

not, she was fond of Rose, too. She said she wanted to be able to welcome her as a sister. And she made me sit down and write a sensible letter to Rose. *Sensible*. . . . Full of prudent plans, you know. Oh, I did it." Eileen saw his hands clench, and his mouth twist as if he tasted something bitter. "The next day," he went on, without any change in his voice, "I heard that Rose was dead. She had killed herself. I wanted to do the same, but Laura kept me from it; Laura brought me the news. But she didn't know everything; not the worst. I heard that whispered, weeks later, when I was strong enough to stand more. They said that Rose hadn't been quite herself . . . they said women weren't always responsible, you know. . . . She had been expecting our child—mine. That was why she wanted to go at once. Only she hadn't been able to tell me. I understood quite clearly, you see, when it was too late. Of course, no one else ever knew. . . . You're the first. Now you know."

He bowed his face in his hands. Eileen, sitting stiffly upright, gripping the arms of the sofa, had not moved while he talked.

"You loved her so much?" she asked in a queer dry voice—dry after so many tears.

"Yes, I did. And I killed her. That was what it amounted to. Part of myself—most of myself, too."

"More than you ever loved any one else?" said Eileen.

"More? I suppose I had felt some fancies before I ever met her; I forget. I was just an ordinary young man. But do you think that afterward I could have taken a woman in my arms——"

Their eyes met; a dark, unbecoming wave of color flooded Eileen's face and throat.

"Only you," he said. He was the born lover; he knew when it were better not to speak. He gathered