

## **AI-Generated Graded Readers**

Masaru Uchida, Gifu University

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### **About This Edition**

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.

The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

### **Content Note**

This adaptation is based on a historical literary work. It may contain expressions, attitudes, or depictions that some readers may consider inappropriate or offensive by today's standards. Such elements have been retained or reflected where necessary in order to preserve the historical and literary character of the original work.

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Henry James, *The Ambassadors* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

## Part 1: Strether Arrives in Chester

When Lambert Strether reached the hotel in Chester, his first question was about his friend. He asked if Mr. Waymarsh had arrived. The young woman at the desk looked for the name and then showed him a telegram. Waymarsh had asked for a room, but only if it was not noisy. He would not arrive until the evening. Strether was surprised, but he was not truly disappointed.

He had expected to meet Waymarsh in England, but not at once. They had agreed to meet in Chester instead of Liverpool. This had been Strether's own wish, though he had not said it very clearly, even to himself. He wanted to see his old friend, but he did not want Waymarsh to be the first face of Europe. Waymarsh was dear to him, but Waymarsh also carried America with him. Strether felt that Europe should first come to him in some other way.

Since leaving the ship the day before, Strether had felt a strange freedom. On the ship he had spoken with several people, and some of them had asked him to join them after landing. Most had gone straight to London. Others had wanted to look around Liverpool with him. But Strether had quietly escaped them all. He had kept no promise, renewed no friendship, and spent the afternoon and evening alone.

That short time alone had pleased him more than he had expected. Liverpool had not been beautiful in any simple way, but it had been new. The streets, the river, the English air, and the sense of being far from home all worked on him. He knew that his real business had not yet begun. He had come to Europe for a serious reason. Yet, for a few hours, he had been only a man with no one to answer to.

This made him feel both light and uneasy. He wanted to see Waymarsh, but he was glad that Waymarsh was late. He wanted to do his duty, but he was also curious about everything that stood outside that duty. He felt pulled in two directions. One part of him was firm and serious. Another part was already

wandering.

After the young woman at the desk gave him the message, Strether turned away. At that moment he found himself face to face with a lady. He had seen her before, though only for a moment, at the hotel in Liverpool. She had been speaking there with people from his ship. Nothing had passed between them then. Still, both of them now seemed to remember the other.

The lady looked at him with quick interest. She said she had heard him ask about Mr. Waymarsh. Did he mean Mr. Waymarsh of Milrose, Connecticut, the American lawyer? Strether answered that he did. Waymarsh was a very old friend and was coming to meet him there. Then Strether asked if she knew him.

She said she had met Waymarsh years before in Milrose. She had stayed there with friends who also knew him. She had even been in his house, though she was not sure he would remember her. She added that she would be glad to see him if the chance came. Then she said, with an easy change of subject, that she believed Strether knew the Munsters. These were the people with whom he had seen her in Liverpool.

Strether did not really know the Munsters well. Because of this, the talk might have stopped. But it did not stop. He and the lady remained together as if something had already been settled between them. She told him the hotel had a garden. A few minutes later, almost before he understood how it had happened, he was walking with her into it.

He had not even gone up to his room yet. He had meant to arrive quietly, ask about Waymarsh, and prepare himself. Instead, this unknown woman seemed to take charge of the moment. She knew the place better than he did. She spoke as if she were receiving him there. Before long they had agreed to meet again after he had washed and changed, and then they would look at the town together.

When Strether came down again, the lady was waiting in the garden. He was a thin man of about fifty-five, with a dark moustache, grey in his hair, and glasses on his strong nose. His face was dry and brown, and time had marked it deeply. He carried a light coat over his arm and moved with a slight stiffness. Yet there was also a careful, gentle look about him. He seemed like a man who noticed more

than he said.

The lady was ready for the walk in a way that made him feel rough and unfinished. Her gloves, clothes, and whole manner had a quiet rightness. Nothing about her was loud, but everything seemed chosen. She was not very young, but she had a lively, confident air. Strether paused before reaching her, pretending to look for something in his coat. In truth, he needed a moment to gather himself.

