had seen at the gaming table. The sight pierced him with pity, and his sympathy began to revive.

"I beseech you not to stand," he said. She fell back into her chair, and he drew up another chair close by.

She said, in the lowest audible tone, "You know I am a guilty woman?"

Deronda turned paler. "I know nothing."

"He is dead." She uttered this in the same undertone.

"Yes," said Deronda, in suspense and reluctant to speak.

"His face will not be seen above the water again," said Gwendolen, clenching her hands.

"No."

"Only by me – a dead face – I shall never get away from it."

She spoke these words with quiet, desperate self-repression, looking away from Deronda. Was she exaggerating her own part in the event through horror? Was she in a state of delirium, which made her think some concealment was necessary? Deronda, his feelings torn between hope and fear, kept silent. She was bent on confession, and

he dreaded hearing her confess: he wished, and yet rebuked the wish as cowardly, that she could bury her secrets in her own bosom. He was not a priest. But she spoke again, hurriedly—

“You will not say that I ought to tell the world? and be disgraced? I could not bear it. I cannot have my mother know. I must tell you; but you will not say that anyone else should know.”

“I can say nothing in my ignorance,” said Deronda, mournfully, “except that I desire to help you.”

“I told you from the beginning that I was afraid of myself.” There was a piteous pleading in the low murmur. Deronda could not look at her. “I felt hatred like an evil spirit. Every way I could free myself came into my mind; and it got worse. That is why I asked you to come to me in town. I thought then I would tell you, but I could not tell everything. And *he* came in.”

She paused, shuddering; but soon went on.

“I will tell you everything now. Do you think a woman who cried, and prayed, and struggled to be saved from herself, could be a murderess?”

“Great God!” said Deronda, in a deep, shaken voice, “don’t torture me. You have not murdered him. You threw yourself into the water to save him. This death was an accident that you could not have hindered.”

“Don’t be impatient with me.” The childlike beseeching in these words compelled Deronda to look at her face. She went on. “You said you felt for those who had done something wicked and were miserable; you said they might become better. I remembered all you said to me. It came to me at the very last – that was the reason why I – but now, if you turn away and forsake me, what shall I do? Am I worse than I was when you wanted to make me better? All the wrong I have done was in me then – and more – if you had not been patient with me. And now – will you forsake me?”

Her hands, which had been so tightly clenched before, were now trembling on the arm of her chair. Deronda took one of them, and clasped it as if they were going to walk together like two children: it was the only way in which he could answer, “I will not forsake you.” And all the while he felt as if he were putting his name to a blank paper which might be filled up terribly.

That grasp was an entirely new experience to Gwendolen: she had never before had from any man a sign of tenderness which her own being had needed, and she interpreted it as a promise of inexhaustible patience and constancy. This made it possible for her to go on.

“All sorts of contrivances in my mind – I fought against them – I was terrified at them – I saw his dead face” – her voice sank almost to a whisper – “long ago I saw it and I wished him to be dead. And yet it terrified me. I wanted to kill – it was as strong as thirst – and then directly – I felt beforehand I had done something unalterable – that would make me like an evil spirit. And it came – it came.”

She was silent for a moment.

“It had been in my mind when I first spoke to you at the Abbey. I had done something then. It was the only thing I did toward carrying out my thoughts. They remained like dreadful dreams – all but one. I did one act – and I never undid it – when we were at Ryelands. There was something in the cabinet in my boudoir – small and sharp like a long willow leaf in a silver sheath. I locked it in my dressing-case. I was haunted with how I should use it. But I never looked at it again. I dared not unlock the drawer: it had a key, and when we were in the yacht, I dropped the key into the deep water, to deliver myself. After that I began to think how I could open the

drawer without the key: but when I met you in Genoa, I thought I would talk to you and tell you this – everything I could not tell you in town; and then I was forced to go out in the boat.”

A sob rose, and she sank back in her chair. Deronda said, insistently–

“And it has all remained in your imagination. To the last the evil temptation has been resisted?”

There was silence. Tears rolled down her cheeks. She pressed her handkerchief against them and sat upright, summoning her resolution; and began again in a whisper–

“No, no; I will tell you everything as God knows it. I will tell you no falsehood. I used to think I could never be wicked. I thought of wicked people as if they were a long way off from me. Since then I have felt wicked. And everything has been a punishment – all the things I used to wish for – as if they were red-hot. Because I ought not to have married. I wronged some one else. I broke my promise. I wanted to make my gain out of another’s loss – like roulette – and the money burned into me. And I could not complain. I knew I was guilty. When we were on the sea, and I lay awake at night, I sometimes felt that everything I had done lay open without excuse – everything held a punishment for me – everything but you. I thought that you would not want me punished – you would have helped me to be better. And only thinking of that helped me. You will not want to punish me now?”

Again a sob had risen.

“God forbid!” groaned Deronda. But he sat motionless.

This long wandering over her past was difficult to bear, but he dared not again urge her with a question. After an interval she continued.

“That made it so hard when I was forced to go in the boat. Because when I saw you it was an unexpected joy, and I thought I could tell you everything, and then it would have less power over me. I hoped and trusted in that. For after all my struggles and my crying, the hatred and the temptation and the thirst for what I dreaded, always came back. And that disappointment – when I had to go in the boat – brought the evil back. There was no escape. Oh, it seems so long ago now since I stepped into that boat! I could have given up everything in that moment, for lightning to strike him dead.”

She spoke with compressed fierceness. “If he were here again, what should I do? I cannot wish him here – and yet I cannot bear his dead face. I was a coward. I ought to have gone away and wandered like a beggar rather than stay. Sometimes I thought he would kill me if I resisted his will. But now – his dead face is there, and I cannot bear it.”

Suddenly loosing Deronda’s hand, she started up, stretching out her arms, and said with a moan–

“I have been a cruel woman! Die, die – you are forsaken – go down, go down into darkness. Forsaken – I shall be forsaken.”

She sank in her chair again and broke into sobs, forgetting even Deronda’s presence. He was completely unmanned. This young creature’s agony of remorse pierced him with passionate pity. He rose from his seat, impelled to turn his back toward her and walk to a distance.

But presently she was still. When Deronda turned round, he saw her eyes were dilated, her lips parted, in an image of forlorn beseeching – too timid to entreat in words. Was she forsaken by him now, already?

But his eyes met hers sorrowfully, and seemed to say, "I know you are guilty, but I shall not forsake you." He sat down by her side again.

Gwendolen was pierced with compunction, and she said, in a tone of loving regret—

"I make you very unhappy."

Deronda gave an indistinct "Oh." Then, gathering resolution, he said, "There is no question of being happy or unhappy. What I most desire is what will most help you. Tell me all you feel it a relief to tell."

Devoted as these words were, they widened his spiritual distance from her, and made it more difficult for her to speak: she felt an impulse to humble herself before him. But she stayed silent, until her stillness made Deronda say—

"Perhaps you are too weary. Shall I go away, and come again whenever you wish it?"

"No, no," said Gwendolen, the dread of his leaving her bringing back her power of speech. "I want to tell you what came over me in that boat. I was full of rage — and I could do nothing but sit there like a galley slave. And then we went out of the port — into the deep — and everything was still — he only spoke to order me — and the very light about me seemed to hold me prisoner. When I was a child I used to fancy sailing away into a world where there would be nobody I did not like, such as my step-father. And now just the opposite had come to me. I had stepped into a boat, and my life was sailing away into solitude with *him*, away from deliverance. And because I felt more helpless than ever, I had cruel wishes — I fancied impossible ways of — I did not want to die myself; I was afraid of our being drowned together. If it had been any use, I should have prayed that something might befall him; that he might sink out of my sight and leave me alone. I knew no way of killing him there, but I did, I did kill him in my thoughts."

She sank into silence for a minute, submerged by the weight of memory.

"But all the while I felt that I was getting more wicked. And it came to me just then — what you once said — about dreading to increase my wrong-doing and my remorse. It was like a writing of fire within me. Getting wicked was misery — being shut out forever from better lives. I felt despair that it was no use — evil wishes were too strong. I remember then letting go the tiller and saying 'God help me!' But then I was forced to take it again and go on; and the evil prayers came again and blotted out everything else, till, in the midst of them — I don't know how it was — he was turning the sail — there was a gust — he was struck — I know nothing — I only know that I saw my wish outside me."

She began to whisper hurriedly.

"I saw him sink, and my heart gave a leap. I think I did not move. I kept my hands tight. It was long enough for me to be glad, and yet to think he would come up again. And he did come up — farther off — the boat had moved. 'The rope!' he called out, in a voice not his own — I hear it now — and I stooped for the rope — I felt I must — I felt sure he could swim, and he would come back whether or not, and I dreaded him. But he was gone down again, and I had the rope in my hand — no, there he was again — his face above the water — and he cried again — and my heart said, 'Die!' — and he sank; and I felt 'I am wicked, I am lost! — and I had the rope in my hand — I don't know what I thought — I was leaping away from myself — I would have saved him then. I was leaping from my crime, and there it was — close to me as I fell — there was the dead face — dead, dead. It can never be altered. That was what happened. You know it all."

She sank back in her chair, exhausted. Deronda felt the burden on his spirit lighten. The word “guilty” had held possibilities worse than the fact; and Gwendolen’s confession convinced him that there had been throughout a counterbalancing struggle of her better will. It seemed almost certain that her murderous thought had had no outward effect – that, quite apart from it, the death was inevitable. He held it likely that Gwendolen’s remorse aggravated her inward guilt, and that she gave the character of decisive action to what had been an instantaneous desire. But her remorse was the precious sign of a recoverable nature, and the awakening of a new life within her; it marked her off from the criminals whose only regret is failure in securing their evil wish. Deronda could not utter one word to diminish that sacred aversion to her worst self.

All this mingled thought and feeling kept him silent. He did not know how long it was before he turned to look at her, and saw her sunk back with closed eyes, like a lost, weary, storm-beaten white doe. He rose, and she opened her eyes with a slight quivering that seemed like fear.

“You must rest now. Try to sleep. And may I see you again when you have rested? Let us say no more now.”

The tears came, and she could not answer except by a slight movement of the head. Deronda urged her again to rest, and left her.



## Chapter Fifty-seven

In the evening she sent for him again. It was near the hour at which she had been brought in from the sea the evening before. She was seated by the open window gazing fixedly on the sea, looking less shattered than before, though with a deep melancholy in her expression. She did not put out her hand, but said, "How long ago it is! Will you sit near me again a little while?"

He placed himself by her side and waited for her to speak. But she looked toward the window in silence, before crying out imploringly—

"You will not say that anyone else should know?"

"Decidedly not," said Deronda. "There is no action that ought to be taken in consequence. There is no injury that could be righted in that way."

She was so still that she seemed to be holding her breath before she said—

"But if I had not had that murderous will — if I had thrown the rope at once — perhaps it would have hindered death?"

"No — I think not," said Deronda, slowly. "If it were true that he could swim, he must have been seized with cramp. With your quickest effort, it seems impossible that you could have saved him. That momentary hesitation cannot, I think, have altered the course of events. Its effect is confined to you. Our evil wish may breed evil acts, but it may also bring the self-aborrence that stings us into better striving."

"I am saved from robbing others — they will have everything — they will have what they ought to have." Gwendolen spoke as if overcoming reluctance. "There was some one else he ought to have married. And I knew it, and I told her I would not hinder it. And I went away — that was when you first saw me. But then we became poor, and I was tempted. I thought, 'I shall do as I like and make everything right.' I persuaded myself. And it was all different and dreadful. Then came hatred and wicked thoughts. I told you I was afraid of myself. I did what you told me — I tried to make my fear a safeguard. I thought of what would be if I — I felt how I should dread the morning — and yet in the darkness always seeing death. If you did not know how miserable I was, you might — but now it has all been no use. I can care for nothing but saving the rest from knowing — poor mamma, who has never been happy."

There was silence again before she said with a repressed sob— "You think I am wicked. You do not believe that I can become any better — I shall always be wicked—" She broke off, helpless.

Deronda's heart was pierced. He said, "I believe that you may become worthy to lead a life that may be a blessing. No evil dooms us hopelessly except the evil we love, and make no effort to escape from. You *have* made efforts — you will go on making them."

"But you must not forsake me," said Gwendolen, looking at him piteously. "I will bear any penance. I will lead any life you tell me. But you must not forsake me. You must be near. If I could have said everything to you, I should have been different. You will not forsake me?"

"It could never be my impulse to forsake you," said Deronda promptly, with that voice which, like his eyes, had the unintentional effect of making his ready sympathy seem more personal and special than it really was. And he was not free from a foreboding of some such self-committing effect, and of future difficulty. He continued to meet her appealing gaze as he spoke, but it was with the painful consciousness that

his words might seem to carry a promise which would be unfulfilled: he was making an indefinite promise to an indefinite hope. His anxiety made him say—

“I expect Sir Hugo Mallinger to arrive tomorrow night; and I hope that Mrs. Davilow may shortly follow him. Her presence will be a comfort – you will try to save her from unnecessary pain?”

“Yes, I will try. You will not go away?”

“Not till after Sir Hugo has come.”

“But we shall all go to England?”

“As soon as possible,” said Deronda, not wishing to enter into particulars. Gwendolen looked toward the window again with an expression which seemed like a gradual awakening to new thoughts.

“You will always be with Sir Hugo now?” she said presently, looking at him. “You will always live at the Abbey – or at Diplo?”

“I am uncertain where I shall live,” said Deronda, colouring.

She was made aware that she had spoken too rashly, and fell silent. After a little while she began—

“It is impossible to think how my life will go on. I think it would be better for me to be poor and obliged to work.”

“New promptings will come as the days pass. When you are among your friends again, you will discern new duties,” said Deronda. “Make it a task now to get as well and calm as you can, before your mother comes.”

“Ah! I must be changed. I have not looked at myself. If you had met me now, should you have known me for the one you saw at Leubronn?”

“Yes,” said Deronda, mournfully. “I should have seen at once that it was you, and that you had gone through some great sorrow.”

“Don’t wish that you had never seen me; don’t wish that,” said Gwendolen, imploringly, while the tears gathered.

“I should despise myself for wishing it,” said Deronda. “If I took to foolish wishing of that sort, I should wish – not that I had never seen you, but that I had been able to save you from this.”

“You have saved me from worse,” she said. “I should have been worse if it had not been for you.”

“I had better go now,” said Deronda, worn out by the strain of this scene. “Remember to get well and calm before your friends come.”

He rose, and she gave him her hand submissively. But when he had left, she sank on her knees in hysterical crying. The distance between them was too great. She was a banished soul – beholding a possible life which she had sinned herself away from.

She was found in this way, crushed on the floor. Such grief seemed natural in a poor lady whose husband had been drowned in her presence.

## BOOK VIII: FRUIT AND SEED

### Chapter Fifty-eight

Length of time is a very imperfect measure of things; a man may head an expedition that opens new continental pathways, and at the end of a few months come back to find his neighbours grumbling at the same parish grievance as before. If the swiftest thinking has the pace of a greyhound, the slowest must be supposed to move, like the limpet, by an apparent sticking, which after a good while is discerned to be a slight progression. Such differences are manifest in the variable intensity of human experience, from the revolutionary rush of change to the quiet recurrence of the familiar.

Something of this contrast was seen in the year's experience which had turned the brilliant, self-confident Gwendolen Harleth of the Archery Meeting into the crushed penitent impelled to confess her unworthiness; while it had left her family in Pennicote without deeper change than some adjustment of prospects as to reduced income and fewer visits.

The rectory was as pleasant a home as before: the red and pink peonies and hollyhocks had bloomed as well this year as last: the rector maintained his cheerful confidence in the good will of patrons, doing nothing with an eye to promotion except, perhaps, the writing of two ecclesiastical articles, which having no signature, were attributed to some one else, except by the patrons who had a special copy sent them, and these certainly knew the author but did not read the articles. The rector, however, was gratified that the Archdeacon and other authorities had nothing to say against his argument.

