

“LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

The colour that had left Rosaleen's lips came back to them.

“Oh! but it's beautiful he looks! And how he's grown! Indeed, and indeed, it's the grand care you've taken of him!” she exclaimed.

Then came tea, with Sonny chattering; he had learnt so many new words and ways, he was on his best behaviour, but he seemed to be on wires all the time. Now here, now there, darting about the room, and filling up any little awkwardness, or pauses, in the talk, though the Duchess took care there should be little pause, or awkwardness. It was she who suggested that Rosaleen should carry Sonny off to the nursery, and that Derry should see Mike, and Pat, and Peter McCreagh, who were all waiting to welcome him. She told her which rooms had been set aside for nurseries for Sonny.

“They are near my mother's; they are Terence's old rooms. You'll make your own arrangements of course, when you've had time to look around you; but, for the present, he's in the west wing, near my mother.”

The tact with which she acknowledged it was Rosaleen who was the hostess, and she the guest only, was inimitable. This was the way to help her to fill her place here. The Duchess knew Rosaleen must grow to fill it; she had all the qualities, only, just for the moment, perhaps, a lack of self-confidence. She had yet to face the Dowager, Terence's mother. And what she should say to her was the question that beat in her beating heart.

Up there, in the room she had shut against them all, and outside of which Biddy had keened the night they brought Terence home, the Dowager waited. She had been very quiet, very patient, but at the back of her patience there trembled an immensity of overwhelming, overpowering restlessness. It was Rosaleen she wanted;