He felt that something new had begun. It was not like the old life behind him, and it was not yet connected with the duty before him. Upstairs, while looking in the mirror, he had already studied himself more sharply than usual. His hat, his tie, and his general appearance had suddenly seemed important. He told himself that London would help with such things later. But the lady before him already seemed to have what he lacked.

As they passed through the hotel hall to go out into the street, she stopped him. She asked if he had looked up her name. Strether laughed and asked if she had looked up his. She answered that of course she had. She had gone to the desk and asked as soon as he left her.

Then she gave him her card. She had another small matter at the desk, she said, and he could read the card while he waited. Strether gave her his card in return, though she did not look at it at once. On her card he read the name Maria Gostrey. There was also an address in Paris. He put the card carefully into his pocket, almost as if he were putting away something valuable.

He smiled to himself while he waited. It seemed strange that he already had Maria Gostrey, whoever she might be, safely in his keeping. He also felt that he had crossed some small line. There was a person at home who might not have liked this quick new friendship. But if every free act was wrong, he thought, then perhaps he should never have come to Europe at all. Before Waymarsh had even arrived, his old limits had begun to move.

Maria Gostrey returned with a bright, decided air, and they went out together. Strether still held his own card in his hand without noticing it. After they had walked a little way, she gently laughed at him and asked why he did not put it away. She thought he was still holding her card. When he gave it to her, she saw

that it was his own and looked at the name.

“I like your name,” she said. She read it again: “Mr. Lewis Lambert Strether.” She liked the sound of Lewis Lambert, she told him. It reminded her of a novel by Balzac. Strether said he knew the novel, and she answered that it was a very bad one. He smiled and said he knew that too.

Then, as if offering a more serious card than the one in her hand, he said, “I come from Woollett, Massachusetts.” Maria laughed a little. She said he spoke as if he wanted her to know the worst at once. Strether answered that she had probably already guessed it. He felt that Woollett showed in his face, his speech, and his whole way of moving. He wanted to be honest from the beginning.

Maria asked what he thought might happen because of that honesty. Strether looked away instead of meeting her eyes. He said that she might find him too hopeless. She answered that she often liked the most hopeless Americans best. They walked on, and the old walls of Chester rose and turned beside them. The town showed them narrow paths, old stones, sudden views, and the tower of the cathedral.

Strether had walked there once before, many years earlier, when he was twenty-five. The memory did not spoil the place for him. It made the place deeper and sweeter. Yet he also thought that he should have been sharing this walk with Waymarsh. He was taking something that had almost belonged to his friend. Again and again he looked at his watch.

At last Maria noticed. She said he was doing something he thought was not right. Strether colored and laughed uneasily. He asked if he was enjoying himself as much as that. Maria said he was not enjoying himself enough. His real failure, she told him, was a failure to enjoy.

Strether said that this was the failure of Woollett. Woollett was not sure that it ought to enjoy anything. If it were sure, perhaps it would do better. But Woollett had no one to show it how. He, at least, now had someone. As he said this, he looked toward the cathedral, where birds were flying around the tower.

Maria stood near him and seemed to understand the feeling of the place. She said that he did indeed have someone. Then she added that she wished he would

let her show him how to enjoy things. Strether answered lightly that he was afraid of her. She looked at him kindly and said he was not afraid at all. If he had been afraid, they would not already be walking together like this.

Strether admitted that he trusted her, and that was exactly what frightened him. He had known her only a short time, yet he had fallen almost completely into her hands. Nothing like this, he said, had ever happened to him. Maria told him that he had simply recognized her. She was, she explained, a kind of guide to Europe. She waited for Americans, picked them up, led them around, and helped them understand what they had come to see.