Then there was the father's delight in his favourite son, which was a happiness outweighing the loss of eighteen hundred a year. However Rex had been changed by the disappointment of his first love, his serious ambition dated from the family misfortune; indeed, Mr. Gascoigne was inclined to regard the little affair which had caused him so much anxiety as a kind of finish to the baking process which the human dough demands. Rex had lately come for a summer visit to the rectory, bringing Anna home, and while still lively with his brothers and sisters, he rose early in the morning and shut himself up in the evenings to study.

"You don't repent the choice of the law as a profession, Rex?" said his father.

"There is no profession I would choose before it," said Rex. "I should like to end my life as a first-rate judge, and help to draw up a code."

"You have to learn an immense amount of rubbish, I suppose," said the rector.

"I don't see that law-rubbish is worse than any other sort. It is not so bad as the rubbishy literature that people choke their minds with. It doesn't make one so dull. Our wittiest men have often been lawyers. Of course there will be a good deal that is troublesome and drudging. But the great prizes in life can't be won easily."

"Well, my boy, the best augury of a man's success in any line of work is that he thinks it the finest in the world. Brewitt, the blacksmith, said to me the other day that his apprentice had no mind to his trade; 'and yet, sir,' said Brewitt, 'what would a young fellow have if he doesn't like the blacksmithing?'"

The rector cherished a fatherly delight in his son, which he showed in moderation. It was only to his wife that he said: "Rex will be a distinguished man, Nancy, I am sure of it."

This quiet trotting of time at the rectory was shared by Mrs Davilow and her family at the low white house not a mile off, enclosed with evergreens, and known to the villagers as "Jodson's." Mrs. Davilow's delicate face showed only a slight deepening of its mild melancholy, her hair only a few more silver lines; the four girls had bloomed a little from being less in the shade; and the good Jocosa preserved her serviceable neutrality of feeling.

The narrow drawing-room, enlarged by two quaint projecting windows, with lattices wide open on a July afternoon to the scent of roses, made rather a crowded, lively scene. Rex and Anna were added to the usual group of six. Anna had much to tell her cousins of her experience of London, and when she came alone, many questions were asked her about Gwendolen's house in Grosvenor Square, what Gwendolen had said, and what anyone else had said about her. Gwendolen had written to her family to say that Mr. Grandcourt and she were going yachting on the Mediterranean, and again from Marseilles to say that the cabins were very elegant, and that she would probably not send another letter for a while. This movement of Mr. and Mrs. Grandcourt had been mentioned in "the newspaper;" so that altogether this phase of Gwendolen's exalted life made a striking part of the sisters' romantic speculations.

But when Rex was present, the girls never started this fascinating topic. Today there had only been animated descriptions of the Meyricks and their extraordinary Jewish friends. To the sisters, who knew of Jews only from books, these accounts were as alien as the depiction of a strange race in Pliny's Natural History, that could sleep under the shade of its own ears. Bertha had a dim idea that Jews rejected the Old Testament since it proved the New; Miss Merry thought that Mirah and her brother could "never have been properly argued with," and the amiable Alice did not mind what the Jews believed, she was sure she "couldn't bear them." Mrs. Davilow corrected her by saying that the great Jewish families in society were quite what they ought to be, but admitted that the commoner unconverted Jews were objectionable; and Isabel asked whether Mirah talked just as they did.

Rex was amusing himself by playfully exaggerating the notion of each speaker, when the laughter was interrupted by the bringing in of a letter for Mrs. Davilow. A messenger had run with it in great haste from the rectory. It enclosed a telegram, which Mrs. Davilow read in agitated silence, while all eyes were turned anxiously on her. Looking up at last at their troubled faces, with a sob which was half relief that the news was not worse—

"My dears, Mr. Grandcourt—" She paused, and then began again. "Mr. Grandcourt is drowned."

Rex started up as if a missile had been suddenly thrown into the room. Then, gathering some self-command while Mrs. Davilow was reading what the rector had written on the enclosing paper, he said—

"Can I do anything, aunt? Can I carry any word to my father from you?"

"Yes, dear. Tell him I will be ready — he is very good. He says he will go with me to Genoa — he will be here at half-past six. She is safe — Gwendolen is safe — but I am sure she must be very ill. Rex, dear, go and tell your father I will be quite ready. I would not for the world lose another night. I can travel night and day till we get there."

Rex and Anna hurried away through the sunshine which was suddenly solemn to them, without uttering a word to each other: she anxious about any reopening of his

wound, he struggling with a tumult of thoughts that were an offence against his better will. At the rectory gate, he said—

“Nannie, I will leave you to say everything to my father. If he wants me immediately, let me know. I shall stay in the shrubbery for ten minutes.”

Who has been quite free from egoistic imaginings, picturing desirable consequences on his own future based on another’s misfortune or death? This type of temptation sometimes raises an inward shame, a self-distaste that is worse than any other form of unpleasant companionship.

In Rex’s nature the shame was immediate, and overspread like an ugly light all the hurrying images of what might come now that Gwendolen was again free — overspread them, perhaps, the more persistently because every phantom hope was quickly nullified by an obstacle. If formerly, when both their lives were fresh, she had turned from his love with repugnance, what ground was there for supposing that her heart would be more open to him in the future?

These thoughts were like a ringing of opposing chimes that he could not escape. During the last year he had brought himself into a state of calm resolve, and now it seemed that three words had been enough to undo all that difficult work, and cast him back into a hopeless longing, whose untimeliness was repulsive to his better self.

Excuse poor Rex; it was only eighteen months since he had been laid low by an archer who sometimes touches his arrow with a subtle, lingering poison, which affects each nature differently. In Rex’s nature, brief as the hope had been, the passionate stirring had gone deep, and the effect of disappointment was revolutionary; he believed that it had determined the colour of his life. Now, however, it seemed that his inward peace was overturned.

Rex’s love had been of that sudden, penetrating, clinging sort which the ancients knew and sung. To have the consciousness suddenly steeped with another’s personality, which retains its dominance in spite of change and apart from worthiness, is a type of love which the common-minded may call blind animalism, insensible to the higher sway of moral affinity. But when this attaching force is present in a dignified nature that can risk itself safely, it may result in a devotedness not unfit to be called divine.

This sort of passion had nested in the sweet-natured, strong Rex, and he had made up his mind to its companionship, as if it had been an object supremely dear, stricken dumb and helpless. But he had also decided that his life was not to be pauperized because he had had to renounce one sort of joy; rather, he had begun life again with a new counting-up of the treasures that remained to him.

And now, here he was pacing the shrubbery, angry with himself that the sense of irrevocableness in his lot had been shaken by a change of circumstances that could make no change in relation to him. He told himself the truth quite roughly—

“She would never love me; and I could never approach her as a lover in her present position. I am exactly of no consequence at all. She would not have me on any terms, and I would not ask her. It is a meanness to be thinking about it now — no better than lurking about the battle-field to strip the dead. Then why can’t I face the facts, and behave as they demand, instead of leaving my father to suppose that there are matters he can’t speak to me about?”

The last thought sent Rex walking firmly inside and into the study, where he saw his father packing a travelling-desk.

“Can I be of any use, sir?” said Rex, with rallied courage, as his father looked up.

“Yes, my boy; when I’m gone, just see to my letters, and answer where necessary, and send me word of everything, till I come back, whenever that may be.”

“You will hardly be very long, sir, I suppose,” said Rex, beginning to strap a railway rug. “You will perhaps bring my cousin back to England?” He forced himself to speak of Gwendolen for the first time, and the rector noticed this with satisfaction.

“That depends,” he answered, taking the subject as a matter-of-course between them. “Perhaps her mother may stay there with her, and I may come back very soon. This telegram leaves us in ignorance which is rather anxious. But no doubt the arrangements of the will are satisfactory, and I feel confident that Gwendolen will be liberally provided for.”

“It must have been a great shock for her,” said Rex, with resolution. “I suppose he was a devoted husband.”

“No doubt of it,” said the rector. “Few men of his position would have come forward as he did under the circumstances.”

Rex had never seen Grandcourt, and knew nothing of Gwendolen’s flight from her suitor to Leubronn. He only knew that Grandcourt, being in love with her, had made her an offer in the first weeks of her sudden poverty, and had behaved very handsomely in providing for her family. That was all very natural and what Rex himself would have liked to do. Grandcourt had been a lucky fellow, and had had some happiness before he got drowned. Yet Rex wondered much whether Gwendolen had been in love with him, or had only refrained from telling him that she hated being made love to.

## Chapter Fifty-nine

Sir Hugo Mallinger was not so prompt in starting for Genoa as M Gascoigne had been, and Deronda would not depart until he had seen the baronet. Not only Grandcourt's death, but also the late crisis in his own life made him wish to speak with his oldest friend.

So on the fifth evening Deronda waited for Sir Hugo at the station; and while he was looking forward to the sight of the kind, familiar face, he almost smiled, despite his late tragic experience, at the idea of Sir Hugo's pleasure in being now master of his estates, able to leave them to his daughters. We should be churlish creatures if we could have no joy in our fellow-mortals' joy; and it is, happily, possible to feel gratitude even where we discern a mistake that may have injured us, if it was made with an affectionate intention through a life-time of kindly offices.

Deronda felt that Sir Hugo had committed a falsity. But the baronet had probably had no knowledge of the mother's breach of trust, and had assumed that she would prefer her son to be made an English gentleman, since she did not seem to care about parting from him. Daniel's affectionate gratitude toward Sir Hugo made him wish to excuse rather than to blame him; and, with all his keen memory of the painful inward struggle he had gone through in his boyhood, he was aware also that Sir Hugo had had no idea of his distress. Ignorant kindness may have the effect of cruelty; but to be angry with it as if it were direct cruelty would be an ignorant unkindness, remote from Deronda's large imaginative lenience toward others.

And perhaps now, after the last ten days, he was more than ever disposed to avoid that rash resentment which is close to a love of punishment. When he saw Sir Hugo's familiar figure descending from the railway carriage, his life-long affection submerged all ground for blame.

"Well, Dan," said Sir Hugo, grasping Deronda's hand. He uttered no other words of greeting; there was too strong a rush of mutual consciousness. The courier having taken the baggage, they walked slowly to the hotel together.

"I didn't hurry in setting off," Sir Hugo said, "because I wanted to inquire into things, and so I saw your letter to Lady Mallinger before I started. How is the widow?"

"Getting calmer," said Deronda. "She seems to be escaping the illness that one might have feared, after her plunge and terrible excitement. Her uncle and mother came two days ago, and she is being well taken care of."

"Any prospect of an heir being born?"

"From what Mr. Gascoigne said to me, I conclude not."

"It will not be much of a wrench to her affections, I fancy, this loss of the husband?" said Sir Hugo.

"The suddenness of the death has been a great blow to her," said Deronda, quietly evading the question.

"I wonder whether Grandcourt gave her any notion what were the provisions of his will?" said Sir Hugo.

"Do you know what they are, sir?"

"Yes, I do," said the baronet, quickly. "Gad! if there is no prospect of a legitimate heir, he has left everything to a boy he had by a Mrs. Glasher. You know nothing about the affair, I suppose, but she was a sort of wife to him for a good many years, and there are three older girls. The boy is to take his father's name, and he will have

more than enough: and meanwhile my beauty, the young widow, is to put up with a poor two thousand a year and the house at Gadsmere. I'm perfectly disgusted with Grandcourt. I don't know that I'm obliged to think the better of him because he's drowned; though, so far as I'm concerned, nothing in his life became him like the leaving it."

"In my opinion he did wrong when he married this wife, not in leaving his estates to the son," said Deronda, rather dryly.

"I say nothing against his leaving the land to the lad," said Sir Hugo; "but since he had married this girl he ought to have given her a handsome provision. She ought to have had four or five thousand a year and the London house for her life; that's what I should have done for her. Even a wise man generally lets some folly ooze out of him in his will – my father did, I know; and if a fellow has any spite in him, he's likely to bottle up a good deal in that sort of document. It's quite clear Grandcourt meant that his death should put an extinguisher on his wife, if she bore him no heir."

"And, in the other case, I suppose everything would have been reversed?" said Deronda, with some scorn.

"Precisely – Gadsmere and the two thousand. It's queer. One nuisance is that Grandcourt has made me an executor; but seeing he was my nephew, I can't refuse. And I hope to be of use to the widow. Lush thinks she knew about the family under the rose, and the purport of the will. But I fancy you are the man who knew most about what Mrs. Grandcourt felt – eh, Dan?" Sir Hugo did not put this question with his usual jocoseness, but with a tone of inquiry; and Deronda answered gravely–

"She was certainly not happy. They were unsuited to each other. But as to the disposal of the property, I should predict that she will be quite contented with it."

"Then she is not much like the rest of her sex; that's all I can say," said Sir Hugo, with a shrug. "There must be an entanglement between your horoscope and hers – eh? When that tremendous telegram came, the first thing Lady Mallinger said was, 'How strange that it should be Daniel who sends it!' But I have had something of the same sort in my own life. I was once at a foreign hotel where a lady had been left by her husband without money. When I came forward to help her, who should she be but an early flame of mine? But my being there had nothing to do with her, any more than you coming to Genoa had to do with the Grandcourts."

There was silence for a little while. They both wished to overcome a reluctance to perfect frankness on the events surrounding Daniel's parentage. Deronda felt that he ought to wait for the first opening to come from Sir Hugo. At last the baronet turned, and said in a tone of serious feeling–

"And about the main business of your coming to Genoa, Dan? You have not been deeply pained by anything you have learned, I hope? Whatever happens to you must always be important to me."

"Much that I have heard about the past has pained me," answered Deronda. "And it has been painful to meet and part with my mother in her suffering state. But it is no pain to know my parentage. And there will be no change in my gratitude to you, sir, for the fatherly care and affection you have always shown me. But to know that I was born a Jew, may have a momentous influence on my life, which I am hardly able to tell you of at present."

Deronda spoke the last sentence with a resolve that overcame some diffidence; for he was aware of the differences between Sir Hugo's nature and his own. The baronet gave him a quick glance, and walked on. After a few moments' silence, he said–



“I have long expected something remarkable from you, Dan; but, for God’s sake, don’t go into any eccentricities! If a man wants to be taken seriously, he must keep clear of melodrama. Don’t misunderstand me. I am not suspecting you of setting up any lunacy on your own account. I only think you might easily be led arm in arm with a lunatic, especially if he wanted defending. You have a passion for people who are pelted, Dan. I’m sorry for them too; but so far as company goes, it’s a bad ground of selection. However, when you do make up your mind to a course that requires money, I have some sixteen thousand pounds that have been accumulating for you over and above your income. I suppose you want to go back to England as soon as you can?”

“I must go first to Mainz to get a chest of my grandfather’s, and to see a friend of his,” said Deronda. “I lingered after my mother left, instead of setting out immediately. Yet I can’t regret that I was here – else Mrs. Grandcourt would have had none but servants to act for her.”

“Yes, yes,” said Sir Hugo, with a flippancy which was an escape of some vexation; “I hope you are not going to set a dead Jew above a living Christian.”

Deronda coloured, and repressed a retort. They were just turning into the hotel.

## Chapter Sixty

When Deronda presented his letter at the banking-house in Mainz, and asked for Joseph Kalonymos, he was shown into an inner room. There, seated at a table arranging letters, was the white-bearded man whom he had seen the year before in the synagogue at Frankfort. Near him was a packed suitcase with a wrap and overcoat upon it. On seeing Deronda enter, he rose, and looking at him with small penetrating eyes, he said in German—

“Good! It is now you who seek me, young man.”

“Yes; I seek you with gratitude, as a friend of my grandfather’s,” said Deronda, speaking in fluent German.

Kalonymos put out his hand and said cordially, “So you are no longer angry at being something more than an Englishman?”

“On the contrary. I thank you heartily for helping to save me from remaining in ignorance of my parentage, and for taking care of the chest that my grandfather left in trust for me.”

“Sit down, sit down,” said Kalonymos. Laying aside his hat, he examined the young face before him. The presence of his grandfather’s friend affected Deronda deeply; he seemed to be touching the electric chain of his own ancestry, and he bore the scrutiny of Kalonymos with delighted awe. This sensibility of Deronda’s gave his face an expression which seemed very satisfactory to his observer.

