

he had to say than when he started. He made another effort. He wondered if it wouldn't have been easier to say what he had to say to a woman who showed feeling. She would have anticipated what he wanted her to understand; would have helped him out. A broken-hearted woman would have been easier to deal with than this child who sat beside him, with her hands folded, unmoved except for the few tears that had fallen, leaving no trace on her lovely face.

"It is difficult, as you say. You will have to be very gentle and patient with him, and accept very tenderly his adoration, because, well, can you understand what I am trying to tell you. Guess why he didn't come? Imagine why he sent me?"

"Good heavens!" he thought, the difficulty was stupendous. He would rather, ten thousand times, have faced a physical danger than break bad news to a wife—such a wife too, a baby—about such a husband.

Violet put out her hand. It was a perfectly natural impulse. All her life she had put out her hand when she had wanted comfort. Just as naturally he took it. Violet found comfort in the strength of his grip. She was not too miserable to notice the whiteness of her hand in his brown one. All her life it had been the unessential things she had grasped.

"Dear Mrs. Dick!"—the grip tightened—"Dick has come home—ill. He's as weak as a baby; as dependant on you as a baby. He can demand nothing! You can give him everything! The chance is—yours!"

Violet withdrew her hand; she was crying. "Is it horrid of me to feel glad—not that he's ill?"

"No, not now that we understand; but remember, some women wait for a chance all their lives and it never comes."