

Chapter LI

She held the spindle as she sat, Errina with the thick-coiled mat Of raven hair and deepest agate eyes, Gazing with a sad surprise At surging visions of her destiny - To spin the byssus drearily In insect-labor, while the throng Of gods and men wrought deeds that poets wrought in song.

When Deronda presented himself at the door of his mother's apartment in the *Italia* he felt some revival of his boyhood with its premature agitations. The two servants in the antechamber looked at him markedly, a little surprised that the doctor their lady had come to consult was this striking young gentleman whose appearance gave even the severe lines of an evening dress the credit of adornment. But Deronda could notice nothing until, the second door being opened, he found himself in the presence of a figure which at the other end of the large room stood awaiting his approach.

She was covered, except as to her face and part of her arms, with black lace hanging loosely from the summit of her whitening hair to the long train stretching from her tall figure. Her arms, naked to the elbow, except for some rich bracelets, were folded before her, and the fine poise of her head made it look handsomer than it really was. But Deronda felt no interval of observation before he was close in front of her, holding the hand she had put out and then raising it to his lips. She still kept her hand in his and looked at him examiningly; while his chief consciousness was that her eyes were piercing and her face so mobile that the next moment she might look like a different person. For even while she was examining him there was a play of the brow and nostril which made a tacit language. Deronda dared no movement, not able to conceive what sort of manifestation her feeling demanded; but he felt himself changing color like a girl, and yet wondering at his own lack of emotion; he had lived through so many ideal meetings with his mother, and they had seemed more real than this! He could not even conjecture in what language she would speak to him. He imagined it would not be English. Suddenly, she let fall his hand, and placed both hers on his shoulders, while her face gave out a flash of admiration in which every worn line disappeared and seemed to leave a restored youth.

'You are a beautiful creature!' she said, in a low melodious voice, with syllables which had what might be called a foreign but agreeable outline. 'I knew you would be.' Then she kissed him on each cheek, and he returned the kisses. But it was something like a greeting between royalties.

She paused a moment while the lines were coming back into her face, and then said in a colder tone, 'I am your mother. But you can have no love for me.'

'I have thought of you more than of any other being in the world,' said Deronda, his voice trembling nervously.

'I am not like what you thought I was,' said the mother decisively, withdrawing her hands from his shoulders, and folding her arms as before, looking at him as if she invited him to observe her. He had often pictured her face in his imagination as one which had a likeness to his own: he saw some of the likeness now, but amidst more striking differences. She was a remarkable looking being. What was it that gave her son a painful sense of aloofness? - Her worn beauty had a strangeness in it as if she were not quite a human mother, but a Melusina, who had ties with some world which is independent of ours.

'I used to think that you might be suffering,' said Deronda, anxious above all not to wound her. 'I used to wish that I could be a comfort to you.'

'I *am* suffering. But with a suffering that you can't comfort,' said the Princess, in a harder voice than before, moving to a sofa where cushions had been carefully arranged for her. 'Sit down.' She pointed to a seat near her; and then discerning some distress in Deronda's face, she added, more gently, 'I am not suffering at this moment. I am at ease now. I am able to talk.'

Deronda seated himself and waited for her to speak again. It seemed as if he were in the presence of a mysterious Fate rather than of the longed-for mother. He was beginning to watch her with wonder, from the spiritual distance to which she had thrown him.

'No,' she began: 'I did not send for you to comfort me. I could not know beforehand - I don't know now - what you will feel toward me. I have not the foolish notion that you can love me merely because I am your mother, when you have never seen or heard of me in all your life. But I thought I chose something better for you than being with me. I did not think I deprived you of anything worth having.'

'You cannot wish me to believe that your affection would not have been worth having,' said Deronda, finding that she paused as if she expected him to make some answer.

'I don't mean to speak ill of myself,' said the princess, with proud impetuosity, 'But I had not much affection to give you. I did not want affection. I had been stifled with it. I wanted to live out the life that was in me, and not to be hampered with other lives. You wonder what

I was. I was no princess then.' She rose with a sudden movement, and stood as she had done before. Deronda immediately rose too; he felt breathless.

'No princess in this tame life that I live in now. I was a great singer, and I acted as well as I sang. All the rest were poor beside me. Men followed me from one country to another. I was lining a myriad lives in one. I did not want a child.'