Kalonymos said in Hebrew, quoting from a hymn, “As thy goodness has been great to the former generations, even so may it be to the latter.” Then he began, “Young man, I rejoice that you are come in time for me to see the image of my friend as he was in his youth – no longer shrinking in proud wrath from the touch of him who seemed to claim you as a Jew. You come with thankfulness to claim the heritage that wicked contrivance would have robbed you of. You come with a willing soul to declare, ‘I am the grandson of Daniel Charisi.’ Is it not so?”

“Assuredly,” said Deronda. “But let me say that I should never have been inclined to treat a Jew with incivility simply because he was a Jew. I shrank from saying to a stranger, ‘I know nothing of my mother.’”

“A sin, a sin!” said Kalonymos in disgust. “A robbery of our people – but it is frustrated. When Daniel Charisi was a stripling and I was a lad little above his shoulder, we made a solemn vow always to be friends. He said, ‘Let us bind ourselves with duty, as if we were sons of the same mother.’ So we bound ourselves. And though we were much apart in our later life, the bond has never been broken. When he was dead, they sought to rob him; but they could not rob him of me. I rescued that remainder of him which he had prized and preserved for his offspring. I will bring you the chest forthwith.”

Kalonymos left the room, and returned with a clerk who carried the chest and set it down on the floor. It was not very large, but was made heavy by ornamental bracers and handles of gilt iron. The wood was beautifully incised with Arabic lettering.

“So!” said Kalonymos. “Here is the key,” he added, taking it from a small leathern bag. “Bestow it carefully. I trust you are methodical and wary.” He gave Deronda the slightly suspicious look with which age is apt to commit any object to the keeping of youth.

“I shall be more careful of this than of any other property,” said Deronda, smiling and putting the key in his breast-pocket. “I never before possessed anything that was a sign of so much cherished hope and effort. Have you time to tell me more of my grandfather?”

“In an hour and eighteen minutes I start for Trieste,” said Kalonymos, looking at his watch, “I am a wanderer, carrying my shroud with me. But my sons and their children dwell here in wealth and unity. The days are changed for us since Karl the Great fetched my ancestors from Italy to bring some knowledge to our rough German brethren. Our youth fell on evil days; but this we have won; we increase our wealth in safety, and the learning of all Germany is fed by Jewish brains. Have you been left altogether ignorant of your people’s life, young man?”

“No,” said Deronda, “I have lately been led to study their history with interest. It turns out that I have been making myself ready to understand my grandfather.” He was anxious to learn more about his grandfather, and his last sentence answered its purpose.

“You would perhaps have been such a man as he if your education had not hindered it; for you are like him in features:— yet not altogether. He had an iron will in his face. I see none of that in you. Daniel Charisi used to say, ‘Better a wrong will than a wavering; better a false belief than no belief at all.’ What he despised most was indifference.”

“Yet his knowledge was not narrow?” said Deronda.

“Narrow? no,” said Kalonymos. “He drank in learning as easily as the plant sucks up water. But he early took to medicine and theories about life and health. He travelled to many countries, and he was bitterly against our people losing themselves among the Gentiles; ‘It’s no better,’ said he, ‘than the many sorts of grain going back from their variety into sameness.’ He mingled all sorts of learning; and in that he was like our Arabic writers in the golden time. We studied together, but he went beyond me. Though we were bosom friends, we were as different as the inside and outside of the bowl. Charisi thought continually of our people’s future: he went with all his soul into that part of our religion: I, not. If we have freedom, I am content. Our people wandered before they were driven. But Charisi was not satisfied with that, but thought of what would come after. Yet we loved each other, and bound our love with duty; we solemnly pledged to help and defend each other to the last. I have fulfilled my pledge.” Here Kalonymos rose, and Deronda, rising also, said—

“I thank you with my whole soul.”

“Be worthy of him, young man. What is your vocation?” This question embarrassed Deronda, who did not feel it honest to allege his law-reading as a vocation. He answered—

“I cannot say that I have any.”

“Get one, get one. The Jew must be diligent. You will call yourself a Jew and profess the faith of your fathers?” said Kalonymos, looking sharply in his face.

“I shall call myself a Jew,” said Deronda, deliberately, becoming slightly paler under those piercing eyes. “But I will not say that I shall profess to believe exactly as my fathers have believed. Our fathers themselves changed the horizon of their belief and learned of other races. I hold that my first duty is to my own people, and if there is anything to be done toward restoring or perfecting their common life, I shall make that my vocation.”

It happened to Deronda at that moment, that the need for speech made an epoch in resolve. By the necessity to answer he found out the truth for himself.

“Ah, you argue and you look forward – you are Daniel Charisi’s grandson,” said Kalonymos, adding a benediction in Hebrew.

With that they parted.

## Chapter Sixty-one

There was another breast besides Rex's, in which the news of Grandcourt's death caused both strong agitation and the effort to repress it.

It was Hans Meyrick's habit to bring the *Times* for his mother. On a Wednesday, he always chose to bring the paper at about the time Mirah finished giving Mab her weekly lesson. But on this particular Wednesday he appeared in the parlour, shaking the *Times* aloft with a crackling which interrupted Mab's singing. Mirah, who had been playing the accompaniment, started up and turned round; and Mab said—

“Oh, Hans! why do you bring a more horrible noise than my singing?”

“What on earth is the wonderful news?” said Mrs. Meyrick, who was the only other person in the room.

“Something from Italy,” said Hans, with a peculiar tone and manner.

“Nothing bad?” said Mrs. Meyrick anxiously, thinking immediately of Deronda; and Mirah's heart had been already clutched by the same thought.

“Not bad for anybody we care about,” said Hans, quickly; “rather uncommonly lucky, I think. I never knew anybody die conveniently before.”

“Oh, Hans!” said Mab, impatiently, “What has happened?”

“Duke Alfonso is drowned, and the Duchess is alive, that's all,” said Hans, putting the paper before Mrs. Meyrick. “But Deronda was at Genoa in the same hotel, and he saw her brought in by the fishermen who had got her out of the water. They saw her jump in after her husband, which was a less judicious action than I should have expected of the Duchess. However, Deronda is a lucky fellow in being there to take care of her.”

Mirah had sunk on the music stool again, with her eyelids down and her hands tightly clasped. Mrs. Meyrick said—

“Poor thing! she must have been fond of her husband to jump in after him.”

“It was a little absence of mind,” said Hans roguishly, throwing himself into a chair. “The Duchess is at liberty now to marry a man with a fine head of hair, and glances that will melt instead of freezing her. And I shall be invited to the wedding.”

Here Mirah started up, and fixing her eyes angrily on Hans, she said, in a deeply-shaken voice of indignation—

“Mr. Hans, you ought not to speak in that way. Why will you say he is lucky – when what is life to one is death to another? How do you know it would be lucky if he loved Mrs. Grandcourt? It might be a great evil to him. She would take him away from my brother. Mr. Deronda would not call that lucky to pierce my brother's heart.”

All three were struck with the sudden transformation. Poor Hans sat transfixed, blushing, and said, nervously—

“I am a fool and a brute, and I withdraw every word.”

But Mirah's anger was not appeased: how could it be? She had burst into indignant speech as creatures in intense pain bite even through their own flesh, by way of making their agony bearable. She said no more, but, seating herself at the piano, pressed the sheet of music before her, as if she thought of beginning to play again.

Both Hans and his mother were silent. It was Mab who spoke, saying, “Mirah is quite right to scold you, Hans. You are always taking Mr. Deronda's name in vain. And it is horrible, joking in that way about his marrying Mrs. Grandcourt. Men's minds must be very black, I think.”

“Quite true, my dear,” said Hans, rising and walking toward the window.

“We had better go on with your lesson, Mab,” said Mirah, in a higher tone than usual. “Will you sing this again, or shall I sing it to you?”

“Oh, please sing it to me,” said Mab, rejoiced to take no more notice of what had happened.

Mirah immediately sang with new fullness and energy. Hans leaned against the mantelpiece, keeping his eyes carefully away from his mother’s. When Mirah had sung her last note, she rose and said, “I must go home now. Ezra expects me.”

She gave her hand silently to Mrs. Meyrick, instead of kissing her as usual. She feared that she had offended Mrs. Meyrick by angrily rebuking Hans; but the little mother sensed this, and drew Mirah’s face to hers, saying soothingly, “God bless you, my dear.”

“Now, Hans,” said Mab, “you are not going to walk home with Mirah. I am sure she would rather not. You are so dreadfully disagreeable to-day.”

“I shall go to take care of her, if she does not forbid me,” said Hans, opening the door.

Mirah said nothing, and when he had closed the door behind them, he walked by her side unforbidden. She had not the courage to begin speaking to him again, and she was pressed upon by a crowd of thoughts thrusting themselves forward.

Hans, on his side, had a mind equally busy. Mirah’s anger had waked in him a new perception, and with it the unpleasant sense that he was a dolt not to have had it before. Suppose Mirah’s heart were entirely preoccupied with Deronda in another character than that of her benefactor? He believed that there was a serious attachment between Deronda and Mrs. Grandcourt; he had pieced together many fragments of observation, which convinced him not only that Mrs. Grandcourt had a passion for Deronda, but also that his austere self-repression concealed love for her.

As for Deronda’s annoyance at his aspiring to love Mirah, Hans took this to be accounted for by her dependent position; for he credited his friend with all possible unselfish anxiety for those whom he could rescue and protect. And Deronda’s insistence that Mirah would never marry one who was not a Jew seemed to exclude himself, since Hans shared the general opinion that Deronda was Sir Hugo’s son.

Thus he felt clear about Deronda’s affections; but now, he had seen a flash of revelation from Mirah – a betrayal of her passionate feeling on this subject which made him melancholy on her account as well as his own – yet on the whole, less melancholy than if he had imagined Deronda’s hopes fixed on her. Hans fluctuated between the contradictory states of feeling wounded because Mirah was wounded, and of being almost obliged to Deronda for loving somebody else. He longed that his speechless companionship should be eloquent in tender sympathy, an admissible form of wooing a bruised heart.

Thus the two went side by side to the door of Mirah’s home, and when Hans said “Good-bye,” with a look of penitence, she said gently, “Will you not come in and see my brother?”

Hans interpreted this as a sign of pardon. He did not understand how Mirah had been taught by her early experience to accept pain with resolution. When they went in together, half his grief was gone, and he was spinning a little romance of how his devotion might make him indispensable to Mirah. This was quite fair, since his friend loved another; and on the question of Judaism Hans felt thoroughly fortified: for in tales and history, Moslem and Jewish damsels were always attracted toward

Christians. And thus his bird-like hope, constructed on the lightest principles, soared again.

They found Mordecai looking singularly happy, holding a letter, his eyes glowing with a quiet triumph which in his emaciated face gave the idea of a conquest over death. Mirah put her arm round his neck, not daring to ask about the letter.

“It is from Daniel Deronda,” said Mordecai. “Brief – only saying that he hopes soon to return. The promise of seeing him again is like the rainbow in the cloud to me,” he continued, looking at Hans; “and to you it must be a gladness.”

While Hans was answering Mirah slipped away to her own room; but not to indulge in any outburst of passion. She merely took off her hat, sat down and pressed her hands against her temples as if her head ached; dashed cold water on her eyes and brow; and then, with deep sighs of relief, put on her slippers and sat still for a couple of minutes, which seemed to her so long that she rose again, and went down to make tea.

Something of the old life had returned. She had been used to remember that she must learn her part, must rehearse, must hide her feelings from her father; and the more painful her life grew, the more she had been used to hide. She had learnt resolute endurance, and today her first violence of feeling had quickly transformed itself into a steady facing of trouble, the well-known companion of her young years. But while she spoke as usual, a close observer might have discerned a difference between this apparent calm, which was the effect of restraint, and the sweet genuine calm of the previous months.

Those who have been indulged by fortune feel a blind incredulous rage at the reversal of their lot, and half believe that their wild cries will alter the course of the storm. Mirah felt no such surprise when familiar Sorrow came back from brief absence, and sat down with her according to the old use. And this habit of expecting trouble rather than joy, inclined her to believe in the probability of an attachment between Deronda and Mrs. Grandcourt, and the certainty that they would marry. There was a tie between him and this woman who belonged to another world than hers.

Well, well – if it could have been deferred so as to make no difference while Ezra was there! She felt instinctively that the relation between Deronda and her brother was incongruous with any close tie to Mrs. Grandcourt. But in the still, quick action of her consciousness, her thoughts soon said distinctly that her repugnance would remain even if Ezra were secured from loss.

“What I have read and sung about, is happening to me – this is the love that makes jealousy;” so impartially Mirah summed up the charge against herself. But what difference could this pain of hers make to anyone? It must remain hidden. What should have been pure gratitude and reverence had sunk into selfish pain; the feeling she had hitherto delighted to pour out in words was degraded into something she was ashamed to betray – an absurd longing that she who had received all and given nothing should be of importance where she was of no importance. It was as if her soul had been steeped in poisonous passion by forgotten dreams in sleep, and now flamed out in this unaccountable misery.

For with her waking reason she had never entertained the thought that Deronda could love her. Her previous vague uneasiness had been easily explained as a general regret that he was only a visitant in her brother’s world, which was so different to his.

But her feeling was no longer vague: the cause of her pain – the image of Mrs. Grandcourt by Deronda’s side – was as sharp as pincers on her flesh. “I could bear

everything that used to be – but this is worse – I used not to have horrible feelings!” said the poor child in a whisper to her pillow. Strange that she should have to pray against any feeling which concerned Deronda! But this conclusion had been reached through an evening spent with Mordecai, whose exaltation in the prospect of seeing his friend made him voice many thoughts aloud to Mirah. One thought especially occupied him.

“Seest thou, Mirah,” he said, “the *Shemah*, wherein we confess the divine Unity, is the chief devotional exercise of the Hebrew; and this made our religion the fundamental religion for the whole world. See, then – the nation which has been scoffed at for its separateness, has given a binding theory to the human race. Now, in complete unity a part possesses the whole as the whole possesses every part: and in this way human life is tending toward the image of the Supreme Unity: for as our life becomes more spiritual, possession becomes more universal, and independent of material contact; so that in a brief day the soul of man may know more fully the good which has been and is to come, than all he could possess in a whole life where he had to follow the creeping paths of the senses. I hold the joy of another’s future within me: a future which these eyes will not see. I love it so, that I can lay down this poor life upon its altar and say: ‘Burn, burn indiscernibly into that which shall be, which is my love and not me.’ Dost thou understand, Mirah?”

“A little,” said Mirah, faintly, “but my mind is too poor to have felt it.”

“And yet,” said Mordecai, rather insistently, “women are specially framed for the love which feels possession in renouncing. Somewhere in the later *Midrash*, I think, is the story of a Jewish maiden who loved a Gentile king so well, that she entered into prison and changed clothes with the woman who was beloved by the king, that she might deliver that woman from death by dying in her stead, and leave the king to be happy in his love which was not for her. This is the surpassing love, that loses self.”

“No, Ezra, no,” said Mirah, with low-toned intensity, “that was not it. She wanted the king when she was dead to know what she had done, and to feel that she was better than the other. It was her strong self, wanting to conquer, that made her die. The Jewish girl must have had jealousy in her heart, and she wanted somehow to have the first place in the king’s mind. That is what she would die for.”

“My sister, thou hast read too many plays. Thou judgest by those, and not by thy own heart, which is like our mother’s.”

Mirah made no answer.



## Chapter Sixty-two

Something which Mirah had lately been watching for now came about.

Turning out of Knightsbridge after singing at a charitable morning concert, she began to feel herself dogged by footsteps that kept pace with her own. She immediately thought of her father, and could no more look round than if she had felt herself tracked by a ghost. She walked on, not quickening her pace – of what use was that? – but certain that the man behind her was her father. Hoping to prevent any unnecessary shock for her brother, she resolved to turn to meet her father before she reached her door. She came to the entrance of the small square where her home lay, but before she could turn she felt him grasping her wrist, and saying, with a persuasive curl of accent, “Mirah!”