Strether listened with wonder. Maria said she had not planned such a life; it had simply become hers. She knew shops, prices, hotels, streets, and many worse and better things too. She carried, she said, the heavy load of American visitors on her back. She did not do it for money. When Strether asked how such people rewarded her, she paused and then answered, "They do not."

They walked back toward the hotel, but Strether again looked at his watch. Maria saw the fear behind the small movement. She said he was truly afraid of Waymarsh. Strether smiled weakly and said this showed why he was afraid of her. She understood too much. She had put her finger on the place where his fear lived.

He said he did not want to escape Waymarsh. He wanted to see him and had to wait for him. But he wanted to escape the fear that came with waiting. He was always thinking about something other than the present moment. Even now, while he was with Maria, part of him was thinking of someone else. Maria said he should not do that and offered, almost playfully but also seriously, to help him.

Strether wished he could give himself fully into her care. But he knew he could not. He could only try. Maria accepted even that. She told him to trust her, and for a little while he put his hand through her arm as they walked. Near the hotel he drew it away again, perhaps because the old world was about to return.

At the hotel door, the young woman from the desk was watching them. Beside her stood another person, also watching. Strether stopped at once. Maria looked ahead and named him with clear confidence: Mr. Waymarsh. In that moment Strether understood what he had been waiting for. His old friend had arrived, and

he looked completely without joy.

## Part 2: Waymarsh and Maria

That evening Strether had to admit to Waymarsh that he knew almost nothing about Maria Gostrey. Waymarsh had now met her again, eaten dinner with her, and walked with her and Strether under the moonlight to see the cathedral. Still, he could not remember her clearly. She asked him about people he knew in Milrose, and he answered as well as he could. But Strether saw that Maria seemed to know more than both men together.

This interested Strether very much. Maria had taken hold of him at once, but she did not take hold of Waymarsh in the same way. Waymarsh remained heavy, silent, and hard to move. Strether felt that his own quick trust in Maria was now shown even more clearly by Waymarsh's lack of trust. With Strether, she had opened a door. With Waymarsh, the door hardly moved.

After the first talk in the hall, the two men went into the garden. Maria disappeared for a while, leaving them together. Later Strether went with Waymarsh to the room that had been prepared for him. He had checked the room before, because he wanted everything to be right. But when he left Waymarsh there, he did not feel calm.

Strether went up to his own room, but the room suddenly felt too small. The meeting with Waymarsh had excited him more than he had expected. He had thought the meeting would settle something in him. Instead, it stirred everything up. He went downstairs again, walked about the hotel, looked into the public room, and saw Maria writing letters.

He did not disturb her. He moved away again and wandered without purpose. Later, after dinner and after the moonlit walk, he spent a longer time with Waymarsh in Waymarsh's room. It was late, but Waymarsh said he could not sleep. He knew himself, he said, and he knew that sleep would not come unless he first became completely tired.

Waymarsh sat on the edge of the bed in his shirt and trousers. His long legs

stretched out before him, and his back bent forward. He held his elbows, then his beard, then his elbows again. He looked large, dark, tired, and deeply uncomfortable. Strether felt pity for him, but he also felt that Waymarsh's discomfort might become dangerous to his own new pleasure in Europe.

Waymarsh had a strong head and impressive eyes. Strether remembered why, years ago, he had admired him. He looked like the old idea of an American public man, serious and powerful. Yet now that power seemed trapped in fatigue. Europe had not refreshed him; it had almost defeated him.

The two friends had not met for many years. Their work and their separate lives had kept them apart. Now, because of the long break, Strether saw Waymarsh almost as if he were new. He also remembered what he must not ask about. Waymarsh had long lived apart from his wife. Strether knew this, but he respected the silence around it.

Strether admired that silence. Waymarsh had suffered, had worked hard, had earned money, and had kept his dignity. In that way, at least, Strether thought him a success. Strether himself had also had things to be silent about, but he had not made a large income. He felt, not for the first time, that Waymarsh had achieved something solid that he himself had missed.

