

we do, fits into the scheme of our existence. You would not deny me this moment!"

"You have paid a great price for it," she said pityingly.

"But it is worth it," he answered perversely. "I made my bargain with fate, and I am satisfied." His glance wandered about the room, but the familiar objects he saw only vaguely. The spell of her presence, desired but denied so long, made it all seem strange and new. Instead of the end, this seemed but the beginning.

"Perhaps you will come here to live with Stephen," he said after a pause.

"I haven't thought of the future," she answered him, and then realized that the future of which they spoke was something in which he would have no part. He fell silent again. Perhaps he was thinking of this, too; a long silence, in which he seemed to be drifting, slipping away into the shadows. Through half-closed lids, he kept his glance fixed upon her face, that seemed to have taken on youth and beauty.

Perhaps she understood the change that was coming to him; but she did not rise or call the others. She knew that he wished to be alone with her. She gazed long and earnestly at the pallid face. Her heart welled with sorrow for him; yet she was conscious that there was something perverse and pagan in his attitude; in his satisfaction with himself and with that moment.

He opened his eyes wide.

"You will not go away — you will not leave me?" he whispered.

"No."

"You almost tempt me to get well, Virginia," he murmured smilingly.

She had rested her hand on the edge of the bed; now he found it with his own, and his fingers closed about it.

"Virginia!"

"Yes — what is it?" and as she bent her head to catch his reply, he moved, and turned his face toward the wall; but the smile still lingered on his lips.

THE END