There was a passionate self-defence in her tone. She had cast all precedent out of her mind. Precedent had no excuse for, her and she could only seek a justification in the intensest words she could find for her experience. She seemed to fling out the last words against some possible reproach in the mind of her son, who had to stand and hear them - clutching his coat-collar as if he were keeping himself above water by it, and feeling his blood in the sort of commotion that might have been excited if he had seen her going through some strange rite of a religion which gave a sacredness to crime. What else had she to tell him? She went on with the same intensity and a sort of pale illumination in her face.

'I did not want to marry. I was forced into marrying your father - forced, I mean, by my father's wishes and commands; and besides, it was my best way of getting some freedom. I could rule my husband, but not my father. I had a right to be free. I had a right to seek my freedom from a bondage that I hated.'

She seated herself again, while there was that subtle movement in her eyes and closed lips which is like the suppressed continuation of speech. Deronda continued standing, and after a moment or two she looked up at him with a less defiant pleading as she said -

'And the bondage I hated for myself I wanted to keep you from. What better could the most loving mother have done? I relieved you from the bondage of having been born a Jew.'

'Then I *am* a Jew?' Deronda burst out with a deep-voiced energy that made his mother shrink a little backward against her cushions. 'My father was a Jew, and you are a Jewess?'

'Yes, your father was my cousin,' said the mother, watching him with a change in her look, as if she saw something that she might have to be afraid of.

'I am glad of it,' said Deronda, impetuously, in the veiled voice of passion. He could not have imagined beforehand how he would have come to say that which he had never hitherto admitted. He could not have dreamed that it would be in impulsive opposition to his mother.

He was shaken by a mixed anger which no reflection could come soon enough to check, against this mother who it seemed had borne him unwillingly, had willingly made herself a stranger to him, and - perhaps - was now making herself known unwillingly. This last suspicion seemed to flash some explanation over her speech.

But the mother was equally shaken by an anger differently mixed, and her frame was less equal to any repression. The shaking with her was visibly physical, and her eyes looked the larger for her pallid excitement as she said violently -

'Why do you say you are glad? You are an English gentleman. I secured you that.'

'You did not know what you secured me. How could you choose my birthright for me?' said Deronda, throwing himself sideways into his chair again, almost unconsciously, and leaning his arm over the back, while he looked away from his mother.

He was fired with an intolerance that seemed foreign to him. But he was now trying hard to master himself and keep silence. A horror had swept in upon his anger lest he should say something too hard in this moment which made an epoch never to be recalled. There was a pause before his mother spoke again, and when she spoke her voice had become more firmly resistant in its finely varied tones:

'I chose for you what I would have chosen for myself. How could I know that you would have the spirit of my father in you? How could I know that you would love what I hated? - if you really love to be a Jew.' The last words had such bitterness in them that any one overhearing might have supposed some hatred had arisen between the mother and son.

But Deronda had recovered his fuller self. He was recalling his sensibilities to what life had been and actually was for her whose best years were gone, and who with the signs of suffering in her frame was now exerting herself to tell him of a past which was not his alone but also hers. His habitual shame at the acceptance of events as if they were his only, helped him even here. As he looked at his mother silently after her last words, his face regained some of its penetrative calm; yet it seemed to have a strangely agitating influence over her: her eyes were fixed on him with a sort of fascination, but not with any repose of maternal delight.

'Forgive me, if I speak hastily,' he said, with diffident gravity. 'Why have you resolved now on disclosing to me what you took care to have me brought up in ignorance of? Why - since you seem angry that I should be glad?'

'Oh - the reasons of our actions!' said the Princess, with a ring of something like sarcastic scorn. 'When you are as old as I am, it will not seem so simple a question - 'Why did you do this?' People talk of their motives in a cut and dried way. Every woman is supposed to have the same set of motives, or else to be a monster. I am not a monster, but I have not felt exactly what other women feel - or say they feel, for fear of being thought unlike others. When you reproach me in your heart for sending you away from me, you mean that I ought to say I felt about you as other women say they feel about their children. I did *not* feel that. I was glad to be freed from you. But I did well for you, and I gave you your father's fortune. Do I seem now to be revoking everything? - Well, there are reasons. I feel many things that I cannot understand. A fatal illness has been growing in me for a year. I shall very likely not live another year. I will not deny anything I have done. I will not pretend to love where I have no love. But shadows are rising round me. Sickness makes them. If I have wronged the dead - I have but little time to do what I left undone.'

