

The Intriguer

searching, brutal inquiries. If she had any sensibilities to be hurt, or any fragile ideas of courtesy to be outraged, we would do better to go back on the instant.

I was glad of this elaborate warning when the girl stood finally before Randolph Mason. I think there is no other man living who would have remained wholly unmoved when this splendid young woman came suddenly before him. She was no mere placid beauty, but force, intelligence, energy, all-vital, all instantly alert, like Jephthah's daughter, rather, had she gone to the prophet, speaking against her father's inconsiderate vow.

Mason deliberately laid down the pen in his fingers and lifted his head, with the expression of one who submits out of necessity to an interruption. There was no gleam of interest, of concern, even of inquiry in his face. He regarded the tall girl standing superbly before his table, her eyes illumined, her nervous hands gripping firmly the back of a chair, as he might have regarded a beggar, slipping in unnoticed through the door. He waited merely for the interruption to cease, the intruder to be gone.

"Mr. Mason," the girl began, "I am Margaret Garnett. I wish to inquire why you care so greatly for my father to prevail over Mr. Wood."

"I do not care," he said.

The young woman was evidently surprised. "What interest have you in my father, then?" she inquired.