She paused without any start; it was the voice she expected. Her face was as grave as if she were looking at her executioner, while his had a propitiating expression. Once a handsome face, it was now sallow and deep-lined, with an impudent suavity. He was lightly made and active, with something youthful about him which made the signs of age seem a disguise. His dress was shabby, and Mirah felt mingled shame and grief, repulsion and pity.

Slowly, with a sad, tremulous voice, she said, “It is you, father.”

“Why did you run away from me, child?” he began with rapid speech which was meant to have a tone of tender remonstrance. “What were you afraid of? I never made you do anything against your will. I broke up your engagement in the Vorstadt because I saw it didn’t suit you, and you repaid me by leaving me. I had made an easier engagement for you: I didn’t tell you, because I wanted to surprise you. And you left me planted there, after I had given up everything for the sake of getting you an education. What father devoted himself to his daughter more than I did? You know how I bore that disappointment in your voice, and made the best of it: and when I had nobody besides you, you chose to leave me. Who else did you owe everything to, if not to me? and where was your feeling in return? For what my daughter cared, I might have died in a ditch.”

Lapidoth stopped short here, not from lack of invention, but because he had reached a pathetic climax, and gave a sudden sob, taking out an old yellow silk handkerchief. He really felt that his daughter had treated him ill – a sort of feeling which is strong in unscrupulous persons. Mirah, despite that sob, answered firmly, though it was the first time she had ever used accusing words to him.

“You know why I left you, father; and I had reason to distrust you, because I felt sure that you had deceived my mother.”

“I never meant to deceive your mother, Mirah,” said Lapidoth, with a voice that struggled against further sobs. “I meant to take you back to her, but then I had word of her death from a particular friend, and I sent him money to pay necessary expenses. To be sure—” Lapidoth had quickly conceived that he must guard against something unlikely, yet possible – “he may have written me lies for the sake of getting money out of me.”

Mirah made no answer; she could not bear to utter the only true one – “I don’t believe one word you say” – and she simply walked on. They might well have caused passers-by to turn to look at them: the figure of Mirah, with her beauty set off by the quiet, careful dress of an English lady, made a strange pendant to this shabby, foreign-looking, eagerly gesticulating man, with his light, jaunty walk.

“You seem to have done well for yourself, Mirah? *You* are in no want, I see,” he said.

“Good friends who found me in distress have helped me to get work,” said Mirah, “I give lessons. I have just been singing at a private concert.” She paused, and then added, with significance, “I have very good friends, who know all about me.”

“And you would be ashamed they should see your father in this plight? No wonder. I came to England with no prospect, but the chance of finding you. It was a mad quest; but a father’s heart is superstitious. I might have done very well, staying abroad: but it’s hard being lonely in the world, when your spirit’s beginning to break. And I thought my little Mirah would repent leaving her father when she came to look back. I’ve had a sharp pinch to work my way. Talents like mine are no use in this country. I’ve been obliged to get pretty low for a shilling already.”

Mirah anxiously imagined her father’s sinking into further degradation, which she was bound to prevent if she could. Before she could answer, he said,

“Where do you live, Mirah?”

“Here, in this square.”

“In lodgings?”

“Yes.”

“Anyone to take care of you?”

“Yes,” said Mirah again, looking full at the keen face – “my brother.”

The father’s eyelids fluttered, and there was a slight movement of the shoulders. But he said, after a brief pause: “Ezra? How did you find him?”

“That would take long to tell. Here we are at the door. My brother would not wish me to close it on you.”

Mirah’s heart had begun to beat faster with the prospect of what was coming in the presence of Ezra; and she had a pang of the sympathetic humiliation and shame – the stabbed heart of reverence – which belongs to a nature intensely filial.

“Stay a minute, *Liebchen*,” said Lapidoth; “what sort of man has Ezra turned out?”

“A good man – a wonderful man,” said Mirah, with slow emphasis, trying to master her agitation. She felt urged to prepare her father for the penetration of himself which awaited him. “But he was very poor when my friends found him. Once – twelve years ago – he was strong and happy, going to the East; and my mother called him back because she had lost me. And he went to her, and took care of her, and worked for her till she died in grief. And Ezra, too, had lost his health and strength. For years he has been getting weaker – always poor, always working – but full of knowledge, and great-minded. All who come near him honour him. To stand before him is like standing before a prophet of God” – Mirah ended with difficulty, her heart throbbing – “falsehoods are no use.”

She had cast down her eyes while she spoke, unable to bear the ignoble look of frustration in his face. But he was quick in invention.

“Mirah, *Liebchen*,” he said, in the old caressing way, “shouldn’t you like me to make myself a little more respectable before my son sees me? If I had a little money, I could fit myself out decently with a good coat, and find work. I should like to be with my children, and forget and forgive. But you have never seen your father look like this before. If you had ten pounds at hand, I could fit myself out by the day after tomorrow.”

Mirah answered –

“I don’t like to deny you what you ask, father; but I have given a promise not to do things for you in secret. It is hard to see you looking needy; but we will bear that for a little while; and then we can pay for new clothes.” Her practical sense made her now see Mrs. Meyrick’s wisdom in exacting a promise from her.

Lapidoth’s good humour gave way a little. He said, with a sneer, “You are a hard and fast young lady – you have been learning useful virtues – promising not to help your father with a pound or two when you dress yourself in silk – your father who gave up the best part of his life to providing for you.”

“I know it seems cruel,” said Mirah, pale, and feeling this a worse moment than when she meant to drown herself. “But, father, it is more cruel to break the promises people trust in. That broke my mother’s heart – it has broken Ezra’s life. You and I must eat this bitterness. Bear it. Come in and be cared for as you are.”

“Tomorrow, then,” said Lapidoth, almost turning away from this trembling daughter, who seemed now to have got the inconvenient world to back her; but he quickly turned again, and said in his appealing tone, “I’m a little cut up with all this, Mirah. If you’ve a little money in your pocket, I suppose it isn’t against your promise to give me a trifle – to buy a cigar with.”

Mirah could not do anything else than put her cold trembling hands in her pocket for her purse and hold it out. Lapidoth grasped it, pressing her fingers, said, “Good-bye, my little girl – tomorrow then!” and left her.

He had not taken many steps before he looked carefully into the purse, found two half-sovereigns and odd silver, and, pasted against the cover, a bit of paper on which Ezra had inscribed, in a beautiful Hebrew character, the name of his mother, the days of her birth, marriage, and death, and the prayer, “May Mirah be delivered from evil.” Mirah liked to have this little inscription on many articles that she used. The father read it, and had a quick vision of his marriage day, and the bright, unblamed young fellow he was at that time; very fond of his beautiful bride Sara – crying when she expected him to cry, and reflecting every phase of her feeling with perfect mimicry.

Lapidoth had travelled a long way from that young self, and remembered this without emotion, like a morsel of food which had no taste to him. Among the things we may gamble away in a lazy selfish life is the capacity for pity, compunction, or unselfish regret – which we may come to long for as one in slow death longs to feel pain, rather than a widening space where consciousness once was.

Mirah’s purse was a handsome one, and Lapidoth found himself considering what it would fetch in addition to the sum it contained, and what prospect there was of his being able to get more from his daughter without submitting to penance under the eyes of that formidable son.

Meanwhile Mirah was overcome by her pain. She found her brother quietly sifting old manuscripts which he meant to give to Deronda, and fell down and clasped his knees, sobbing, and crying, “Ezra, Ezra!”

He did not speak, though he was stricken with alarm. But presently she raised her head, and said brokenly–

“Ezra, my father! our father! He followed me. I wanted him to come in. And he said No, he would not now, but tomorrow. And he begged for money. And I gave him my purse, and he went away.”

Although Mirah’s words expressed all her misery, her brother found them less grievous than his preconceptions, and said gently, “Wait for calm, Mirah, and then tell me all,” laying his hands tenderly on her head. Under this soothing influence, she told him what had happened.

“He will not come tomorrow,” said Mordecai. Neither of them said to the other what they both thought, namely, that he might watch for Mirah and beg from her again.

“Seest thou,” he presently added, “our lot is the lot of Israel. The grief and the glory are mingled as the smoke and the flame. It is because we children have inherited the good that we feel the evil. These things are wedded for us, as our father was wedded to our mother.”

The surroundings were of Brompton, but the voice might have come from a Rabbi. It is said, “God is occupied in making marriages”: whereby are meant all the wondrous combinations of the universe whose issue makes our good and evil.

## Chapter Sixty-three

Imagine the difference in Deronda's state of mind when he left England and when he returned. He had set out for Genoa in total uncertainty of how far his wishes would be encouraged. He came back with the inheritance that he had begun to yearn for: with what was better than freedom – with a bond which he accepted gladly, even if it offered no promise of satisfying a secret passionate longing never yet allowed to grow into a hope.

But now he dared avow to himself his hidden love. Since the hour when he left the house at Chelsea in silence after Mirah's farewell look and words – stirring in him his habitual deep-laid care for womanhood – her hold on his feeling had helped him to be blameless in word and deed under the difficult circumstances we know of. There seemed no likelihood that he could ever woo Mirah; yet she had taken her place in his soul, reducing the power of other fascination and making a difference in it that became deficiency.

The influence had been continually strengthened. Poor Gwendolen's dependence on Deronda tended to rouse in him self-martyring pity rather than love, and his tenderness dwelt on an image in all things unlike Gwendolen. His relation to Mordecai had brought a new nearness to Mirah which was agitating, not less because there was no apparent change in his position toward her; and she had been bound up in his thoughts about his parentage. Deronda had been conscious of this process, but the jealous fire had leaped out at Hans's pretensions, and when his mother accused him of being in love with a Jewess any evasion suddenly seemed an infidelity. His mother had compelled him to an acknowledgment of his love, as Joseph Kalonymos had compelled him to a definite resolve.

This new state of decision acted on Deronda with a force which surprised even himself. There was a release of energy: it was as if he had found an added soul in finding his ancestry, which drew him shoulder to shoulder with men of like inheritance. He wanted to be again with Mordecai, to pour forth instead of restraining his feeling, to admit agreement and maintain dissent, and also to see Mirah without the embarrassment of seeking her, to interpret her looks and words from a new starting-point. He was not greatly alarmed about Hans's attentions, but he had a presentiment that her feelings toward himself did not include love. To astonish a woman by turning into her lover when she has been thinking of you merely as a Lord Chancellor is what a man naturally shrinks from.

What wonder that Deronda went straight from the London railway station to the lodgings in that small square in Brompton? He wished to lose no time, but to deposit the precious chest with Mordecai: and that he should pay this visit without pause would gratify Mordecai's heart. The strongest tendencies of Deronda's nature were rushing in one current – the fervent affection which made him delight in meeting others' wishes, and the imaginative need of some far-reaching relation to make the horizon of his immediate, daily acts. There was an added radiance in his eyes as he entered the house noiselessly, wondering what exactly he should find.

It was the evening of that same day on which Mirah had met her father. Mordecai, penetrated by her grief, and by sad memories, had not resumed his task of sifting papers. They had sat perfectly still together while the light faded. Mirah, unable to think of eating, had not moved, while he had laid his head back, with closed eyes and difficult breathing, looking, Mirah thought, as he would look after death. The thought

that his death might be near continually visited her; and now, to her grief, was added the regret that she had been unable to control her violent outburst. She sat watching him – her cheeks pallid, her eyes brilliant with young tears, her curls in as much disorder as a just-awakened child's – watching that emaciated face. Life at that moment stretched before Mirah with a double bereavement – of one living as well as one dead.

But now the door opened, and a well-known voice said: "Daniel Deronda – may he come in?"

"Come! come!" said Mordecai, immediately rising, apparently unsurprised; while Mirah started up blushing with confused, half-alarmed expectation.

Yet when Deronda entered, the sight of him was like the clearness after rain: no clouds to come could hinder the cherishing beam of that moment. As he held out his right hand to Mirah, he laid his other hand on Mordecai's shoulder, and stood so a moment, uttering no word, but reading their faces, till he said anxiously to Mirah, "Has anything happened? – any trouble?"

"Talk not of trouble now," said Mordecai, saving her from the need to answer. "There is joy in your face."

Mirah thought, "It is for something he cannot tell us." But when they sat down, Deronda said, emphatically–

"That is true. I did not tell you the reason of my journey abroad, Mordecai, but I went to learn my parentage. And you were right. I am a Jew."

The two men clasped hands, while the words passed through Mirah like an electric shock. Deronda went on–

"We have the same people. Our souls have the same vocation. We shall not be separated by life or by death."

Mordecai's whispered answer was uttered in Hebrew. It was the liturgical words which express the religious bond: "Our God and the God of our fathers."

Mirah fell on her knees by her brother's side, and looked at his now illuminated face, which had just before been so deathly. For the moment she thought of the news only through the effect on her brother.

"And it is not only that I am a Jew," Deronda went on, enjoying one of those rare moments when our yearnings and our acts can be one; "but I come of a strain that has ardently maintained the fellowship of our race – a line of Spanish Jews that has borne many students and men of practical power. My grandfather, Daniel Charisi, preserved manuscripts stretching far back, in the hope that they would pass into the hands of his grandson. Now his hope is fulfilled: I possess the chest containing them, and it is down below in this house. I mean to leave it with you, Mordecai, that you may help me to study the manuscripts. Some of them I can read easily enough – those in Spanish and Italian. Others are in Hebrew, and, I think, Arabic; but there seem to be Latin translations. We will study them together."

Deronda ended with that bright smile which seemed a revelation. But when this happy glance rested on Mirah, it acted like a little too much sunshine, and made her change her position. She had knelt, but now she coloured under Deronda's glance, and rose to take her seat again in her usual posture, trying to look as quiet as possible.

Deronda, equally sensitive, imagined that his feeling for her had entered too much into his eyes, and had been repugnant to her. He was afraid that his precious relation to brother and sister would be marred. If Mirah could not love him, advances of love on his part would make her wretched in their inevitable contact.

While such feelings were pulsating quickly in Deronda and Mirah, Mordecai, conscious of nothing but a blessed fulfilment, was speaking—

“Daniel, as I said to you, we know not all the pathways. Has there not been a meeting among them, as of the operations in one soul, where an idea draws the elements toward it, and is fed and glows? For all things are bound together in that Omnipresence which is the habitation of the world. And if it seems that the erring wills of men have helped to prepare you, as Moses was prepared, to serve your people the better, that depends on another order than the law which must guide our footsteps. For a people can be blessed only by having counsellors whose will moves in obedience to the laws of justice and love. For see, now, it was your loving will that made a chief pathway; for, by performing the duties of brotherhood to my sister, and seeking out her brother, your soul has been prepared to receive with gladness this message of the Eternal, ‘behold the multitude of your brethren.’”

“It is quite true that you and Mirah have been my teachers,” said Deronda. “If this revelation had been made to me before I knew you both, I think my mind would have rebelled against it. What I feel now is that my whole being is a consent to the fact. But it has been the accord between your mind and mine which has brought that about.”

As Deronda was speaking, he remembered that first evening in the book-shop, and his struggling aloofness from Mordecai’s prophetic confidence. It was his nature to delight in satisfying to the utmost the eagerly-expectant soul; and he went on with fuller fervour—

“It is through your inspiration that I have discerned what may be my life’s task. It is you who have given shape to what, I believe, was an inherited yearning – the effect of passionate thoughts in many ancestors – thoughts that were intensely present in my grandfather. I have always longed for some ideal task, in which I might feel myself the heart and brain of a multitude – some social captainship, which would come to me as a duty, and not be striven for as a prize. You have raised the image of such a task for me – to bind our race together in spite of heresy. I mean to try what can be done with that union. Failure will not be ignoble, but it would be ignoble for me not to try.”

“Even as my brother,” said Mordecai, falling back in his chair with a look of exultant repose.