The varied transitions of tone with which this speech was delivered were as perfect as the most accomplished actress could have made them. The speech was in fact a piece of what may be called sincere acting; this woman's nature was one in which all feeling - and all the more when it was tragic as well as real - immediately became matter of conscious representation: experience immediately passed into drama, and she acted her own emotions. In a minor degree this is nothing uncommon, but in the Princess the acting had a rare perfection of physiognomy, voice, and gesture. It would not be true to say that she felt less because of this double consciousness: she felt - that is, her mind went through - all the more, but with a difference; each nucleus of pain or pleasure had a deep atmosphere of the excitement or spiritual intoxication which at once exalts and deadens. But Deronda made no reflection of this kind. All his thoughts hung on the purport of what his mother was saying; her tones and her wonderful face entered into his agitation without being noted. What he longed for with an awed desire was to know as much as she would tell him of the strange mental conflict under which it seemed he had been brought into the world; what his compassionate nature made the controlling idea within him were the suffering and the confession that breathed through her later words, and these forbade any further question, when she paused and remained silent, with her brow knit, her head turned a little away from him, and her large eyes fixed as if on something incorporeal. He must wait for her to speak again. She did so with strange abruptness, turning her eyes upon him suddenly, and saying more quickly -

'Sir Hugo has written much about you. He tells me you have a wonderful mind - you comprehend everything - you are wiser than he is with all his sixty years. You say you are glad to know that you were

born a Jew. I am not going to tell you that I have changed my mind about that. Your feelings are against mine. You don't thank me for what I did. Shall you comprehend your mother, or only blame her?'

'There is not a fibre within me but makes me wish to comprehend her,' said Deronda, meeting her sharp gaze solemnly. 'It is a bitter reversal of my longing to think of blaming her. What I have been most trying to do for fifteen years is to have some understanding of those who differ from myself.'

'Then you have become unlike your grandfather in that.' said the mother, 'though you are a young copy of him in your face. He never comprehended me, or if he did, he only thought of fettering me into obedience. I was to be what he called 'the Jewish woman' under pain of his curse. I was to feel everything I did not feel, and believe everything I did not believe. I was to feel awe for the bit of parchment in the *mezuzah* over the door; to dread lest a bit of butter should touch a bit of meat; to think it beautiful that men should bind the *tephillin* on them, and women not, - to adore the wisdom of such laws, however silly they might seem to me. I was to love the long prayers in the ugly synagogue, and the howling, and the gabbling, and the dreadful fasts, and the tiresome feasts, and my father's endless discoursing about our people, which was a thunder without meaning in my ears. I was to care forever about what Israel had been; and I did not care at all. I cared for the wide world, and all that I could represent in it. I hated living under the shadow of my father's strictness. Teaching, teaching for everlasting - 'this you must be,' 'that you must not be' - pressed on me like a frame that got tighter and tighter as I grew. I wanted to live a large life, with freedom to do what every one else did, and be carried along in a great current, not obliged to care. Ah!' - here her tone changed to one of a more bitter incisiveness - 'you are glad to have been born a Jew. You say so. That is because you have not been brought up as a Jew. That separateness seems sweet to you because I saved you from it.'

'When you resolved on that, you meant that I should never know my origin?' said Deronda, impulsively. 'You have at least changed in your feeling on that point.'

'Yes, that was what I meant. That is what I persevered in. And it is not true to say that I have changed. Things have changed in spite of me. I am still the same Leonora' - she pointed with her forefinger to her breast - 'here within me is the same desire, the same will, the same choice, *but*' - she spread out her hands, palm upward, on each side of her, as she paused with a bitter compression of her lip, then let her voice fall into muffled, rapid utterance - 'events come upon us like evil enchantments: and thoughts, feelings, apparitions in the darkness are events - are they not? I don't consent. We only consent to what we

love. I obey something tyrannic' - she spread out her hands again - 'I am forced to be withered, to feel pain, to be dying slowly. Do I love that? Well, I have been forced to obey my dead father. I have been forced to tell you that you are a Jew, and deliver to you what he commanded me to deliver.'