At last Waymarsh spoke about Europe. "I do not see what you need it for," he said. "You do not look sick." Strether answered that he did not feel sick now that he had started. Before leaving America, however, he had felt worn out. Waymarsh looked at him carefully and asked if he was not just about as usual.

Strether felt the question as a voice from home. It was honest, dry, and not gentle. He said that seeing Waymarsh had already done him good. Waymarsh did not answer the kindness directly. He only said that Strether looked better than the last time he had seen him, and that he had even filled out a little.

Strether laughed and said he had perhaps taken in more than he had room for. He had been very tired when he sailed. Waymarsh answered that he too had been very tired when he arrived in Europe. This search for rest, he said, was taking all the life out of him. Then he said plainly that Europe was not his kind of place and that he wanted to go home.

Strether looked at him with friendly protest. It was not very kind, he said, to say that to a man who had come so far partly to meet him. Waymarsh looked at him sharply and asked if he had really come for that reason. Strether answered that he had, very largely. But Waymarsh had guessed there was something else behind the journey.

Strether admitted that there was another reason. It was not too private for Waymarsh, but it was complicated. Waymarsh said he had not yet lost his mind in Europe, so perhaps he could understand it. Strether promised to tell him everything, but not that night. Waymarsh asked why not, since he could not sleep. Strether answered that he could sleep, and that this was exactly why he needed to go.

Strether helped him settle in bed like a nurse helping a difficult patient. He lowered the light and made sure there were enough blankets. Waymarsh looked even larger and darker under the covers. As Strether stood near the door, Waymarsh asked if Mrs. Newsome was behind the journey. People at home, he said, seemed to think she followed Strether rather closely.

Strether smiled and answered that Mrs. Newsome was safely at home. She had thought of coming herself, but had not come. He had come in her place, and on her business. This meant that Waymarsh had guessed part of the truth. But Strether said there were more things involved than he could begin to explain that night.

Waymarsh asked if the two of them would stay together. Strether answered that he hoped so, though he could already see danger if Waymarsh kept saying he wanted to go home. Waymarsh then asked what Strether was going to do with him. Strether remembered that he himself had asked Maria almost the same question. He answered that he would first take Waymarsh down to London.

Waymarsh groaned that he had already been to London and had no use for it. Strether said that, even so, he had some use for Strether. Then Waymarsh asked again what Strether had in hand. Strether said that if they stayed together, he would soon know it all. Waymarsh gloomily decided that the journey was really for Mrs. Newsome. Strether answered that it was for Mrs. Newsome and for Waymarsh too. Waymarsh turned over and said, "Well, I will not marry you."

Strether laughed and left him.

The next morning Maria was already in the breakfast room when Strether came down. She had planned to take an earlier train, but Strether asked her not to leave so quickly. She had created a need, he said, and she must not disappear at once. Waymarsh had not yet come down, and Strether needed help ordering breakfast for him. Maria accepted the duty with quick good humor.

In the garden, while breakfast was prepared, Maria explained more about her strange work. She said she often helped Americans through Europe so that they could go home quickly. She called herself an agent for sending people back to their own country. Strether laughed, but he understood that there was truth in her joke. Maria knew how to lead people into Europe and also how to send them away from it.

She decided to stay a little longer and travel later. During the morning she helped Waymarsh eat a more European breakfast than he knew. Then the three of them walked again through Chester. Maria and Strether talked easily, while Waymarsh mostly stayed silent. His silence was not empty; it seemed full of heavy thoughts.

Strether enjoyed the old streets, the shop windows, the walls, and the strange covered walks. But he was also a little ashamed of enjoying them so much. The shops made him want things he did not need. He looked with interest at paper, gloves, and neckties. Waymarsh looked instead at useful things, as if usefulness could protect him from Europe.

Maria allowed Strether to buy gloves, but she told him to wait before buying other things. In London, she said, she would guide him better. Strether felt the danger and pleasure of this. Maria was not only showing him Europe; she was showing him a new way to be himself. Waymarsh, walking near them, seemed to watch this with dark suspicion.

