

"No. Ask no more questions, child. Good night, and remember your promise. I shall expect you to tell me every thing." She held out her hand, and Gloria touched it and went thoughtfully to her own room. Her heart was full of new hopes and plans, of dreams of conquest and of social royalties. Into them John Preston never entered. The true heart she had amused herself with was of less value to her than the pearl upon her finger. Usually the devil makes such good bargains—a little land, a little gold, a little honour, or a few jewels, are sufficient. There was only one soul to whom he thought it necessary to offer the whole world.

It was more than two hours after midnight, yet madam's end of the lonely mansion was in a blaze of light. The windows were wide open, the restless old woman, in her lace and jewels, wandering about the room, and the tall, black form of Souda standing almost motionless behind madam's chair. For madam had a terror of the darkness; she drove it away with a fictitious light, and then, when the dawn broke, she had the blinds closed and went to sleep. Souda had become used to the same hours. After Gloria left, they discussed the quarrel with the relish of old people who have a pleasure with the flavour of other years in it. Madam was absolutely happy: she laughed and played with her bracelets, and pulled on and off her rings, and imitated Raymund and Cassia with a clever and mocking fidelity.

Even if Cassia had known it, the cruelty at that hour would have been of small importance to her. She had fled to her room in terror and distress so great, that at first the sound of Ray galloping away from her had seemed a relief. Her head throbbed violently, light was intolerable to her aching eyes; she put down the lamp as low as possible, and slowly paced the large, dim room. Then the conscious want of help and comfort forced her to feel out into the abyss for something mightier than flesh and blood to lean upon. Often our first prayer, in such sorrow, is an excuse—"I could not help it, Lord! I bore it as long as I could!" These were Cassia's first, low, moaning cries. It was not madam's hatred nor Gloria's impertinences that she thought of—it was that Raymund had deserted her and made her a laughter to those who had dealt so treacherously and cruelly with her.

What had she done wrong? She tried to settle that question first of all in her own mind. Had she been too impatient with madam? Was it wrong to call Raymund to interfere? Was it wrong to refuse obedience to an insolent message? For some time she defended herself to herself. As the hours went on the first turbulence of her grief subsided. She grew calm and sorrowful, and, in the tender, vague mystery of the time and hour, the feeling of the Infinite around her grew sweetly