'I beseech you to tell me what moved you - when you were young, I mean - to take the course you did,' said Deronda, trying by this reference to the past to escape from what to him was the heart-rending piteousness of this mingled suffering and defiance. 'I gather that my grandfather opposed your bent to be an artist. Though my own experience has been quite different, I enter into the painfulness of your struggle. I can imagine the hardship of an enforced renunciation.'

'No,' said the Princess, shaking her head and folding her arms with an air of decision. 'You are not a woman. You may try - but you can never imagine what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl. To have a pattern cut out - 'this is the Jewish woman; this is what you must be; this is what you are wanted for; a woman's heart must be of such a size and no larger, else it must be pressed small, like Chinese feet; her happiness is to be made as cakes are, by a fixed receipt.' That was what my father wanted. He wished I had been a son; he cared for me as a make-shift link. His heart was set on his Judaism. He hated that Jewish women should be thought of by the Christian world as a sort of ware to make public singers and actresses of. As if we were not the more enviable for that! That is a chance of escaping from bondage.'

'Was my grandfather a learned man?' said Deronda, eager to know particulars that he feared his mother might not think of.

She answered impatiently, putting up her hand, 'Oh, yes, - and a clever physician - and good: I don't deny that he was good. A man to be admired in a play - grand, with an iron will. Like the old Foscari before he pardons. But such men turn their wives and daughters into slaves. They would rule the world if they could; but not ruling the world, they throw all the weight of their will on the necks and souls of women. But nature sometimes thwarts them. My father had no other child than his daughter, and she was like himself.'

She had folded her arms again, and looked as if she were ready to face some impending attempt at mastery.

'Your father was different. Unlike me - all lovingness and affection. I knew I could rule him; and I made him secretly promise me, before I married him, that he would put no hindrance in the way of my being an artist. My father was on his deathbed when we were married: from

the first he had fixed his mind on my marrying my cousin Ephraim. And when a woman's will is as strong as the man's who wants to govern her, half her strength must be concealment. I meant to have my will in the end, but I could only have it by seeming to obey. I had an awe of my father - always I had had an awe of him: it was impossible to help it. I hated to feel awed - I wished I could have defied him openly; but I never could. It was what I could not imagine: I could not act it to myself that I should begin to defy my father openly and succeed. And I never would risk failure.'

This last sentence was uttered with an abrupt emphasis, and she paused after it as if the words had raised a crowd of remembrances which obstructed speech. Her son was listening to her with feelings more and more highly mixed; the first sense of being repelled by the frank coldness which had replaced all his preconceptions of a mother's tender joy in the sight of him; the first impulses of indignation at what shocked his most cherished emotions and principles - all these busy elements of collision between them were subsiding for a time, and making more and more room for that effort at just allowance and that admiration of a forcible nature whose errors lay along high pathways, which he would have felt if, instead of being his mother, she had been a stranger who had appealed to his sympathy. Still it was impossible to be dispassionate: he trembled lest the next thing she had to say would be more repugnant to him than what had gone before: he was afraid of the strange coercion she seemed to be under to lay her mind bare: he almost wished he could say, 'Tell me only what is necessary,' and then again he felt the fascination which made him watch her and listen to her eagerly. He tried to recall her to particulars by asking -

'Where was my grandfather's home?'

'Here in Genoa, where I was married; and his family had lived here generations ago. But my father had been in various countries.'

'You must surely have lived in England?'

'My mother was English - a Jewess of Portuguese descent. My father married her in England. Certain circumstances of that marriage made all the difference in my life: through that marriage my father thwarted his own plans. My mother's sister was a singer, and afterward she married the English partner of a merchant's house here in Genoa, and they came and lived here eleven years. My mother died when I was eight years old, and my father allowed me to be continually with my Aunt Leonora and be taught under her eyes, as if he had not minded the danger of her encouraging my wish to be a singer, as she had been. But this was it - I saw it again and again in my father: - he did not guard against consequences, because he felt sure he could hinder

them if he liked. Before my aunt left Genoa, I had had enough teaching to bring out the born singer and actress within me: my father did not know everything that was done; but he knew that I was taught music and singing - he knew my inclination. That was nothing to him: he meant that I should obey his will. And he was resolved that I should marry my cousin Ephraim, the only one left of my father's family that he knew. I wanted not to marry. I thought of all plans to resist it, but at last I found that I could rule my cousin, and I consented. My father died three weeks after we were married, and then I had my way!' She uttered these words almost exultantly; but after a little pause her face changed, and she said in a biting tone, 'It has not lasted, though. My father is getting his way now.'

