

'How did you get possession of the key of my door?'  
last said Sir Theodore.

'Your wife gave it to me.'

'When?'

'On the night before you started for England last year.'

He paused. Sir Theodore looked at him in the eyes, and he continued in a low, hard voice:

'We had been dining together at Villa Medici. I brought her home. She gave me the key that I might open the door. And I have kept it ever since.'

He laid the key down on the hall table.

'That's a lie,' said Sir Theodore. 'I was here that night.'

'I know. Here—asleep!'

'My wife was at home. I visited her room and heard her sleeping before I went to bed.'

'No. She was with me in the garden of Villa Medici till midnight.'

'I heard her sleeping.'

A look of contempt—or was it pity?—flitted across Cesare's face.

'Because you thought she must be,' he said.

'You dare to say——?'

'I came in with her that night.'

'You——' Sir Theodore made a slight movement forward, checked himself, and stood still.

'Against her will. I only stayed a few minutes.'

There was an unmistakable accent of truth in the voice. That, and the unexpectedness of the last words, evidently made on Sir Theodore an immense, and terrible, impression. The man who could say that, in that way, was a man of truth.

'She did not wish you to come in?'

'She did not wish me to come in, to be with her *that night*.'

Sir Theodore hesitated, with his eyes always fixed upon Cesare. Little drops of sweat burst out on his forehead. Twice he opened his lips and did not speak. At length, with a difficult effort, he said:

'What have you come here for now? It is not to see her. She is dead.'

'I have come to claim my child.'

Again the silence fell between them. In it there too