To estimate the effect of this ardent outpouring from Deronda we must remember his former reserve, his careful avoidance of encouragement, which gave to this decided pledge of himself a sacramental solemnity. On Mirah the effect was equally strong, though she felt more surprise than her brother at Deronda’s suddenly revealed nearness to them: there seemed to be a breaking of day around her which might show her other facts unlike her forebodings in the darkness.

Mordecai spoke again—

“It has begun already – the marriage of our souls. It waits but the passing away of this body, and then we shall unite in a stricter bond, and what is mine shall be thine. Call nothing mine that I have written, Daniel; for the willing marriage melts soul into soul, and makes thought fuller as the clear waters are made fuller. For I have judged what I have written, and I desire the body that I gave my thought to pass away as this fleshly body will pass; but let the thought be born again from our fuller soul which shall be called yours.”

“You must not ask me to promise that,” said Deronda, smiling. “I must be convinced first of special reasons for it in the writings themselves. And I am too backward a pupil yet. I think our duty is faithful tradition where we can attain it.

Don't ask me to deny my spiritual parentage, when I am finding the clue of my life in the recognition of natural parentage."

"I will ask for no promise till you see the reason," said Mordecai. "But for years my hope has been, not that the imperfect image of my thought should live, but that my vision and passion should enter into yours; for he whom I longed for afar, was he not you whom I discerned when you came near? Nevertheless, you shall judge. For my soul is satisfied."

"I will relate the whole story of my journey at some time," said Deronda. "But now tell me how the time has passed since I went away. I am sure there has been some trouble. Mirah has been in distress about something."

He looked at Mirah, but she immediately turned to her brother. She hoped he would not think it necessary to tell Deronda about her father this evening. Just when Deronda had brought himself so near, it hurt her that he should hear of this disgrace clinging about them. She rose to take up her cloak, meaning to go to her own room: perhaps they would speak more easily when she had left them. But meanwhile Mordecai said—

"To-day there has been a grief. A duty which seemed to have gone far into the distance, has come back and raised a dread that we must submit to. But let us defer speaking of it, as if this evening were the beginning of the festival in which we must offer the fruits of our joy, and mingle no mourning with them."

Deronda guessed the hinted grief, and asked no more. Rising as he saw Mirah rise, he said, "Are you going? I must leave as soon as I have delivered the key to Mordecai — no, Ezra — may I call him Ezra now?"

"Please do," said Mirah, faintly, feeling a new timidity under Deronda's glance. Was there really something different about him, or was the difference only in her feeling? The various emotions of the last few hours had exhausted her; she was faint with fatigue and want of food. Deronda, observing her pallor and tremulousness, longed to show more feeling, but dared not. She put out her hand with an effort to smile, and then he opened the door for her. That was all.

A man of refined pride shrinks from making a lover's approaches to a woman whose wealth or rank might make them appear presumptuous; but Deronda was finding a more delicate difficulty in a position which, superficially, was the reverse of that — though to a reverential love, the loved woman has always a kind of rank which makes a man keenly susceptible about the appearance of his addresses.

Deronda was affected peculiarly because of his imaginative sympathy with her mind. Mirah, he knew, felt bound to him by deep obligations, which might seem to her to give every wish of his the aspect of a claim; and an inability to fulfil it would cause her a pain continually revived by their inevitable meetings in care of Ezra. Here were fears not of pride only, but of extreme tenderness. Altogether, his character as a benefactor seemed to Deronda an insurmountable obstacle to confessing himself a lover, unless in some inconceivable way it could be revealed to him that Mirah already loved him.

As for Mirah, her former suspicions were thrown out of shape but still present, like an ugly story which had been discredited but not therefore dissipated. All that she knew about Deronda seemed to prove that he had no such fetters upon him as she had begun to believe in. His whole manner as well as his words implied that he had no hidden bonds. But uneasiness still clung about her heart. Deronda was not to blame, but he had an importance for Mrs. Grandcourt which must give her some hold on him.



And the thought of any close confidence between them stirred the little biting snake that had long lain curled and harmless in Mirah's gentle bosom.

But did she this evening feel that any possibility of attachment was as remote as before? Hardly. Something indefinable had happened and made a difference. The soft warm rain of blossoms which had fallen just where she was – did it really come because she was there? What spirit was there among the boughs?

## Chapter Sixty-four

Gwendolen would not consent to remain at Genoa after her mother's arrival. Her desire to get away helped to rally her strength. For that gem of the sea had turned into a place of punishment.

"I shall never like to see the Mediterranean again," she said to her mother, who thought that she quite understood her child's feeling.

Mrs. Davilow, indeed, though compelled formally to regard this time as one of severe calamity, was enjoying her life more than she had ever done since her daughter's marriage. It seemed that her darling was brought back to her not merely with all the old affection, but with a conscious cherishing of her mother's nearness, such as we give to a possession that we have been on the brink of losing.

"Are you there, mamma?" cried Gwendolen, in the middle of the night, as she had in her young girlhood. (A bed had been made for her mother in the same room with hers.)

"Yes, dear; can I do anything for you?"

"No, thank you; only I like so to know you are there. Do you mind my waking you?" (Gwendolen would hardly have asked this in her early girlhood.)

"I was not asleep, darling."

"It seemed not real that you were with me. I wanted to make it real. I can bear things if you are with me. But you must not lie awake and anxious. You must be happy now. You must let me make you happy now at last."

"God bless you, dear; I have the best happiness possible, when you make much of me."

But the next night, hearing that she was sighing and restless, Mrs. Davilow said, "Let me give you your sleeping-draught, Gwendolen."

"No, mamma, thank you; I don't want to sleep."

"It would be good for you to sleep more, my darling."

"Don't say what would be good for me, mamma," Gwendolen answered impetuously. "You don't know what would be good for me. You and my uncle must not contradict me and tell me what would be good for me."

Mrs. Davilow was silent, not wondering that the poor child was irritable. Presently Gwendolen said—

"I was always naughty to you, mamma."

"No, dear."

"Yes, I was," said Gwendolen insistently. "It is because I was always wicked that I am miserable now."

She burst into sobs. The determination to be silent about the facts of her married life reacted in these escapes.

But light was breaking on the mother's mind through the information that came to her from Sir Hugo, through Mr. Gascoigne. The good-natured baronet thought it best to tell the rector the purport of Grandcourt's will, so as to save him the shock that would be in store for him otherwise.

The rector was deeply hurt, and remembered, more vividly than before, how offensively proud and repelling the manners of the deceased had been — remembered also that he himself had received hints of former entangling dissipations. However, he did not express these thoughts, but remarked—

“When a young man makes his will in health, he usually counts on living a long while. Probably Mr. Grandcourt did not believe that this will would ever have its present effect.”

“Well, in point of fact,” said Sir Hugo, in his comfortable way, “since the boy is there, this was really the best alternative for the disposal of the estates. I forgive Grandcourt for that part of his will. But what I don’t forgive him for, is the shabby way he has provided for your niece. I think that she has not been well treated. And I hope you will urge her to rely on me as a friend.”

Thus spake the chivalrous Sir Hugo, in his disgust at the young and beautiful widow of a Mallinger Grandcourt being left with only two thousand a year and a house in a coal-mining district. To the rector that income naturally appeared less shabby; but he had a keener sense of the humiliation cast over his niece, and also over her nearest friends, by the publishing of her husband’s relation to Mrs. Glasher. He felt the unpleasantness of communicating the facts to Mrs. Davilow, who had to tell Gwendolen.

For the good rector had an innocent conviction that his niece was unaware of Mrs. Glasher’s existence. Not so Gwendolen’s mother, who now thought that she saw an explanation of much that had been enigmatic in her child’s conduct, concluding that in some way Gwendolen had been informed of this left-handed marriage and the existence of the children. She trusted that Gwendolen might confide in her during their journey to England, so that she could prepare her for any disappointment. But she was spared from devices on the subject.

“I hope you don’t expect that I am going to be rich and grand, mamma,” said Gwendolen; “perhaps I shall have nothing.”

Mrs. Davilow was startled, but said, after a moment’s reflection—

“Oh yes, dear, you will have something. Sir Hugo says you are to have two thousand a year and the house at Gadsmere.”

“What I have will depend on what I accept,” said Gwendolen. “You and my uncle must not attempt to cross me. I will do everything I can do to make you happy, but in anything about my husband I must not be interfered with. Is eight hundred a year enough for you, mamma?”

“More than enough, dear.” Mrs. Davilow paused, and then said, “Do you know who is to have the rest of the money?”

“Yes,” said Gwendolen, waving her hand in dismissal of the subject. “I know everything. It is all perfectly right, and I wish never to have it mentioned.”

The mother was silent. She did not like to meet her daughter’s eyes, and sat down again under a sad constraint, wondering what wretchedness her child had perhaps gone through. But Gwendolen was watching her mother with that new divination which experience had given her; and said tenderly, “Come and sit nearer, mamma, and don’t be unhappy.” When Mrs. Davilow did so, Gwendolen leaned toward her caressingly and said, “I mean to be very wise; I do, really. And so good to you, dear, old, sweet mamma, you won’t know me. Only you must not cry.”

Gwendolen had resolved to ask Deronda whether she ought to accept any of her husband’s money – whether she might accept enough to provide for her mother. The poor thing felt strong enough to do anything that would give her a higher place in Deronda’s mind.

Sir Hugo kindly invited Gwendolen and Mrs. Davilow to Park Lane, to stay for as long as they needed. No proposal could have suited Gwendolen better. It would be

easy for her there to have an interview with Deronda, if she could only get a letter to him.

During the journey, Sir Hugo ventured to talk to her about her future arrangements. He had become quite fatherly towards her, calling her "my dear," and in mentioning Gadsmere, spoke of what "we" might do to make the best of that property. Gwendolen sat in pale silence while Sir Hugo, addressing Mrs. Davilow or Mr. Gascoigne, conjectured that Mrs. Grandcourt might prefer letting Gadsmere to residing there, in which case he thought that it might be leased to one of the fellows engaged with the coal.

"If one's business lay there, Gadsmere would be a paradise," he said.

"A more important place than Offendene, I suppose?" said Mr. Gascoigne.

"Much," said the baronet, decisively. "The grounds are on a different scale."

"Our poor dear Offendene is empty after all," said Mrs. Davilow. "Mr. Haynes cried off, and no-one has taken it since."

Gwendolen had turned with a changed glance when her mother said this; it was during one of the long unaccountable pauses often experienced in foreign trains at some country station. There was a dreamy, sunny stillness over the fields; and to Gwendolen the talk within the carriage seemed only to make the dreamland larger with an indistinct region of coal-pits, and a purgatorial Gadsmere which she would never visit; then this dozing view dissolved into a vision of Offendene. She saw the grey shoulders of the downs, the cattle-specked fields, the neatly-clipped hedges on the road to Offendene, the avenue, the hall-door opening, and her mother coming out to meet her. All that brief experience of a quiet home which had once seemed dull, now came back to her as a restful escape.

However, Gwendolen gave no outward sign of interest in the conversation. The baronet and the rector were talking about their families. Sir Hugo declared his intention of taking his family to Diplo for a month or two in autumn; and Mr. Gascoigne cordially rejoiced in that prospect. Altogether, the journey was continued with mutual liking between the male fellow-travellers.

Meanwhile Gwendolen sat by like one who had visited the spirit-world and whose experience threw a strange unreality over all worldly talk; and Mrs. Davilow was chiefly occupied in imagining what her daughter was feeling, and in wondering whether she would accept her husband's bequest.

Gwendolen in fact had a purpose shutting off every other resolution. She wanted again to consult Deronda, so that she might secure herself against any act he would disapprove. Would her remorse have maintained its power within her, if it had not been for that conscience which was made for her by Deronda? His influence had begun with what she had felt to be his judgment of her at the gaming-table.

But Gwendolen did not know his address, and her only way of reaching him was through Sir Hugo. She knew the construction that might be put on her seeking out Deronda; but she would not let go of her dependence. When she was in Park Lane and knew that the baronet was about to go down to the Abbey, she said to him without hesitation, while her mother was present—

"Sir Hugo, I wish to see Mr. Deronda again as soon as possible. Will you let him know that I want to see him?"

A quick thought passed across Sir Hugo's face, but he said easily, "Upon my word, I don't know whether he's at his chambers or the Abbey at this moment. But I'll send a note to his chambers, and if he's at the Abbey I can give him your message and send him up. I am sure he will want to obey your wish."

The baronet spoke with grave kindness, as if nothing could seem more appropriate. But he was convinced that Gwendolen had a passionate attachment to Deronda, and thinking that this might lead her into imprudences, he was determined to screen her as far as lay in his power. To him it was a pretty story that this fine creature and his favourite Dan should have turned out to be formed for each other, and that the unsuitable husband should have made his exit in such excellent time. In truth, what most vexed his mind was a doubt whether Dan had not got some scheme or other in his head, which would prove to be dearer to him than the lovely Mrs. Grandcourt, and put that neatly-prepared marriage with her out of the question.

Of course all this thinking on Sir Hugo's part was premature, only a fortnight after Grandcourt's death. But it is the trick of thinking to be either premature or behind-hand.

However, he sent the note to Deronda's chambers, and it found him there.

## Chapter Sixty-five

Deronda did not obey Gwendolen's new summons without some agitation. He felt the danger that her heart might make larger demands on him than he could fulfil; and he knew that Gwendolen's soul clung to his with a passionate need. Deronda felt this woman's destiny hanging on his over a precipice of despair. Inwardly he confessed that if all this had happened a year ago, he would hardly have asked himself whether he loved her; his impulse would have been to save her from sorrow, to shelter her life forevermore from loneliness, and to complete the rescue he had begun in that redemption of the necklace.

But now, love and duty had thrown other bonds around him, and that impulse could no longer determine his life; still, it was present in him as a compassionate yearning, and he pitied her all the more.

He awaited her in the drawing-room where they had sat together at the musical party, when Gwendolen had asked for the first time that he should not forsake her, and her appeal had seemed to melt into the song. But the melody had come from Mirah's dear voice.

Deronda walked about this familiar room with a strange sense of metamorphosis. The objects around him seemed almost to belong to a previous state of existence which he was revisiting in memory only, not in reality; so deep and transforming had been his recent experiences. And he was awaiting the entrance of a young creature whose life had also been undergoing a transformation – a tragic transformation toward a wavering result, in which he felt apprehensively that he was still bound up.

Gwendolen came in, looking changed; not only by her mourning dress, but by a more satisfied quietude of expression than he had seen in her face at Genoa. Her satisfaction was that Deronda was there; but there was no smile between them as they met and clasped hands. She said, "It was good of you to come. Let us sit down." He placed himself opposite her.

"I asked you to come because I want you to tell me what I ought to do," she began. "Don't be afraid of telling me what you think is right, because it seems hard. I have made up my mind to do it. I was afraid once of being poor; that was why I married. I have borne worse things now, and I could bear to be poor, if you think I ought. Do you know about my husband's will?"

"Yes, Sir Hugo told me," said Deronda.

"Ought I to take anything he has left me? I will tell you what I have been thinking," said Gwendolen, with nervous eagerness. "I really did care about my mother when I married. I was selfish, but I did love her; and what comforted me most at first, when I was miserable, was her being better off. The thing that would be hardest to me now would be to see her in poverty again; and I have been thinking that if I took enough to provide for her, and no more, it would not be wrong; for I was very precious to my mother – and he took me from her – and he meant – and if she had known—"

Gwendolen broke off as perilous remembrances swarmed between her words, making her speech more and more tremulous. She looked down helplessly at her hands, now unladen of all rings except her wedding-ring.

"Do not hurt yourself by speaking of that," said Deronda, tenderly. "The case is very simple. I think I can hardly judge wrongly about it." He waited until Gwendolen had courage to lift up her eyes before he continued, "You think that you have forfeited

all claim as a wife. You shrink from taking what was his. You want to keep yourself from profiting by his death. Your feeling even urges you to some self-punishment – some scourging of the self that disobeyed your better will. Do I understand you?”

“Yes – I want to be good,” said Gwendolen. “I will try to bear what you think I ought to bear. I have tried to tell you the worst about myself. What ought I to do?”

