

empty years. It would be silent and negative in its nature, the denial of promotion, but he would understand. Even in a matter of sentiment the official attitude had its decencies, its conveniences. He was vaguely aware of them as he rose, with a little cough, and fell back into his own.

Nevertheless it was with something like an inward groan that he abandoned it, and tried, for a few lingering minutes, to remind her of the man she had known in Calcutta.

"Judith," he said desperately at the door, after she had bidden him a cheerful farewell, "I once thought I had reason to believe that you loved me."

She was leaning rather heavily on the back of a chair. He had made only a short visit, but he had spent five years of this woman's life since he arrived.

"Not you," she said: "my idea of you. And that was a long time ago."

She kept her tone of polite commonplace; there was nothing for it but a recognisant bow, which Ancram made in silence. As he took his way downstairs and out into Kensington, a