Near the end of the walk, Waymarsh suddenly crossed the way and entered a jeweller's shop. Maria and Strether stopped, surprised. For a moment they looked at each other almost with fear. Maria asked what was wrong with him. Strether answered that he could not bear Europe, and that this was his strike for freedom.

They waited outside, half amused and half worried. Maria wondered what terrible thing he might buy. Strether said they must not follow him. They had to let him have his moment. When Waymarsh came out, he explained nothing. His face was dark and grand, and he looked above the old buildings as if he had fought a private battle.

Strether later called this mood Waymarsh's sacred rage. It was his way of refusing to be changed by Europe. It made him difficult, but Strether also felt that it gave him a kind of strength. Maria looked at Waymarsh, then at Strether, and understood enough. She did not want to be better than Strether, and perhaps, for the moment, that was the most honest thing between them.

### Part 3: London and the Mission Explained

Three days later, Strether sat beside Maria Gostrey in a London theatre. He had not planned the evening himself. Maria had simply heard him say that he wondered what the London theatre was like, and from that small wish she had carried him there. She knew the play, the theatre, the seats, and the proper hour to arrive. For three days she had known everything in this same easy way.

Waymarsh had not come with them. He said he had already seen enough plays before Strether arrived. When Strether asked how many, Waymarsh said he had seen two plays and a circus. This seemed to him quite enough for one man in Europe. Strether did not argue. He had begun to understand that Waymarsh's refusals were part of his strength.

Before the play, Maria had dined with Strether at his hotel. They had sat across from each other at a small table, with soft pink lights between them. The room, the food, the candles, and Maria's quiet fragrance all seemed new to him. He had been to the theatre in Boston with Mrs. Newsome more than once. But he had never dined in this free, private-public way with a woman before going to a play.

Maria's dress also made him think. It showed her shoulders more than Mrs. Newsome's dresses ever did. Around Maria's neck was a red velvet band with an old jewel at the front. Strether noticed it more than he wanted to. He would never

have told her how much he liked it, but he could not stop seeing it.

The red band made him think of Mrs. Newsome's throat, Mrs. Newsome's dress, and Mrs. Newsome's whole manner. Mrs. Newsome wore black silk at such times and always looked fine, proper, and controlled. He had once told her she looked like Queen Elizabeth. At the time he had thought this a brave remark. Now, sitting beside Maria, he saw how careful and small that bravery had been.

The theatre itself seemed full of different kinds of people. Maria called them "types," and Strether understood the word at once. Woollett had types too, but fewer and simpler ones. In Woollett, people seemed to fall into large groups: men and women, useful people and difficult people, proper people and improper people. In London, every face seemed to carry a different mark.

He looked at the audience almost as much as the stage. A large red-haired woman near him spoke across him to a man on her other side. Her words were not important, but her voice and body seemed very much alive. On the stage, a bad woman in a yellow dress made a weak young man do terrible things. Strether watched this with a feeling he could not fully name.

The weak young man made him think of Chad Newsome. He had not come to Europe to be kind to Chad. He had come to bring him home. Yet the young man on the stage looked so easy to pity that Strether began to worry. Would Chad be like that, charming and helpless? Would he also move through life in evening clothes, softened by pleasure and danger?

During one of the pauses, Maria turned their talk back to Chad. She said she had guessed part of the story. Chad was a young man with great hopes placed on him in Woollett. A bad woman in Paris had taken hold of him. His family had sent Strether to rescue him and separate him from her. Then Maria asked if Strether was completely sure the woman was bad for him.

Strether was stopped by the question. Of course they were sure, he said. How could they not be? Maria answered that one could not know such things before seeing the facts. She knew almost nothing yet, she reminded him. The woman might be charming. Chad's life itself might be charming.

