

She had heard him discuss commercial morality with her father, seen into both their souls, learned her lover's creed. One must not best a fellow man, fool though he might be, nor take advantage of his need or ignorance. She had learned that there were such things as undue percentage of profit, although no man might know what that profit was. "Child's talk" her father had called it, and told him the world's finance would collapse in a day if his tenets were to hold good. Margaret had been proud of him then, although secretly her reason had failed to support him, for it is hard to upset the teaching of a lifetime. To her it seemed there were conventions, but common sense or convenience might override them. In this particular instance why should she not submit to blackmail, paying for the freedom she needed. But he could not be brought to see eye to eye with her in this. She used all the power that was in her to prove to him that there is no sharp line of demarcation between right and wrong, that one can steer a middle course.

The short morning went by whilst she argued. She put forth all her powers, and in the end, quite suddenly, became conscious that she had not moved him in the least, that as he thought when he came into the room so he thought now. He used the same words, the same hopeless, unarguable words: "Being innocent, we cannot put in this plea of guilty." She would neither listen nor talk any more, but lay as a wrestler, who, after battling again and again until the whistle blew and the respite came, feels both shoulders touching the ground, and sullenly, without appeal, admits defeat.