

as he took his place by Miss Arkroyd on that tree-trunk. But he fought shy of the sequel their presence suggested—what word ought his fancy to supply as the tree's imaginary speech about themselves? He shrank from it, and he knew the reason why. It was because, as his own disordered passion grew, as he found himself more and more at loggerheads with his lot, he became more and more alive to the danger of relying on this woman *herself* as his protection against *himself*. How if *she* gave way, too?

As far as any conscious loss of self-control at that moment went, on the part of Miss Judith Arkroyd, Challis need not have fretted. Never was a young woman more perfectly cool and collected, more equal to any occasion that might arise in connection with a love of power that she just felt this man was a satisfactory lay-figure for. That best defines all the feeling she had on his account—so far.

She resumed the conversation where the question of anchorage had interrupted her. "I don't think we have rows in our family, in the ordinary sense of the word. That is, if I understand it rightly. . . . No!—I know what you are going to say. It has nothing to do with that repose that marks the caste of Vere de Vere. It is entirely individual and local. We have our quarrels, of course, but they take the form of distant civility, entirely due, as I understand, to our self-respect. There is nothing we Arkroyds respect more than ourselves, not even the Bill of Rights or the Protestant Succession. . . ."

Challis interrupted: "But the distant civility, this time? . . ."

"Followed naturally on my telling Sihyl that the first act of Estrild was ready for rehearsal. She merely said she supposed I must go my own way. But that day after lunch she allowed me to leave the apartment first. It had been a cold lunch, as far as emotions went; and I knew, when Sihyl stood courteously on one side to let me pass, what was coming. So I wasn't the least surprised to find a letter from my mother on the dressing-table next morning."

"A letter from your mother!" Challis's tone was puzzle, awaiting enlightenment. Judith was not to be hurried, though. For one thing, she was engaged with a