Strether stared before him. He said the woman was low, selfish, and probably

taken from the streets. Maria then asked what kind of man Chad was. Strether called him obstinate. When she asked if he liked Chad, he answered quickly that he did not. How could he like a young man who had brought so much worry to his mother?

Strether spoke of Mrs. Newsome with deep respect. Chad had darkened her life, he said, and nearly worried her to death. Maria asked if Mrs. Newsome's life was very admirable. Strether answered that it was extraordinarily admirable. His tone made Maria pause, as if she had suddenly seen something important.

Maria wanted to know more about Chad's family. Strether explained that Chad's father was dead. Chad had one sister, older than he was and married. Mrs. Newsome and her daughter were both, he said, very fine women. Maria asked if he meant very handsome. Strether felt a little trapped by the direct question, but he answered carefully.

Mrs. Newsome, he said, was handsome, though she had a grown son and daughter and was no longer young. But he was not thinking mainly of her looks. He was thinking of many other things. About the daughter, Mrs. Pocock, people might disagree. Maria asked if people might disagree about her beauty, and Strether said they might disagree about everything.

Maria saw quickly that Strether was a little afraid of Mrs. Pocock. She said she could already imagine her. Then she asked if these three people were all Chad's family. Strether said they were. They would do anything in the world for Chad. Maria then asked if Strether would do anything in the world for them.

Strether did not like the question put so strongly. He said he did not know. Maria answered that he was at least doing this one great thing for them. Strether explained that Mrs. Newsome and her daughter could not come themselves. They were busy, and Mrs. Newsome especially had a full life. She was also delicate, nervous, and not strong.

Maria understood that kind of woman. She said Mrs. Newsome must put so much of herself into everything that she had nothing left. Strether agreed. Mrs. Newsome, he said, would have come if she had believed it necessary, but seeing the woman in Paris herself would have been too much for her. Maria said that

would have taken courage. Strether answered that it would have been not courage but a kind of high moral excitement, and that was different.

Maria then asked about money. Strether said Mrs. Newsome had plenty of it, and that money was part of the trouble. Chad had been allowed to use a great deal. If he came home now, however, he would gain much more. The family business was waiting for him, but it would not wait forever.

Maria asked what kind of business it was. Strether said it was a large and successful manufacture in Woollett. They made one small common household object, and they made it very well. It was useful, ordinary, and profitable, but it had no beauty or dignity. Maria tried to guess what the object was, but Strether would not tell her. He said only that it was too vulgar for this grand London evening.

Maria wondered if Chad stayed away because he was ashamed of the business. Strether laughed at this. Chad was not ashamed to use the money, he said. He also had money of his own from his grandfather. Maria then asked whether the grandfather's money had come from a noble source. Strether avoided the details, but he admitted that it had not been noble.

The talk made Mrs. Newsome appear before Maria's mind more clearly. She seemed to see a woman who lived among money, business, and old wrongs, yet tried to make her life fine and useful. Strether said Mrs. Newsome spent her money with wide kindness. Maria answered that this sounded almost like payment for old sins. Strether did not like that, but he could not fully deny the picture.

Maria asked if Strether worked in the business. He said he did not touch it. Then what did he do? Strether answered that he edited the Review. Woollett had a Review, paid for mostly by Mrs. Newsome and edited by him. His name was on the cover. He was almost hurt, he said, that Maria had never heard of it.

Maria asked what kind of Review it was. Strether said, with sudden peace, that it was green. He meant that the cover was green, a very lovely green. Mrs. Newsome's name was not on it, but she was behind the whole thing. Maria understood. Mrs. Newsome, she said, must be a moral great lady of Woollett.

Strether accepted this. Yes, Mrs. Newsome was a moral great lady. Maria said

Strether must be one too, because he was so closely connected with her. Strether denied it, but Maria would not let him escape. She said he made himself smaller, and that this was part of his position. He kept his name on the cover because it was the one clear piece of himself left after many disappointments.