“If no one but yourself were concerned in this question of income,” said Deronda, “I should hardly dare to urge you against any remorseful prompting; but I take as a guide now, your feeling about Mrs. Davilow, which seems to me quite just. Your husband’s dues are not nullified by any act you have committed. He voluntarily entered into your life: it was due from him that he should provide for your mother, and he of course understood that if this will took effect she would share the provision he had made for you.”

“She has had eight hundred a year. What I thought of was to take that and leave the rest,” said Gwendolen, who had been inwardly arguing for this so long, that her mind could not at once take another attitude.

“I think it is not your duty to fix a limit in that way,” said Deronda. “You would be making a painful enigma for Mrs. Davilow; an income from which you shut yourself out must be embittered to her. And your own course would become too difficult. We agreed at Genoa that no-one else should know of the burden on your conscience. It is best if you save all others from the pain of that knowledge. In my opinion you ought simply to abide by your husband’s will, and let your remorse decide only on the use that you will make of your money.”

In uttering the last sentence Deronda automatically took up his hat to go. Gwendolen felt her heart giving a great leap, as if it would hinder him from going: she rose from her chair, unable to reflect that the movement was an acceptance of his apparent intention to leave; and Deronda, of course, also rose.

“I will do what you tell me,” said Gwendolen, hurriedly; “but what else shall I do?” No other than these simple words were possible to her; as the child-like sentences fell from her lips they acted on her like a picture of her own helplessness, and she could not check a sob. Deronda, too, felt a crushing pain; but knew the need of the utmost exertion of conscience. He said gently–

“You will probably be soon going with Mrs. Davilow into the country.”

“Yes, in a week or so.” Gwendolen turned her eyes vaguely toward the window. “I want to be kind to them all – they can be happier than I can. Is that the best I can do?”

“I think so. It is a duty that cannot be doubtful,” said Deronda. He paused, feeling a weight of anxiety on all his words. “Other duties will spring from it. Looking at your life as a debt may seem the dreariest view of things at a distance; but it cannot really be so. What makes life dreary is the want of motive: but once beginning to act with that penitential, loving purpose you have in your mind, there will be unexpected satisfaction – there will be new needs – continually carrying you on from day to day. You will find your life growing like a plant.”

Gwendolen turned her eyes on him with the look of one athirst toward the sound of unseen waters. Deronda felt as if she had been stretching her arms toward him from a forsaken shore. He said imploringly–

“This sorrow, which has cut to the root, has come to you while you are young – try to think of it not as a spoiling of your life, but as a preparation for it.” Anyone listening would have thought he was entreating for his own happiness. “See! you have been saved from the worst evils that might have come from your marriage, which you

feel was wrong. You have had a vision of degradation; think that a severe angel, seeing you on the road of error, grasped your wrist and showed you the horror of the life you must avoid. And it has come to you in your spring-time. Think of it as a preparation. You can, you will, be among the best of women, such as make others glad that they were born.”

The words were like the touch of a miraculous hand to Gwendolen. Mingled emotions streamed through her frame with the strength of a new existence. So potent in us is the infused action of another soul, before which we bow in complete love. But the new existence seemed inseparable from Deronda: the hope seemed to make his presence permanent. It was not her thought, that he loved her; it was her spiritual breath. For the first time since that terrible moment on the sea a flush rose and spread over her cheek, brow and neck, deepened an instant or two, and then gradually disappeared. She did not speak.

Deronda put out his hand, saying, “I must not weary you.”

Startled by the sense that he was going, she put her hand in his without speaking.

“You look ill,” he added.

“I can’t sleep much,” she answered, with some return of her dispirited manner.

“Things come back – they will all come back.” She shuddered.

“By degrees they will be less insistent,” said Deronda. He could not drop her hand abruptly.

“Sir Hugo says he shall come to stay at Diplow,” said Gwendolen. “You will come too.”

“Probably,” he said, and then feeling that the word was cold, he added, “Yes, I shall come.” He released her hand, with a final friendly pressure.

“And not again here, before I leave town?” said Gwendolen, with timid sadness.

What could Deronda say? “If I can be of any use – if you wish – certainly I will.”

“I must wish it,” said Gwendolen impetuously; “you know I must wish it. What strength have I? Who else is there?” Again a sob was rising.

Deronda felt and looked miserable as he said, “I will certainly come.”

She perceived the change in his face; but her intense relief could not give way to any other feeling, and there was a recovery of hope and courage in her.

“Don’t be unhappy about me,” she said, in a tone of affectionate assurance. “I shall remember your words. I shall remember what you believe about me; I shall try.”

She looked at him firmly, and put out her hand again, but without a smile. She had never smiled since her husband’s death. She looked like a melancholy statue of the Gwendolen whose laughter had once been so ready when others were grave.

It is only by remembering her life-changing anguish that we can understand her behaviour to Deronda – the unreflecting openness, the pleading, with which she expressed her dependence on him. She did not think about how it would appear to others, any more than if flames had been mounting, and she had flung herself into his arms and clung about his neck that he might carry her into safety.

Is it any wonder that she saw her own need reflected in his feeling? She was in that state of unconscious reliance and expectation which is common when we are preoccupied with our own trouble. We diffuse our feeling over others, and count on their acting from our motives. She had not imagined any future union with Deronda other than the spiritual tie between them; but also she had not envisaged a future separation. Love-making and marriage had no connection with attachment for poor Gwendolen now. Mighty Love had laid his hand upon her; but what had he demanded of her? Acceptance of rebuke – the hard task of self-change – confession – endurance.



If she cried, what then? She cried as the child cries whose little feet have fallen behind – cries to be taken by the hand, lest she should lose herself.

The cry pierced Deronda. He was the only creature who knew the real nature of Gwendolen's trouble: to withdraw himself from her appeal would be to consign her to a dangerous loneliness. He could not cruelly reject her dependence on him; and yet in the distance he saw a coming wrench, which all present strengthening of their bond would make the harder.

He was obliged to risk that. He went again to Park Lane before Gwendolen left; but their interviews were in the presence of Mrs. Davilow, and were therefore less agitating. Gwendolen, since she had determined to accept her income, had decided to move with her mother and sisters to Offendene again, and, as she said, piece back her life unto that time when they first went there, when everything was happiness, only she did not know it. Sir Hugo was going to arrange the letting of Gadsmere for a rent which would more than pay the rent of Offendene.

All this was told to Deronda, who willingly dwelt on a subject that seemed to soothe Gwendolen. Her mind was fixed on his coming to Diplow before the autumn was over; and she never thought of the Lapidoths as likely to make a difference in her destiny. In fact, poor Gwendolen's memory had been stunned, and all outside the lava-lit track of her troubled conscience lay for her in dim forgetfulness.

## Chapter Sixty-six

When the father Lapidoth quitted his daughter at the doorstep, he was ruled by that lure of gambling which left no care for alternative prospects or resolutions. Until he had lost everything, he never considered whether he would apply to Mirah again or whether he would brave his son's presence. In the first moment he had shrunk from encountering Ezra; and the possession of Mirah's purse was enough to banish the thought of future necessities. The gambling appetite is more absolutely dominant than hunger. In its final, imperious stage, it seems the joyless dissipation of demons, seeking diversion amidst the burning rocks of hell.

But every form of selfishness requires the support of at least one meal a day; and though Lapidoth's appetite for food and drink was extremely moderate, he had slipped into a shabby form of life in which he could not eat without some ready money. When, in a brief visit to a gambling-house, he had first doubled and trebled and finally lost Mirah's thirty shillings, he went out with her empty purse in his pocket, wondering whether he should get another stake by pawning the purse, or go back to her, giving himself a good countenance by restoring the purse, and declaring that he had used the money in paying a debt.

Lapidoth felt himself to have a claim on any property his children might possess. After all, to take up his lodging with his children was the best thing he could do; and the more he thought of meeting Ezra the less he winced from it, influenced more by the chances of getting money without exertion, than by the threat of a private humiliation. Luck had been against him lately; he expected it to turn – and might not the turn begin with some supplies from his daughter and the good friends she had spoken of? Lapidoth counted on the fascination of his cleverness: it is not only women who are unaware of their diminished charm, or imagine that they can feign not to be worn out.

The result was that he went toward the little square in Brompton in hope of catching sight of Mirah. It was evening, two days after he had first seen her; and on coming near the house he knew that she was at home: he heard her singing.

Mirah, seated at the piano, was pouring forth "*Herz, mein Herz*," while Ezra was listening, when Mrs. Adam opened the door, and said in some embarrassment,

"A gentleman below says he is your father, miss."

"I will go down to him," said Mirah, starting up immediately.

"No, Mirah, not so," said Ezra, with decision. "Let him come up."

Mirah stood, feeling sick with anxiety. Ezra had also risen, evidently much shaken. But there was a severe expression in his face which she had never seen before.

Mrs Adam brought up Lapidoth. He had put on a melancholy expression, but there was some real wincing in his frame as he said—

"Well, Ezra, my boy, you hardly know me after so many years."

"I know you too well – father," said Ezra, with a slow biting solemnity which made the word father a reproach.

"Ah, you are not pleased with me. I don't wonder at it. When a man gets into straits he can't do just as he would by others. *I've* suffered enough, I know," said Lapidoth glibly; and turning toward Mirah, he said, "Here's your purse, my dear. I thought you'd be anxious about it because of that bit of writing. I've emptied it, for I had a debt to pay for food and lodging. I knew you would like me to clear myself, and

here I stand – without a farthing – at the mercy of my children. You can turn me out if you like. Say the word, Mirah; say, ‘Father, I’ve had enough of you; you made a pet of me, and spent your all on me; but I can do without you now,’ – say that, and I’m gone out like a spark. I shan’t spoil your pleasure again.” The tears were in his voice before he had finished.

“You know I could never say it, father,” answered Mirah, with not the less anguish because she felt the falsity of his speech.

“Mirah, my sister, leave us!” said Ezra, with authority.

She looked at her brother beseechingly – in awe, yet unable to go without making a plea for this father who was like something that had grown painfully in her flesh. Going close to her brother, she said, “Remember, Ezra – you said my mother would not have shut him out.”

“Trust me, and go,” said Ezra.

She left the room, but sat a little way up the stairs, with a palpitating heart.

Lapidoth had some sense of what was being prepared for him in his son’s mind, but he was beginning to adjust himself to a cool superiority. This haggard son, speaking as from a sepulchre, had an incongruous appearance to his selfish levity. Whatever preaching his son might deliver must be taken for a matter of course, as a man finding shelter from hail in an open cathedral might take a little religious howling that happened to be going on there.

Lapidoth was not born with this sort of callousness: he had achieved it.

“This home that we have here,” Ezra began, “is maintained partly by the generosity of a beloved friend, and partly by the labours of my sister. While we have a home we will not shut you out from it. For you are our father, and though you have broken your bond, we acknowledge ours. But I will never trust you. You absconded with money, leaving your debts unpaid; you forsook my mother; you robbed her of her little child and broke her heart; you have become a gambler, and where shame and conscience were there sits an insatiable desire; you were ready to sell my sister – you had sold her, but the price was denied you. The man who has done these things must never expect to be trusted any more. We will share our food with you – you shall have a bed, and clothing, because you are our father. But you will never be trusted. You are an evil man: you made the misery of our mother. That such a man is our father is a painful brand on our flesh. But the Eternal has laid it upon us; and though human justice were to flog you for crimes, and your body fell helpless before public scorn, we would still say, ‘This is our father; make way, that we may carry him out of your sight.’”

Lapidoth, in adjusting himself to what was coming, had not been able to foresee the intensity of the lightning or the exact course it would take – that it would not fall outside his frame but through it. He could not foresee this voice from the soul of his son. It touched his spring of hysterical excitability. He threw himself into a chair and cried like a woman, burying his face – and yet, strangely, while this hysterical crying was a reaction under the stress of his son’s words, it was also a conscious resource in a difficulty; just as in early life, when he was a bright-faced curly-haired young man, he had been used to avail himself of his ready tears to turn the edge of disapproval.

Ezra sat down again and said nothing – exhausted by the outburst of feelings which for years he had borne in silence. His thin hands trembled on the arms of the chair; he felt as if he had taken a step toward beckoning Death. Meanwhile Mirah recognized the sound of weeping, and opened the door. But her immediate alarm was

for Ezra, and it was to his side that she went, taking his trembling hand, which he pressed without looking at her.

The father was conscious that Mirah had entered, and presently lifted up his head, pressed his handkerchief against his eyes, and said with plaintive hoarseness, "Good-bye, Mirah; your father will not trouble you again. He deserves to die like a dog by the roadside, and he will. If your mother had lived, she would have forgiven me, and we should have spent our old age together. But I haven't deserved it. Good-bye."

He rose from the chair. Mirah, frightened and awe-struck, cried out—

"No, father, no!" Then turning to her brother, "Ezra, you have not forbidden him? I cannot bear it. How can I say to my father, 'Go and die!'"

"I have not said it," Ezra answered, with great effort. "I have said, stay and be sheltered."

"Then you will stay, father – and be taken care of – and come with me," said Mirah, drawing him toward the door.

This was really what Lapidoth wanted. And for the moment he felt a sort of comfort in his daughter's care that made a change of habits seem possible. She led him down to the parlour below, and said—

"This is my sitting-room when I am not with Ezra, and there is a bedroom behind which shall be yours. You will stay and be good, father. Think that you are come back to my mother, and that she has forgiven you through me." Mirah's tones were imploring.

Lapidoth quickly recovered his composure, and began to speak to Mirah of the improvement in her voice. When Mrs. Adam came to lay out his supper, he talked to her to show her that he was not a common person, though his clothes were just now against him.

But that night, he fell to wondering what money Mirah had by her, and went back over old times at Roulette, reproducing the method of his play, and the chances that had frustrated it.

These were the stronger visions of the night with Lapidoth, and not the worn frame of his son uttering a terrible judgment. Ezra did pass across the gaming-table, and his words were audible; but he passed like an insubstantial ghost, and his words had the heart eaten out of them by numbers that seemed to make the very tissue of Lapidoth's consciousness.

## Chapter Sixty-seven

It was an unpleasant surprise to Deronda when he returned to find the undesirable father installed in the lodgings at Brompton. Mirah had felt it necessary to speak of Deronda to her father, making him aware of how the friendship with Ezra had begun, but omitting altogether the rescue from drowning, and letting her father suppose that she had met Deronda through the Meyricks. Lapidoth was much interested in the fact of his children having a friend high in the world.

“I am become calm in beholding him now,” Ezra told Deronda, “and I try to think it possible that my sister’s tenderness may keep him from temptation. We have agreed to trust him with no money, for he will buy with it his own destruction.”

The first time Deronda came after the father’s arrival, Lapidoth did not present himself, for his new clothes were not yet ready. Watching from the window, he was surprised at Deronda’s youthfulness; he had assumed him an older man who had taken up a grave friendship with the sepulchral Ezra, and began to imagine that Deronda’s real motive must be that he was in love with Mirah; which might make it easier for Lapidoth to recommend himself to him.

He was behaving amiably, and trying to get himself into easy domestication with his children – entering into Mirah’s music, showing himself docile about smoking, and walking out in the square with his pipe and the tobacco which Mirah gave him. He was too acute to remonstrate against the refusal of money: he was comfortable enough to wait.

The next time Deronda came, Lapidoth, satisfied with his own appearance in his new clothes, was in the room with Ezra, who was teaching himself, as a part of his severe duty, to tolerate his father’s presence. Deronda was cold and distant, the sight of this man who had blighted the lives of his family creating in him a physical repulsion.

But Lapidoth was not discouraged: he asked leave to stay and hear the reading of papers from the old chest, and actually made himself useful in helping to decipher some difficult German manuscript. This led him to suggest that it might be desirable to make a transcription of the manuscript, and he offered his services for this purpose.

