

"Shall I tell you?"

"I think I have—a right to that. Afterward, I'll go away, or—anything you like."

"You shall do anything you like," he repeated. "Sit down . . . dear. Do you know that it is difficult to tell an old story one has never told? . . . How old are you, Eileen?" It was singular, but he did not know exactly. "Twenty-three? I was twenty-five—then. That's nineteen years ago. I was in love. First love. She was twenty. Dark and—slim and sweet, like you. So much alive. . . . She was married to a man twice her age, too. Always a mistake, I dare say. He used to be away a great deal; he was a rough, hearty, outdoor man—very rich, that was why she married him, but, you understand, she was quite a child, and dazzled; indeed, she didn't know what marriage was at all. His money was in timber; he used to be away on business—I said that, didn't I? Well . . . I had always had everything I wanted—and, you know, I loved her, too. I suppose first love can't help being selfish.

"One night she came to me; she was wild, begged me to take her away. He was returning home, after a long trip. We had been in a fool's paradise. She cried terribly; she couldn't bear ever to see him again, she said, after everything. . . . Of course I said I would; I wanted to. We planned how we would go, the next day, and she went away laughing.

"The next day I called on my sister Laura, just to say good-bye; and somehow Laura guessed. She had seen Rose, only an hour before, and then she had always suspected. She pinned me down, wouldn't listen to any denial, and told me I was mad. Why not wait, let Rose get a divorce, instead of giving up everything and putting ourselves outside the pale? I don't know if she hoped delay would wear it out; perhaps