Their talk grew more personal, though still light on the surface. Maria said Mrs. Newsome must like seeing his name there. She also asked, suddenly, how Mrs. Newsome did her hair. Strether laughed and said she did it beautifully. Maria guessed it would be very neat, thick, and still without white. Strether was startled by how well she could see a woman she had never met.

At the end of the play, they waited while the crowd slowly left the theatre. Outside, rain had begun to fall. Maria said Strether must not take her home. He was only to put her into a cab. She liked to ride alone after an evening like this, especially in London rain, so that she could think everything over.

While they waited for the cab, Maria asked about Chad again. She wondered if Paris might have changed him in two possible ways. It might have made him worse, rougher, or more selfish. But it might also have made him finer. Strether was surprised by the idea. Maria said quietly that refinement could be one of the most dangerous signs.

Strether explained Chad's chance at home. If Chad returned now, he could enter the business and receive a large share in its future. His mother had kept the place open for him against pressure. If he refused, he might lose it forever. Strether had come to make sure he did not miss that chance.

Maria saw the shape of the plan. They wanted Chad home not only for business but also for marriage. Strether admitted this. The young woman was Mamie Pocock, sister-in-law to Chad's married sister. She was, Strether said, the prettiest and brightest girl they had in Woollett. Maria listened and then said softly, almost with pity, "Poor Chad."

Strether answered that Mamie would save him. Maria looked away and corrected him. Strether would save him, she said. Strether tried to make a joke and said perhaps he would do it with Maria's help. She answered that he would do more than all of them together because he was better than the others. Strether

replied that perhaps he had become better since knowing her.

At last the cab came. Before Strether closed the door, Maria asked what he stood to gain if he succeeded. He said he had nothing to gain. She asked what he stood to lose if he failed. At first he said nothing. But when she asked again, the word came out differently. "Everything," he said.

Maria understood him then. She said that if he stood to lose everything, he must succeed. She would help him, she promised, until the end. Strether stood in the rain with his hand still on the cab door. Maria said good night, and the cab carried her away into the wet London street.

#### Part 4: First Days in Paris

On Strether's second morning in Paris, he went with Waymarsh to the bank in the Rue Scribe. His letters of credit had been sent there, and he also expected letters from home. They had gone the day before, just after arriving from London, but nothing had been waiting for him then. This had troubled him more than he wanted to admit. He had come to Paris to begin his work, and without letters he felt strangely loose and unused.

That first day in Paris had still not been wasted. Strether had walked, watched, and let the city press on him from every side. He told himself that everything he saw might be useful for his mission. If he looked at a street, a shop, a theatre, or a crowd, it might all help him understand Chad. This was a comforting thought, because it allowed him to enjoy himself while still calling the pleasure work.

Waymarsh had gone with him that night to a theatre. Afterward they walked along the bright, crowded boulevard and sat for a while outside a café. It was very late, but Paris did not seem sleepy. People moved, talked, smoked, and drank as if the night itself were a public room. Waymarsh sat among them with a face of deep resistance. He had agreed to come, but his whole body seemed to say that he was suffering for a principle.

This morning there were letters. They had first gone to London and then followed Strether to Paris. He felt a strong wish to open them at once in the bank,

but he controlled himself. The bank, with its American air, almost seemed like a bridge back to Woollett. He put the letters into the pocket of his loose grey coat and decided to carry them away before reading them.

Waymarsh had his own letters too, but he did not hurry away. He liked the bank because it had newspapers. To him, such places were stations of safety in Europe. Europe, he seemed to feel, was built to hide important facts from Americans. A bank with American papers gave him one small window back into the world he trusted.

Strether left him there and began to walk alone. The letters in his pocket made him restless. He wanted the best possible place in which to read Mrs. Newsome's words. He walked down the Rue de la Paix in the morning sun, crossed the Tuileries, passed the river, and stopped more than once near the bookstalls. Paris in spring seemed to open itself before him with dangerous kindness.