Deronda accepted the offer, thinking that Lapidoth showed a sign of grace in this willingness to be employed usefully; and he saw a gratified expression in Ezra’s face, who, however, said, “Let all the writing be done here; for I cannot trust the papers out of my sight, lest there be an accident.” Poor Ezra felt as if he had a convict under his charge. But by this arrangement he fastened on himself the burden of his father’s presence, with all its restlessness, which showed itself more as Lapidoth became familiarized with his situation, and lost his awe of his son.

The fact was, he was putting a strong constraint on himself for the sake of winning Deronda’s favour; and like a man in an uncomfortable garment he gave himself relief at every opportunity, going out to smoke, or moving about and talking; and if Mirah were in the room, he would fall into his old habit of gossiping, or repeating stories, in the belief that he could command his old vivacity. All this was a mortal infliction to Ezra; and when Mirah was at home she tried to relieve him, by taking her father down into the parlour. The prospect of this duty to an unworthy father seemed to Mirah to stretch onward through her life.

Meanwhile Lapidoth’s presence had raised a new partition between Deronda and Mirah – each of them dreading the soiling inferences of his mind, each interpreting

mistakenly the increased reserve of the other. But it was not long before some light came to Deronda.

He had called at Hans Meyrick's rooms to let him know the outcome of his recent journey. Hans was not there; and Deronda, after leaving a note, waited a week. But receiving no word, he at length made a second call, and was admitted into the painting-room, where he found his friend looking worn and wizened. He stood before his easel when Deronda entered, but seemed not to be painting.

As they shook hands, Deronda said, "You don't look well, old fellow. Is it Cambridge you have been to?"

"No," said Hans curtly, throwing himself into a chair. "I've been to No man's land – and a mortally unpleasant country it is."

"Have you been drinking, Hans?" said Deronda, in anxious survey.

"I've been smoking opium. I always meant to try it some time or other, when I was feeling low. But I shall never do it again. It disagrees with me."

"What has been the matter? You were in good spirits enough when you wrote to me."

"Oh, nothing in particular. The world began to look seedy – a sort of cabbage-garden with all the cabbages cut. A malady of genius, you may be sure," said Hans, creasing his face into a smile.

"Nothing else?" said Deronda. "I came to tell you of my own affairs, but I can't do it with a good grace if you hide yours."

"Haven't an affair in the world," said Hans, in a flighty way. "Besides, as it is the first time in our lives that you ever spoke to me about your own affairs, you are beginning to pay a pretty long debt."

Deronda felt convinced that Hans was behaving artificially, but he trusted to a return of the old frankness if he gave his own confidence.

"You laughed at the mystery of my journey to Italy, Hans," he began. "I had never known anything about my parents, and I went to Genoa to meet my mother. My father died when I was an infant. My mother was the daughter of an eminent Jew; my father was her cousin. Many things had caused me to think of this origin as almost a probability before I set out. I was so far prepared that I was glad of it – glad to find myself a Jew."

"You must not expect me to look surprised, Deronda," said Hans, laying one leg across the other and examining his slipper.

"You knew it?"

"My mother told me, after Mirah and Ezra told her. We can't rejoice as they do. But whatever you are glad of, I shall come to be glad of in the end," said Hans, speaking in a low tone.

"I quite understand that you can't share my feeling," said Deronda; "but I could not let silence lie between us on my future. I have taken up some of Mordecai's ideas, and I mean to try and carry them out, so far as one man's efforts can go. I shall travel to the East and be away for some years."

Hans said nothing, but rose, seized his palette and began to work his brush on it, standing with his back to Deronda, who felt himself embarrassed by Hans's embarrassment.

Presently Hans said, without turning, "Does Mrs. Grandcourt know of all this?"

"No; and I must beg of you, Hans," said Deronda, rather angrily, "to cease joking on that subject. Any notions you have are the very reverse of the truth."

"I am not sure that you are aware what are my notions on that subject."

“Perhaps not,” said Deronda. “But let me say, once for all, that in relation to Mrs. Grandcourt, I never have had, and never shall have the position of a lover. If you have ever thought that, you are supremely mistaken.”

There was an uncomfortable silence.

“Perhaps I have been mistaken in another interpretation, also,” said Hans.

“What is that?”

“That you had no wish to hold the position of a lover toward another woman, who is neither wife nor widow.”

“I can’t pretend not to understand you, Meyrick. It is painful that our wishes should clash. I hope you will tell me if you have any ground for supposing that you would succeed.”

“That seems rather a superfluous inquiry on your part, Deronda,” said Hans, with some irritation. “You are perfectly convinced on the subject – and you probably have had the very best evidence to convince you.”

“I will be more frank with you than you are with me,” said Deronda, still heated. “I have never had the slightest evidence that I should succeed. In fact, I have very little hope. And in our present situation, I don’t see how I can make known my feeling to her. If she could not return it, I should have embittered her best comfort; for we should have to meet continually to tend to her brother. You have no reason to envy me.”

“Oh, not the slightest,” said Hans, with bitter irony. “You have measured my conceit and know that it out-tops all your advantages.”

“I am a nuisance to you, Meyrick. I am sorry, but I can’t help it,” said Deronda, rising. “I don’t see that any pretensions of mine have made a difference to you. They are not likely to make any pleasant difference to myself. Now the father is there, she and I meet under greater constraint than ever. Things might go on in this way for two years without my getting any insight into her feeling toward me. That is the whole state of affairs, Hans. Neither you nor I have injured the other, that I can see. We are rivals without hope: our friendship can bear that strain, surely.”

“No, it can’t,” said Hans, throwing down his tools, and turning to face Deronda, who looked at him with amazement. Hans went on, with a fierce expression—

“Our friendship can’t bear the strain of my behaving to you like an ungrateful dastard and grudging you your happiness. If Mirah loves anybody better than her brother, *you are the man*.”

A shock passed through Deronda. After an instant, he said—

“It is a good-natured fiction of yours, Hans.”

“I am not in a good-natured mood. I found the fact disagreeable when it was thrust on me: I believed then that your heart was pledged to the duchess. But now, confound you! you turn out to be in love in the right place – a Jew – and everything eligible.”

“Tell me what convinced you – there’s a good fellow,” said Deronda, distrusting his unfamiliar delight.

“Don’t ask. Little mother was witness. The upshot is, that Mirah is jealous of the duchess, and I may be allowed to swear at you for getting what you deserve – which is just the very best luck.”

“God bless you, Hans!” said Deronda, putting out his hand, which the other shook in silence.

## Chapter Sixty-eight

Deronda went on his next visit to Ezra eager to confess his love and determined to request a private conversation with Mirah. If she accepted him, he would be able to protect her in any difficulties with her father. Deronda had forebodings of some future struggle in which he might save Ezra and Mirah from being helpless victims.

His forebodings would have been strengthened if he had known what was going on in the father's mind. Lapidoth's submission to restraint was only made bearable to him by his thinking of it as a means of by-and-by securing freedom. He intended to await an opening for getting a large sum from Deronda; but meanwhile he was trying to discover where Mirah kept her money and her keys. The imperious desire to gamble, which was present through every other occupation, would hardly have been under his control if he had been able to lay his hands on any sum. But Mirah, with her practical clear-sightedness, confided all money to Mrs. Meyrick's care.

If Lapidoth had found and pocketed any bank-notes of Mirah's, he would have considered it a sort of domestic appropriation which held no disgrace; for he really felt himself badly treated by his daughter, and thought that he ought to have what he wanted of her earnings. However, he was most tempted to approach Deronda, whom he felt might be willing to advance a considerable sum for the sake of getting rid of him. But Lapidoth was still in some awe of Ezra's imposing friend, and deferred this approach.

When Deronda came, full of a gladdened consciousness, Lapidoth was at a crisis of discontent that made his mind busy with schemes of freedom. He was so restless that he could not show any interest in what went forward; and at last he went out to smoke and walk in the square. The two friends were all the easier. Mirah was not at home, but she was sure to be in again before Deronda left, and his eyes glowed with a secret anticipation: and there was a playful affectionateness in his manner toward Ezra.

"This little room is too close for you, Ezra," he said, breaking off his reading. "You must have a better home now. I shall do as I like with you, being the stronger half." He smiled at Ezra, who said—

"I lack nothing except breath. But you, who might have the wide green country around you, find this a narrow prison."

"The country would be a banishment while you are here," said Deronda, rising and walking round the room, while he made a fan of his handkerchief. "This is the happiest room in the world to me. I will imagine myself in the East, since I am getting ready to go there some day. Only I will not wear a cravat and a heavy ring there," he ended, pausing to take these off and put them on a small table behind Ezra.

"I have been wearing my memorial ring ever since I came home," he went on, as he reseated himself. "But it is a burden when I am doing anything. Now I shall get on better."

They were soon absorbed in their work again. Deronda was reading a piece of rabbinical Hebrew under Ezra's correction, and they took little notice when Lapidoth re-entered and sat in the background.

His rambling eyes quickly alighted on the ring that sparkled on the dark mahogany. During his walk, he had been creating a fiction about an advantageous opening for him abroad, only requiring a sum of ready money, which Deronda might



supply. Lapidoth had been debating how large a sum; he did not know the limit of Deronda's willingness.

But now, in the midst of these airy fantasies, this ring, which Lapidoth had seen with envy on Deronda's finger, suddenly shone detached and within easy grasp. Its value was certainly below the imaginary sums in his head: but it was before him as a solid fact, and his desire at once leaped into the thought that if he were quietly to pocket that ring and walk away he would have the means of comfortable escape without trouble, and also without danger; for any property of Deronda's was all one with his children's property, since their father would never be prosecuted for taking it. The details of this thinking followed each other so quickly that they seemed to rise before him as one picture.

Still, the gift was to be preferred, if Lapidoth could only make haste enough in asking for it, and the imaginary action of taking the ring, which kept repeating itself like an inward tune, sank into a rejected idea. He resolved to go below, and watch for the moment of Deronda's departure, when he would ask leave to join him in his walk and boldly carry out his plan. He rose and stood looking out of the window, but all the while he saw the brief passage to the door past the table where the ring was. However, he was resolved to go down; but – by no distinct change of resolution – it so happened that in passing the table his fingers fell noiselessly on the ring, and he found himself in the passage with the ring in his hand. It followed that he put on his hat and quitted the house. The possibility of again throwing himself on his children receded into the indefinite distance, and before he was out of the square his sense of haste had concentrated itself on selling the ring and getting on shipboard.

Deronda and Ezra were aware of his exit; that was all. But, by-and-by, Mirah came in and made a real interruption. She had not taken off her hat; and when Deronda rose to shake hands with her, she said, in a confusion at once unaccountable and troublesome to herself–

“I only came to see that Ezra had his medicine. I must go directly to Mrs. Meyrick's.”

“Pray allow me to walk with you,” said Deronda urgently. “I must not tire Ezra any further; besides, my brains are melting. I want to go to Mrs. Meyrick's: may I go with you?”

“Oh, yes,” said Mirah, blushing still more, with the vague sense of something new in Deronda, and turning away to pour out Ezra's draught.

Deronda suddenly remembered that he had laid aside his cravat, and saying– “Pray excuse my dishabille,” he went to the little table, took up his cravat, and exclaimed in surprise, “Good heavens, where is my ring gone?” beginning to search about on the floor.

Ezra looked round, quick as thought, went to the spot where Deronda was seeking, and said, “Did you lay it down?”

“Yes,” said Deronda, still assuming that the ring had fallen and was lurking in shadow, indiscernible on the variegated carpet. He was moving the bits of furniture nearby.

But another explanation had taken the colour from Mirah's cheeks. She went to Ezra's ear and whispered “Was my father here?” He nodded, meeting her eyes with terrible understanding. She darted back to the spot where Deronda was still hunting in vain. “You have not found it?” she said, hurriedly.

He, meeting her frightened gaze, immediately caught her alarm and answered, “Perhaps I put it in my pocket.”

“You put it on the table,” she said, with a penetrating voice that would not let him feign to have found it in his pocket; and immediately she rushed out of the room. Deronda followed her: she was gone into the sitting-room below to look for her father – she opened the door of his bedroom – she looked where his hat usually hung – she turned with her hands clasped tight and her lips pale, gazing despairingly out of the window. Then she looked up at Deronda, unable to utter a word in her humiliation. But he, taking her clasped hands between his, said, in a tone of reverent adoration–

“Mirah, let me think that he is my father as well as yours – that we can have no sorrow, no disgrace, no joy apart. I will rather take your grief to be mine than I would take the brightest joy of another woman. Say you will take me to share all things with you. Say you will promise to be my wife. I have been in doubt so long – I have had to hide my love so long. Say that now and always I may prove to you that I love you with complete love.”

The change in Mirah was gradual. She did not pass at once from anguish to the full, blessed consciousness that, in this moment of grief and shame, Deronda was giving her the highest tribute man can give to woman. With the first words, she had only a sense of comfort, referring this goodness of Deronda’s to his feeling for Ezra. But by degrees the rapturous assurance of love took possession of her: her face glowed under Deronda’s as he bent over her; yet she looked up still with intense gravity, as when she had first acknowledged with gratitude that he had thought her “worthy of the best;” and when he had finished, she could say nothing – she could only lift up her lips to kiss his. They stood then, looking at each other, he holding her hands between his – too happy to move, till Mirah whispered: “Let us go and comfort Ezra.”

## Chapter Sixty-nine

Sir Hugo carried out his plan of spending part of the autumn at Diplow. He extended invitations to old Wanchester solicitors and young village curates, taking such care in the combination of guests that he both gained popularity for himself and gave pleasure to others. The rector of Pennicote now found a reception at Diplow very different from Grandcourt's haughtiness. Sir Hugo desired to keep up a marked friendliness with him on account of Mrs. Grandcourt, for whom he secretly thought Deronda had a preference.

But Deronda, after he became engaged to Mirah, wrote a full statement of his position and purposes to Sir Hugo. He feared that his fatherly friend would feel some dissatisfaction, if not pain, at this turn of his destiny, and thought a letter would avoid any hasty response which might afterward be repented of. And Sir Hugo, though not altogether surprised, was thoroughly vexed.

He took the letter to Lady Mallinger, who professed herself astonished, observing without rancour that she had little dreamed of what was coming when she had Mirah to sing at her musical party. Indeed, she confessed it had passed through her mind that Daniel might marry Mrs. Grandcourt. Sir Hugo desired his wife not to breathe a word about the affair till further notice, saying to himself, "If it is an unkind cut to poor Gwendolen, the longer she is without knowing it the better, in her present nervous state. And she will best learn it from Dan himself."

The plan of removal to Offendene had been carried out; and Gwendolen maintained a calm beyond her mother's hopes. She was experiencing some of that peaceful melancholy which comes from taking the ordinary good of existence, and especially kindness, even from a dog, as a gift above expectation. Does one who has been lost in a pit of darkness complain of the sweet air and the daylight? There is a way of looking at our daily life as an escape, and taking the quiet return of morn and evening as a salvation. This feeling of rescue came to Gwendolen as she lived through and through again the terrible history of her temptations, from her first illusory self-pleasing to her final hatred dragging her toward its satisfaction, while she prayed and cried for the help of that conscience which she had once forsaken. She was now dwelling on every word of Deronda's that pointed to her deliverance from the worst evil in herself, and on every word that carried a force to resist self-despair.

But she was also upborne by the prospect of soon seeing him again: she imagined him always within her reach, her supreme need of him blinding her to the separateness of his life, which she filled with his relation to her. We are all apt to fall into this passionate egoism, not only toward our fellow-men, but toward God. And she looked to a future where she would be guided by him. Had she not seen him first as a corrective presence which she had recognized in the beginning with resentment, and at last with entire love and trust? She could not imagine an end to that reliance.

And soon Deronda came to Diplow. He had wished to take Ezra and Mirah to a mild spot on the coast, while he prepared another home which Mirah might enter as his bride, and where they might watch over her brother. But Ezra begged not to be removed, unless it were to go with them to the East: his mind dwelt on the possibility of this voyage with a visionary joy.

Deronda, in his preparations for the marriage, which he hoped not to defer beyond a couple of months, wished to consult Sir Hugo about his affairs. But he had another reason to visit Diplow – his promise to Gwendolen. His sense of blessedness in his

own lot had an aching anxiety at its heart: it was no treason to Mirah, but a part of that full nature which, along with his joy in her, could hold by its side the care for another.

