

He had never until now suspected Mrs. Breagh was not his mother. He had called her "Mamma" ever since he could speak. No question had ever risen in his mind as to the existence of some secret reason for her dislike of him.

When she had seemed most hateful in his eyes, by reason of her lacking reticence and absent sense of honour—for she couldn't keep a secret if she promised you ever so, and was always telling tales of you to Dada!—Carolan had frequently relieved his feelings by going into corners and calling her "that woman" under his breath. The appalling sense of crime, involved with the relief this process brought—for to call your real mother names would be a sin of the first magnitude—had invested it with a dreadful fascination. Now the glamour had vanished, together with the wickedness. Mrs. Breagh was nothing to Carolan. He was the son of another woman—and she was dead in India. Her name was Milly—a gentle, prettily-sounding name.

Only the day before, Carolan had found out what the thing grown-up people called "death" and "dying" meant. He had given a shiny sixpence that had lain hidden for weeks at the bottom of the pocket in his old plaid frock to Bugler Finnerty for a thrush he had limed, a beautiful brown thrush with a splendidly dappled breast. Only the bird's eyes looked like beads of dull jet glass instead of round black blobs of diamond-bright bramble-dew. And it had squatted on the foul floor of the little wood and wire cage in which Finnerty had been keeping it, panting, with ruffled feathers and open beak.

Finnerty had said that the bird would thrive on snails and worms, and Carolan had promised it plenty of these luxuries. He had meant to range for them through all the soldiers' vegetable-allotments, and ransack the Parade-ground flower-beds. But all at once the thrush had fallen over on its side, fluttering and struggling—and Carolan