

stared quietly at the chair that was empty, the chair that was still placed, just as he had left it that morning when, going down to see to his garden and to speak to Tito, he had fallen in the great room outside, and they had carried him straight to his bed.

Now it was empty. The whole room was empty. She heard sounds—sounds in Venice—sounds that she had never realized before. She heard the clock ticking and wondered why she had never heard that. She heard Claudina moving in the kitchen. She heard the voice of a gondolier singing on the canal.

Presently, she rose to her feet and walked slowly to a drawer that had long been closed. Opening it, she took out some part of an old lace shawl, unfinished, where it had been laid from that moment when God had withered her hands and she was powerless to do her work.

Bringing it with her, she came back to her chair: sat down and laid it on her lap. This was the only thing incomplete in her life. Memory became suddenly vivid as she looked at it. She almost remembered—perhaps pretended that she did recall—the last stitch where she had left off.

And there, when she came in for her unailing ceremony, Claudina found her, gazing towards the door with the unfinished lace shawl in her hands.

The little white head moved quickly, the eyes lighted for one sudden moment of relief.

“Surely it’s after ten o’clock, Claudina?” she said.