She began to look more contemplatively again at her son, and presently said -

'You are like him - but milder - there is something of your own father in you; and he made it the labor of his life to devote himself to me: wound up his money-changing and banking, and lived to wait upon me - he went against his conscience for me. As I loved the life of my art, so he loved me. Let me look at your hand again: the hand with the ring on. It was your father's ring.'

He drew his chair nearer to her and gave her his hand. We know what kind of a hand it was: her own, very much smaller, was of the same type. As he felt the smaller hand holding his, as he saw nearer to him the face that held the likeness of his own, aged not by time but by intensity, the strong bent of his nature toward a reverential tenderness asserted itself above every other impression and in his most fervent tone he said -

'Mother! take us all into your heart - the living and the dead. Forgive every thing that hurts you in the past. Take my affection.'

She looked at him admiringly rather than lovingly, then kissed him on the brow, and saying sadly, 'I reject nothing, but I have nothing to give,' she released his hand and sank back on her cushions. Deronda turned pale with what seems always more of a sensation than an emotion - the pain of repulsed tenderness. She noticed the expression of pain, and said, still with melodious melancholy in her tones -

'It is better so. We must part again soon and you owe me no duties. I did not wish you to be born. I parted with you willingly. When your father died I resolved that I would have no more ties, but such as I could free myself from. I was the Alcharisi you have heard of: the name had magic wherever it was carried. Men courted me. Sir Hugo Mallinger was one who wished to marry me. He was madly in love with me. One day I asked him, 'Is there a man capable of doing something

for love of me, and expecting nothing in return?' He said: 'What is it you want done?' I said, 'Take my boy and bring him up as an Englishman, and never let him know anything about his parents.' You were little more than two years old, and were sitting on his foot. He declared that he would pay money to have such a boy. I had not meditated much on the plan beforehand, but as soon as I had spoken about it, it took possession of me as something I could not rest without doing. At first he thought I was not serious, but I convinced him, and he was never surprised at anything. He agreed that it would be for your good, and the finest thing for you. A great singer and actress is a queen, but she gives no royalty to her son. All that happened at Naples. And afterward I made Sir Hugo the trustee of your fortune. That is what I did; and I had a joy in doing it. My father had tyrannized over me - he cared more about a grandson to come than he did about me: I counted as nothing. You were to be such a Jew as he; you were to be what he wanted. But you were my son, and it was my turn to say what you should be. I said you should not know you were a Jew.'

'And for months events have been preparing me to be glad that I am a Jew,' said - Deronda, his opposition roused again. The point touched the quick of his experience. 'It would always have been better that I should have known the truth. I have always been rebelling against the secrecy that looked like shame. It is no shame to have Jewish parents - the shame is to disown it.'

'You say it was a shame to me, then, that I used that secrecy,' said his mother, with a flash of new anger. 'There is no shame attaching to me. I have no reason to be ashamed. I rid myself of the Jewish tatters and gibberish that make people nudge each other at sight of us, as if we were tattooed under our clothes, though our faces are as whole as theirs. I delivered you from the pelting contempt that pursues Jewish separateness. I am not ashamed that I did it. It was the better for you.'

'Then why have you now undone the secrecy? - no, not undone it - the effects will never be undone. But why have you now sent for me to tell me that I am a Jew?' said Deronda, with an intensity of opposition in feeling that was almost bitter. It seemed as if her words had called out a latent obstinacy of race in him.

'Why? - ah, why?' said the Princess, rising quickly and walking to the other side of the room, where she turned round and slowly approached him, as he, too, stood up. Then she began to speak again in a more veiled voice. 'I can't explain; I can only say what is. I don't love my father's religion now any more than I did then. Before I married the second time I was baptized; I made myself like the people I lived among. I had a right to do it; I was not like a brute, obliged to go with my own herd. I have not repented; I will not say that I have

repented. But yet' - here she had come near to her son, and paused; then again retreated a little and stood still, as if resolute not to give way utterly to an imperious influence; but, as she went on speaking, she became more and more unconscious of anything but the awe that subdued her voice. 'It is illness, I don't doubt that it has been gathering illness - my mind has gone back: more than a year ago it began. You see my gray hair, my worn look: it has all come fast. Sometimes I am in an agony of pain - I dare say I shall be to-night. Then it is as if all the life I have chosen to live, all thoughts, all will, forsook me and left me alone in spots of memory, and I can't get away: my pain seems to keep me there. My childhood - my girlhood - the day of my marriage - the day of my father's death - there seems to be nothing since. Then a great horror comes over me: what do I know of life or death? and what my father called 'right' may be a power that is laying hold of me - that is clutching me now. Well, I will satisfy him. I cannot go into the darkness without satisfying him. I have hidden what was his. I thought once I would burn it. I have not burned it. I thank God I have not burned it!'

