

ought to save him from this—free him from her blighting presence and go.

As she lay thinking, turning over in her mind how best to accomplish this—when she should write and what she should say to Lady Dunsmore—there came the usual little knock at her door, the usual sound of tiny bare feet trotting over the carpet, and the burst of joyous child-laughter at her bedside. And when she hardly noticed it, for it pierced her like a sword, there came a loud wail. “Tannie take her! Take Rosie in Tannie arms.” Poor Tannie sprang up, and felt that all her well-woven plans were torn down like spider-webs. To go away and leave her child! The thing was impossible.

Our lives, like the year, go through a succession of seasons, which may come early or late, but come in regular order. We do not find fruit in March or primroses in August. Thus, though Hannah’s heart now, strangely stirred as it was, had a primrose breath of spring quivering through it, it was not exactly the heart of a girl. She was a woman of thirty, and though she loved—alas, she knew it now only too well!—she did not love romantically, absorbingly. Besides coexistent with this love had come to her that other sentiment, usually of much later growth—the maternal instinct, which in her was a passion too. Bernard’s one rival, and no small one was his own little child.

As Hannah pressed Rosie to her bosom, all her vague terrors, her equally dreadful delights, faded away into quiet realities, and by the time she had the child with her for an hour, she felt quite herself again, and was able to carry Rosie down to the Sunday breakfast-table, where the small woman had lately begun to appear, conducting herself like a little princess.

Oh what a blessing she was! the pretty little maid! How her funny ways, her wonderful attempts at English, and her irresistible bursts of laughter, smoothed over difficulties untold, and helped them through that painful hour—those two, who stood to the little one like rather and mother, and yet to one another were nothing, and never could be. This was the strange anomaly of their relationship; that while Rosie was her own flesh-and-blood, closer to her than any child not her very own could possibly be, with Rosie’s father there was no tie of blood at all.

The usual Sunday morning routine went on—prayers, breakfast, after breakfast play with Rosie—yet neither Hannah nor Bernard ventured once to look at each other, lest they should betray the piteous secret, which, whether or not hers did, the deadly paleness of Bernard’s features, and his nervous, excited manner, only too much revealed.

“I scarcely slept an hour,” he said. “I had to sit up and write my sermon. And I found so much to do among my papers. I must never leave home again.”

She was silent.

Then he asked her if she were going to church—an idle question for one who never missed church in any weather. Perhaps he did not want her to go? And she would have been angry, but for the strange compassion she always had for him—the feeling that, if any trouble came to him, she should always like to bear it herself. And now he