

with dust. It was that—the dust—which seemed to make me realise that you had not lost a moment in coming, that you hadn't hesitated a moment as to whether you would come or not. You looked as if—almost as if you had run all the way to be in time to save my life—my wretched life. And you saved it. Did you save me to hate me?"

He waited for her to speak. But still she was silent. He heard no sound of her at all, and for a moment he almost wondered whether she had discovered that the chamber had some second outlet, whether she had not escaped while he had been speaking. But he looked round, and he saw only dense darkness. She must be there still, close to him, hearing everything he said, whether against her will or with it. He was being perfectly sincere, and he was feeling very deeply, with intensity. But out of his natural reserve now rose a fear—the fear that, perhaps, his voice, his speech, did not convey his sincerity to her. If she should mistake him! If she should fancy he was trying to play upon her emotions in order to win her away from some desperate resolve? He longed to make her see what he was feeling, feel what he was feeling, be him and herself for one moment. And now the darkness began to distract him. He wanted light. He wanted to see Hermione, to see which of the women in her faced him, which was listening to him.

"Hermione," he said, "I want you—I want—it's hateful speaking like this, always in the darkness. Don't make me stay here. Don't make me feel all the time that I am holding you a prisoner. No, I can't—I won't bear that any more."

He moved suddenly from the doorway, back into the room behind him, in which there was a very little, very faint light. There he waited.

Almost immediately, the tall shadow which had disappeared into the darkness emerged from it, passed before him, and went into the central chamber of the palace. He followed it, and found Hermione standing by the great doorway that overlooked the sea. Hermione she was, no longer a shadow, but the definite darkness of a human form relieved against the clear, but now moonless night. She was waiting. Surely she was waiting for him. She might have escaped, but she stayed. She was willing, then, to hear what he had to say, all he had to say.

He stood still at a little distance from her. But in this hall the sound of the sea which came from the chamber on the left was much more distinct and disturbing than in the chamber where she had hidden. And he came nearer to her, till he was very near, almost close to her.

"If you hated me for—once, when we were standing on the