She threw herself on her cushions again, visibly fatigued. Deronda, moved too strongly by her suffering for other impulses to act within him, drew near her, and said, entreatingly -

'Will you not spare yourself this evening? Let us leave the rest till to-morrow.'

'No,' she said decisively. 'I will confess it all, now that I have come up to it. Often when I am at ease it all fades away; my whole self comes quite back; but I know it will sink away again, and the other will come - the poor, solitary, forsaken remains of self, that can resist nothing. It was my nature to resist, and say, 'I have a right to resist.' Well, I say so still when I have any strength in me. You have heard me say it, and I don't withdraw it. But when my strength goes, some other right forces itself upon me like iron in an inexorable hand; and even when I am at ease, it is beginning to make ghosts upon the daylight. And now you have made it worse for me,' she said, with a sudden return of impetuosity; 'but I shall have told you everything. And what reproach is there against me,' she added bitterly, 'since I have made you glad to be a Jew? Joseph Kalonymos reproached me: he said you had been turned into a proud Englishman, who resented being touched by a Jew. I wish you had!' she ended, with a new marvelous alternation. It was as if her mind were breaking into several, one jarring the other into impulsive action.

'Who is Joseph Kalonymos?' said Deronda, with a darting recollection of that Jew who touched his arm in the Frankfort synagogue.

'Ah! some vengeance sent him back from the East, that he might see you and come to reproach me. He was my father's friend. He knew of your birth: he knew of my husband's death, and once, twenty years ago, after he had been away in the Levant, he came to see me and inquire about you. I told him that you were dead: I meant you to be dead to all the world of my childhood. If I had said that you were living, he would have interfered with my plans: he would have taken on him to represent my father, and have tried to make me recall what I had done. What could I do but say you were dead? The act was done. If I had told him of it there would have been trouble and scandal - and all to conquer me, who would not have been conquered. I was strong then, and I would have had my will, though there might have been a hard fight against me. I took the way to have it without any fight. I felt then that I was not really deceiving: it would have come to the same in the end; or if not to the same, to something worse. He believed me and begged that I would give up to him the chest that my father had charged me and my husband to deliver to our eldest son. I knew what was in the chest - things that had been dinned in my ears since I had had any understanding - things that were thrust on my mind that I might feel them like a wall around my life - my life that was growing like a tree. Once, after my husband died, I was going to burn the chest. But it was difficult to burn; and burning a chest and papers looks like a shameful act. I have committed no shameful act - except what Jews would call shameful. I had kept the chest, and I gave it to Joseph Kalonymos. He went away mournful, and said, 'If you marry again, and if another grandson is born to him who is departed, I will deliver up the chest to him.' I bowed in silence. I meant not to marry again - no more than I meant to be the shattered woman that I am now.'

She ceased speaking, and her head sank back while she looked vaguely before her. Her thought was traveling through the years, and when she began to speak again her voice had lost its argumentative spirit, and had fallen into a veiled tone of distress.

'But months ago this Kalonymos saw you in the synagogue at Frankfort. He saw you enter the hotel, and he went to ask your name. There was nobody else in the world to whom the name would have told anything about me.'

'Then it is not my real name?' said Deronda, with a dislike even to this trifling part of the disguise which had been thrown round him.

