

"No. It may be that my son will come to me."

"Mayn't I sleep on the little bed in your bedroom?"

"No, good Denner; I am not ill. You can't help me."

"That's the hardest word of all, madam."

"The time will come—but not now. Kiss me. Now go."

The small quiet old woman obeyed, as she had always done. She shrank from seeming to claim an equal's share in her mistress's sorrow.

For two hours Mrs. Transome's mind hung on what was hardly a hope—hardly more than the listening for a bare possibility. She began to create the sounds that her anguish craved to hear—began to imagine a footfall, and a hand upon the door. Then, checked by continual disappointment, she tried to rouse a truer consciousness by rising from her seat and walking to her window, where she saw streaks of light moving and disappearing on the grass, and heard the sound of bolts and closing doors. She hurried away and threw herself into her seat again, and buried her head in the deafening down of the cushions. There was no sound of comfort for her.

Then her heart cried out within her against the cruelty of this son. When he turned from her in the first moment, he had not had time to feel anything but the blow that had fallen on himself. But afterward—was it possible that he should not be touched with a son's pity—was it possible that he should not have been visited by some thought of the long years through which she had suffered? The memory of those years came back to her now with a protest against the cruelty that had all fallen on *her*. She started up with a new restlessness from this spirit of resistance. She was not penitent. She had borne too hard a punishment. Always the edge of calamity had fallen on *her*. Who had felt for her? She was desolate. God had no pity, else her son would not have been so hard. What dreary future was there after this dreary past? She, too, looked out into the dim night; but the black boundary of trees and the long line of the river seemed only part of the loneliness and monotony of her life.

Suddenly she saw a light on the stone balustrades of the balcony that projected in front of Esther's window, and the flash of a moving candle falling on a shrub below. Esther