Deronda came twice to Diplow, and saw Gwendolen twice – and yet he went back to town without having told her anything about the change in his prospects. He blamed himself; but in the first interview Gwendolen was so absorbed in what she had to say to him, so full of questions which he must answer about the arrangement of her life, how she could make herself less ignorant and selfish, that Deronda shrank from brushing her wants aside in order to speak of himself, nay, from inflicting a wound on her when she was leaning on him for help.

In the second interview, he found her in a state of deep depression, overmastered by miserable memories. She cried hysterically, and said that he would always despise her. He could only seek words of soothing encouragement: and when she gradually revived under them, with a pathetic look of renewed childlike interest, it was impossible to lay another burden on her.

But he felt it a pressing duty to make the difficult disclosure. Gwendolen, it was true, never recognized his having any affairs; and it had never even occurred to her to ask him why he happened to be at Genoa. But this unconsciousness would make a sudden revelation all the heavier a blow to her; and it would be cruel to let her hear of it from others. He could not tell her in writing: his tenderness could not bear to think of her reading his virtual farewell in solitude, and perhaps feeling him indifferent to her.

So he made a third visit. This time, he found Hans Meyrick installed with his easel at Diplow, beginning his picture of the three daughters “in the Gainsborough style,” and varying his work by rambling to Pennicote to see the Gascoignes. Hans appeared to have recovered his vivacity, but Deronda detected some artificiality in it. With all his admiration for Deronda, Hans could not help a certain irritation against him, for keeping the true state of his feelings hidden.

It is true that poor Hans had confided in Deronda without any curiosity as to confidences that might have been given in return; but he must be excused for his bruised sensibility, since he had the consciousness of having done right by his fortunate friend. Perhaps in reward of his good behaviour he gave his tongue more freedom; and he was too convinced of Deronda’s happiness to have any idea of what he was feeling about Gwendolen, so that he spoke of her without hesitation.

“When did you come down, Hans?” said Deronda, joining him in the grounds where he was sketching.

“Oh, ten days ago; I ran down with Rex Gascoigne and stayed at the rectory a day or two. I’m up in all the gossip of these parts, and have assisted at an infant school to which sister Anna escorted me. The village is idyllic, and the Gascoignes are perfect – besides being related to the Vandyke duchess. I caught a glimpse of her in her black robes at a distance when I was taken to Offendene to see the old house. I suppose you have been there? A fine old place. An excellent setting for a widow with romantic fortunes. And she seems to have had several romances. I think there was one between her and my friend Rex.”

“Not long before her marriage, then?” said Deronda, interested. “How came you to know of it?”

“Oh – I found out that Rex never goes to Offendene, and has never seen the duchess since she came back; and Anna let slip something that proved to me that Rex was once hovering about his fair cousin close enough to get singed. I don’t know what was her part in the affair. Perhaps the duke came in and carried her off. I understand

now why Gascoigne talks of making the law his mistress and remaining a bachelor. But since the duke did not get himself drowned for your sake, it may turn out to be for my friend Rex's. Who knows?"

"Is it absolutely necessary that Mrs. Grandcourt should marry again?" said Deronda.

"You monster!" retorted Hans, "do you want her to wear mourning clothes for *you* all her life?"

Deronda could say nothing, but he looked so annoyed that Hans changed the subject.

No wonder that Deronda winced. The joke touched sensibilities that were already quivering with the anticipation of witnessing Gwendolen's pain. But he had come with the firm resolve that he would not again evade the trial, and the next day he rode to Offendene.

He found Gwendolen awaiting him in the drawing-room. She seemed less sad than he had seen her since her husband's death; there was no smile on her face, but a placid self-possession, in contrast with the mood in which he had last found her. She noticed Deronda's sadness; and they were no sooner seated than she said:

"You were afraid of coming to see me, because I was so full of despair last time. But I have been sorry ever since. I have been making it a reason why I should be as cheerful as I can, because I would not give you any pain about me."

There was an unusual sweetness in Gwendolen's tone that seemed to Deronda to infuse the utmost cruelty into his task. But he felt obliged to begin.

"I *am* in some trouble to-day," he said, looking at her rather mournfully; "because I have things to tell you which you will think I should have spoken of before. They are things affecting my own future. I shall seem to have made an ill return to you for the trust you have placed in me – never to have given you an idea of events that make great changes for me. But when we have been together we have hardly had time to enter into less pressing subjects than the trials you were going through." There was a sort of timid, pleading tenderness in Deronda's deep tones.

A thrill of surprise was visible in Gwendolen, but she did not feel any fear. Her mind flew at once of some change in his position with regard to Sir Hugo and Sir Hugo's property. She said–

"You never thought of anything but what you could do to help me."

"It will perhaps astonish you," said Deronda, "that I have only quite lately known who were my parents."

Gwendolen was not astonished: she felt the more assured that her expectations were right. Deronda went on.

"I went to Italy to meet my mother. It was by her wish that I was brought up in ignorance of my parentage. She parted with me after my father's death, when I was a baby. But she is now very ill, and she felt that the secrecy ought not to be any longer maintained. Her chief reason for it had been that she did not wish me to know I was a Jew."

"A *Jew!*" Gwendolen exclaimed, in a low tone of amazement, with an utterly frustrated look, as if some confusing potion were creeping through her system.

Deronda coloured, and did not speak, while Gwendolen, with her eyes fixed on the floor, was struggling to find her answer. Looking up, she said–

"What difference need that have made?"

"It has made a great difference to me that I have known it," said Deronda, emphatically, but uncertain what force his words would carry.

Gwendolen meditated again, and then said feelingly, "I hope there is nothing to make you mind. *You* are just the same as if you were not a Jew." She meant to reassure him that nothing of that external sort could affect the way in which she regarded him.

"The discovery was far from being painful to me," he said. "I was glad of it. I had been prepared for it by becoming intimate with a very remarkable Jew, whose ideas have attracted me so much that I think of devoting my life to them."

Again Gwendolen seemed shaken – this time frustration was mingled with alarm. She looked at Deronda with lips childishly parted. She had a dreadful foreboding of mountainous travel for her mind before it could reach Deronda's.

"That is an object," he said, "which will by-and-by force me to leave England for some time – for some years. I have purposes which will take me to the East."

Gwendolen's lips began to tremble. "But you will come back?" she said, tasting her own tears as they fell.

Deronda could not sit still. He rose, and went to the mantelpiece. "If I live," he said – "*some time.*"

They were both silent.

"What are you going to do?" she asked at last, very mildly. "Can I understand the ideas, or am I too ignorant?"

"I am going to the East to become better acquainted with the condition of my race in various countries there," said Deronda, gently, and anxious to expand on impersonal reasons. "The idea that I am possessed with is that of restoring a political existence to my people, making them a nation again, giving them a national centre, though they are scattered over the face of the globe. I am resolved to devote my life to that task."

There was a long silence. The world seemed getting larger round poor Gwendolen, and she more solitary and helpless in the midst. Before the bewildering vision of these wild-stretching purposes, she felt herself reduced to a mere speck. There comes a terrible moment to many souls when the great movements of the world, the larger destinies of mankind, which have lain neglected in newspapers, enter like an earthquake into their own lives. That was the sort of crisis which was at this moment beginning in Gwendolen's small life: she was for the first time feeling the pressure of a vast mysterious movement, for the first time being dislodged from her supremacy in her own world, and getting a sense that her horizon was but a dipping onward of an existence with which her own was revolving.

All her troubles had still left her with the impression that whatever surrounded her was somehow specially for her, and it was because of this that no jealousy had been roused in her relation to Deronda: she could not think of him as rightfully belonging to others more than to her. But here had come a shock which went deeper than personal jealousy – something spiritual and tremendous that thrust her away, and yet quelled her into self-humiliation.

Gwendolen sat like a statue in the intensity of her thought. At length something occurred to her that made her turn to Deronda and say in a trembling voice –

"Is that everything?"

The question was like a dart to him. "The Jew whom I mentioned just now," he answered, with a tremor in his tones too, "is the brother of Miss Lapidoth, whom you have often heard sing."

A great wave of remembrance passed through Gwendolen and spread as a deep, painful flush over neck and face. She recalled that morning when she had called on

Mirah, and heard Deronda's voice reading, and had been told that he was reading Hebrew with Mirah's brother.

"He is very ill – very near death," Deronda went on nervously, and then stopped short. Would she divine the rest?

"Did she tell you that I went to her?" said Gwendolen, abruptly.

"No," said Deronda. "I don't understand you."

She turned away her eyes again, and sat thinking, until at last she said–

"But *can* you marry?"

"Yes," said Deronda. "I am going to marry."

Gwendolen began to tremble visibly; then she looked before her with dilated eyes, stretched out her arms, and cried with a smothered voice–

"I said I should be forsaken. I have been a cruel woman. And I am forsaken."

Deronda's anguish was intolerable. He could not help himself. He seized her outstretched hands, and kneeled at her feet. She was the victim of his happiness.

"I am cruel, too, I am cruel," he repeated, with a sort of groan.

His presence and touch seemed to dispel a horrible vision, and she felt something like the return of consciousness after fainting. She dwelt on his face with tender recollection: his look of sorrow brought back a very far-off moment in the library, at the Abbey. Sobs rose, and great tears fell fast. Deronda held her hands still with one of his, and himself pressed her handkerchief against her eyes. She submitted like a half-soothed child, her effort to speak hindered by struggling sobs. At last she said, brokenly–

"I said – it should be better – better with me – for having known you."

His eyes too were large with tears. She pulled one of her hands from his, and returned his action, pressing his tears away.

"We shall not be quite parted," he said. "I will write to you always, when I can, and you will answer?"

He waited till she said in a whisper, "I will try."

"I shall be more with you than I used to be," Deronda said, releasing her hands and rising from his knees. "Perhaps we can never see each other again. But our minds may get nearer."

Gwendolen said nothing, but rose too, automatically. Her withered look of grief made him hate his own words: they seemed to have the hardness of easy consolation in them. She felt that he was going, and that nothing could hinder it. The sense of it was like a dreadful whisper in her ear.

Deronda could not speak again: yet it was difficult to move toward the parting, till she looked at him with a sort of intention in her eyes, which helped him. He put out his hand silently, and when she had placed hers within it, she said what her mind had been labouring with–

"You have been very good to me. I have deserved nothing. I will try – try to live. I shall think of you. What good have I been? Only harm. Don't let me be harm to *you*. It shall be the better for me–"

She could not finish for the intense effort of speaking. The burden of that difficult rectitude was a weight her frame tottered under.

She bent forward to kiss his cheek, and he kissed hers. Then they looked at each other for an instant with clasped hands, and he turned away.

When he was quite gone, her mother came in and found her sitting motionless.

"Gwendolen, dearest, you look very ill," she said, touching her cold hands.

“Yes, mamma. But don’t be afraid. I am going to live,” said Gwendolen, bursting out hysterically.

Her mother persuaded her to go to bed, and watched by her. Through the day and half the night she fell into fits of shrieking, but cried in the midst of them to her mother, “Don’t be afraid. I shall live. I mean to live.”

After all, she slept; and when she waked, she looked up at her mother and said tenderly, “Ah, poor mamma! You have been sitting up with me. Don’t be unhappy. I shall live. I shall be better.”



## Chapter Seventy

Among the blessings of love there is hardly one more exquisite than the sense that we can bring comfort where hardship was, and over memories of suffering open the sweetest fountains of joy. Deronda's love for Mirah was strongly imbued with that blessed protectiveness. Since infancy she had trod among thorns; and the first time he had beheld her face it had seemed the image of despair.

But now she was glowing like a dark-tipped delicate flower in the sunlight of content, thinking of any possible grief as part of her life with Deronda. He watched the sober gladness which gave new beauty to her movements, with a delight which made him say to himself that it was enough of personal joy for him to save her from pain.

She knew nothing of Hans's struggle or of Gwendolen's pang; for after the assurance that Deronda's hidden love had been for her, she easily explained Gwendolen's interest in him as part of a grateful dependence on his goodness, such as she herself had known. All Deronda's words about Mrs. Grandcourt confirmed that view, though he never touched on it except in the most distant manner. Mirah was ready to believe that he had been a rescuing angel to many besides herself. The only wonder was, that she among them all was to have the bliss of being continually by his side.

So, when the bridal veil was around Mirah it hid no doubtful tremors – only a thrill of awe at the acceptance of a great gift. And the velvet canopy never covered a more goodly bride and bridegroom; more truthful lips never touched the sacramental marriage-wine; the marriage-blessing never held a stronger promise of fulfilment than in the integrity of their mutual pledge.

Naturally, they were married according to the Jewish rite. Among the guests at Deronda's little wedding-feast was the entire Cohen family; for how could Mordecai have borne that those friends of his adversity should be shut out from rejoicing with him?

Mrs. Meyrick had quite reconciled herself to meeting the Jewish pawnbroker, and was there with her three daughters – all enjoying the consciousness that Mirah's marriage to Deronda crowned a romance which would always make a sweet memory to them. For which of them, mother or girls, had not had a generous part in it? If Hans could have been there, it would have been better; but Mab observed that men must suffer for being so inconvenient; suppose she, Kate, and Amy had all fallen in love with Mr. Deronda? – but being women they were not so ridiculous.

Mr. Cohen gave a speech; Jacob ate beyond his years; while Adelaide Rebekah, in a new Sabbath frock, maintained throughout a grave air of responsibility.

Mordecai's brilliant eyes, sunken in their large sockets, dwelt on the scene with the benignancy of a spirit already lifted into an aloofness which nullified selfish needs and left sympathy alive. But his gaze always returned to dwell on Deronda with a fresh gleam of trusting affection.

The wedding-feast was humble, but Mirah was not without splendid wedding-gifts. Sir Hugo and Lady Mallinger had provided a complete equipment for Eastern travel, as well as a precious locket. The Klesmers sent a perfect watch, with a pretty inscription.

But something more precious than gold and gems came to Deronda from the neighbourhood of Diplow on the morning of his marriage. It was a letter containing these words:—

‘Do not think of me sorrowfully on your wedding-day. I have remembered your words — that I may live to be one of the best of women, who make others glad that they were born. I do not yet see how that can be, but you know better than I. If it ever comes true, it will be because you helped me. I only thought of myself, and I made you grieve. It hurts me now to think of your grief. You must not grieve any more for me. It is better — it shall be better with me because I have known you.

‘GWENDOLEN GRANDCOURT.’

The preparations for the departure of all three to the East began at once; for Deronda could not deny Ezra’s wish that they should set out on the journey forthwith, so that he might go with them. He had no belief that Ezra’s life would last through the voyage, for there were symptoms which seemed to show that the last stage of his malady had set in. But Ezra himself had said, “Never mind where I die, so that I am with you.”

He did not set out with them. One morning early he said to Deronda, “Do not quit me to-day. I shall die before it is ended.”

He chose to be dressed and sit up in his easy chair as usual, Deronda and Mirah on each side of him, and for some hours he was unusually silent, not even making the effort to speak, but looking at them occasionally with eyes full of some restful meaning, as if to assure them that while this remnant of breathing-time was difficult, he felt an ocean of peace beneath him.

It was not till late in the afternoon, when the light was falling, that he took a hand of each in his and said, looking at Deronda, “Death is coming to me as the divine kiss which is both parting and reunion — which takes me from your bodily eyes and gives me full presence in your soul. Where thou goest, Daniel, I shall go. Is it not begun? Have I not breathed my soul into you? We shall live together.”

He paused, and Deronda waited, thinking that there might be another word for him. But slowly and with effort Ezra, pressing on their hands, raised himself and uttered in Hebrew the confession of the divine Unity, which for generations has been on the lips of the dying Israelite.

He sank back gently into his chair, and did not speak again. But it was some hours before he had ceased to breathe, with Mirah’s and Deronda’s arms around him.

“Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail  
Or knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,  
Dispraise or blame; nothing but well and fair,  
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.”

THE END

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