

before I can ask you to answer any more questions. When I didn't know who or what my—er—official fiancée would turn out to be, this was the plan I made, to save my parents' feelings—and yours. I thought that, when we'd had the interview I asked you to give me, we could manage to quarrel, or discover that we didn't like each other as well as before. We could break off our engagement, and Father and Mother need never know—how it began."

"A very generous idea of yours!" I cried, the blood so hot in my cheeks that it forced tears to my eyes. "It had occurred to me, too, that for *their* sakes we might manage that way. Thank you, Mr. Beckett, for sparing me the pain—I deserve. I couldn't have dared hope for such a happy solution——"

"Couldn't you?"

"No. I——"

"Well, I'm hoping for an even happier one—a lot happier. But of course it depends on what you say to Mr. O'Farrell's—accusation."

"He—made an accusation?"

"Listen, and tell me what you'd call it. He said you told him at Amiens, when he asked you to marry him, that—*you loved me*."

"Oh!"

"Is it true?"

"Yes, I did tell him that——"

"I mean, is it true that you've loved me?"

"Mr. Beckett, after all, you are cruel! You're punishing me very hard."

"I don't wish to 'punish you hard'—or at all. Why am