'Oh, as real as another,' said his mother, indifferently. 'The Jews have always been changing their names. My father's family had kept the name of Charisi: my husband was a Charisi. When I came out as a singer, we made it Alcharisi. But there had been a branch of the family my father had lost sight of who called themselves Deronda, and

when I wanted a name for you, and Sir Hugo said, 'Let it be a foreign name,' I thought of Deronda. But Joseph Kalonymos had heard my father speak of the Deronda branch, and the name confirmed his suspicion. He began to suspect what had been done. It was as if everything had been whispered to him in the air. He found out where I was. He took a journey into Russia to see me; he found me weak and shattered. He had come back again, with his white hair, and with rage in his soul against me. He said I was going down to the grave clad in falsehood and robbery - falsehood to my father and robbery of my own child. He accused me of having kept the knowledge of your birth from you, and having brought you up as if you had been the son of an English gentleman. Well, it was true; and twenty years before I would have maintained that I had a right to do it. But I can maintain nothing now. No faith is strong within me. My father may have God on his side. This man's words were like lion's teeth upon me. My father's threats eat into me with my pain. If I tell everything - if I deliver up everything - what else can be demanded of me? I cannot make myself love the people I have never loved - is it not enough that I lost the life I did love?'

She had leaned forward a little in her low-toned pleading, that seemed like a smothered cry: her arms and hands were stretched out at full length, as if strained in beseeching, Deronda's soul was absorbed in the anguish of compassion. He could not mind now that he had been repulsed before. His pity made a flood of forgiveness within him. His single impulse was to kneel by her and take her hand gently, between his palms, while he said in that exquisite voice of soothing which expresses oneness with the sufferer -

'Mother, take comfort!'

She did not seem inclined to repulse him now, but looked down at him and let him take both her hands to fold between his. Gradually tears gathered, but she pressed her handkerchief against her eyes and then leaned her cheek against his brow, as if she wished that they should not look at each other.

'Is it not possible that I could be near you often and comfort you?' said Deronda. He was under that stress of pity that propels us on sacrifices.

'No, not possible,' she answered, lifting up her head again and withdrawing her hand as if she wished him to move away. 'I have a husband and five children. None of them know of your existence.'

Deronda felt painfully silenced. He rose and stood at a little distance.

'You wonder why I married,' she went on presently, under the influence of a newly-recurring thought. 'I meant never to marry again. I meant to be free and to live for my art. I had parted with you. I had no bonds. For nine years I was a queen. I enjoyed the life I had longed for. But something befell me. It was like a fit of forgetfulness. I began to sing out of tune. They told me of it. Another woman was thrusting herself in my place. I could not endure the prospect of failure and decline. It was horrible to me.' She started up again, with a shudder, and lifted screening hands like one who dreads missiles. 'It drove me to marry. I made believe that I preferred being the wife of a Russian noble to being the greatest lyric actress of Europe; I made believe - I acted that part. It was because I felt my greatness sinking away from me, as I feel my life sinking now. I would not wait till men said, 'She had better go.'

She sank into her seat again, and looked at the evening sky as she went on: 'I repented. It was a resolve taken in desperation. That singing out of tune was only like a fit of illness; it went away. I repented; but it was too late. I could not go back. All things hindered, me - all things.'

A new haggardness had come in her face, but her son refrained from again urging her to leave further speech till the morrow: there was evidently some mental relief for her in an outpouring such as she could never have allowed herself before. He stood still while she maintained silence longer than she knew, and the light was perceptibly fading. At last she turned to him and said -

'I can bear no more now.' She put out her hand, but then quickly withdrew it saying, 'Stay. How do I know that I can see you again? I cannot bear to be seen when I am in pain.'

She drew forth a pocket-book, and taking out a letter said, 'This is addressed to the banking-house in Mainz, where you are to go for your grandfather's chest. It is a letter written by Joseph Kalonymos: if he is not there himself, this order of his will be obeyed.'

When Deronda had taken the letter, she said, with effort but more gently than before, 'Kneel again, and let me kiss you.'

He obeyed, and holding his head between her hands, she kissed him solemnly on the brow. 'You see, I had no life left to love you with,' she said, in a low murmur. 'But there is more fortune for you. Sir Hugo was to keep it in reserve. I gave you all your father's fortune. They can never accuse me of robbery there.'

'If you had needed anything I would have worked for you,' said Deronda, conscious of disappointed yearning - a shutting out forever from long early vistas of affectionate imagination.

'I need nothing that the skill of man can give me,' said his mother, still holding his head, and perusing his features. 'But perhaps now I have satisfied my father's will, your face will come instead of his - your young, loving face.'

'But you will see me again?' said Deronda, anxiously.

'Yes - perhaps. Wait, wait. Leave me now.'