

when I guessed, for it was only that—what my appeal to you had caused—all it had caused——”

He paused. He was thinking of Maurice's death, which must have been a murder, which he was certain had been a murder.

“I hadn't——”

But the compelling voice from the darkness interrupted him.

“All?” it said.

He hesitated. Had she read his mind again?

“All?”

“The misery,” he answered slowly. “The sorrow that has lain upon your life ever since.”

“Did you mean that? Did you only mean that?”

“No.”

“What did you mean?”

“I was thinking of his death,” he replied.

He spoke very quietly. He was resolved to have no more subterfuges, whatever the coward or the tender friend, or—the something else that was more than the tender friend within him might prompt him to try to hide.

“I was ‘hinking of his death.”

“His death!”

Artois felt cold with apprehension, but he was determined to be sincere.

“I don't understand.”

“Don't ask me any more, Hermione. I know nothing more.”

“He was coming from the island. He slipped and fell into the sea.”

“He fell into the sea.”

There was a long silence between them, filled by the perpetual striving of the restless waves within the chambers of the palace. Then she said:

“Her father was on the island that night?”

“I think he was.”

“Was it that? Was it that? Did Maurice make that atonement?”

Artois shuddered. Her voice was so strange, or sounded so strange in the dark. Did she wish to think, wish to be sure that her husband had been murdered? He heard the faint rustle of her dress. She had moved. Was she coming nearer? He heard her breathing, or thought he heard it. He longed to be certain. He longed to still the perpetual cry of the baffled sea.

“Then he was brave—at the last. I think he knew, I am sure he knew—when he went down to the sea. I am sure he knew—when he said good-bye.”