In the Tuileries Gardens he paused several times simply to look. Girls crossed the paths with boxes strapped over their shoulders. Old people sat early in the sun. Men in official blue coats cleaned the walks and cared for the place with quiet order. A priest moved slowly in one direction, and a soldier in bright trousers passed in another. Everything seemed separate and yet beautifully joined.

Strether remembered that a palace had once stood there. Now there was only open space, and the empty place made history feel close. He did not understand everything he felt, but Paris seemed full of old meanings. The city did not explain itself like a lesson. It touched him here and there, like a hand on a nerve.

Still, he did not stop there to read. He crossed farther and slowly made his way toward the Luxembourg Gardens. There at last he found a chair and sat down. From that place he could see paths, trees in tubs, fountains, women in white caps, and children at play. The whole scene seemed arranged, as if life itself had become a picture.

Then he opened the letters. Four of them were from Mrs. Newsome, and none was short. She had written quickly and fully, following him across the sea with her thoughts. Strether understood that he would hear from her often. Her letters would come several times a week, perhaps more than one with each mail. She had

not come to Europe, but her voice had come.

He read the letters slowly, one after another. Then he kept them on his knees and sat thinking. Mrs. Newsome wrote very well. Her written voice seemed even clearer than her spoken one. From far away, her strength came to him with surprising force. Yet the very distance also made him feel how different his present life was from the life she described.

She told him much about Woollett. She explained who was doing his work while he was away and how everything had been arranged. She wanted him to feel free from small worries. Nothing important at home would suffer, she told him. She had planned things so that he could give himself completely to Chad and to the mission.

This kindness had an odd effect. Because Mrs. Newsome had told him not to worry about home, she had also given him room to breathe. He felt thankful, but he also felt more free than she could have meant him to feel. If she could have seen him sitting in the Luxembourg Gardens with her letters on his knees, he might have stood up at once. He would not have run away, but he would have needed a moment to collect himself.

Strether then thought of his own tiredness before he left America. Mrs. Newsome had understood that tiredness and had pitied him for it. Perhaps that was why she had sent him so carefully into this freedom. He had felt old, worn out, and nearly finished. Yet here in Paris, with the morning around him, he found something like youth moving again in him.

This did not make him proud. It made him uneasy. He had failed, he felt, in many things. He had tried different kinds of work and had not made a great success of any of them. His name stood on the green cover of the Review, but even that name was there because Mrs. Newsome supported it. He was not famous because of the Review. The Review mattered because Mrs. Newsome had allowed him to stand near it.

His thoughts moved farther back. He remembered the young wife he had lost long ago. He remembered the little son who had died at school. The thought of the child still hurt him, because he believed he might have done more. He had

been lost in grief for the mother and had not understood the boy enough. Perhaps the boy had not been dull at all. Perhaps he had only been lonely.

These memories were not new, but Paris made them sharp again. Years before, as a young married man, Strether had come to Europe with his wife. They had spent money they badly needed because they believed the journey would open their lives. Strether had returned home promising himself that he would keep that opening alive. He would read, learn, come back, and grow. But life had closed over the promise.

He remembered buying French books then, pale yellow books that had seemed full of culture and future pleasure. Some of them were still at home, old and dirty now, never properly bound and perhaps never read. In the streets near the bookstalls, their memory came back to him. He saw how much he had meant to become and how little of it had happened. The green covers of the Review at home suddenly seemed poor beside those old yellow books.

Yet he did not buy a book now. His conscience stopped him. He had not yet called on Chad, and until he did that, he felt that he must take no private step for his own pleasure. He looked at the books, wanted them, and kept his hands behind his back. He told himself he had not come for himself. He had come to reconstruct Chad's story and to begin his campaign.

That thought brought him back to Chad. Years earlier, Chad had first lived in the Latin Quarter. He had written home about economy, serious young artists, good French, and a useful life among clever men. There had even been a time when he talked of studying in an artist's studio. In Woollett this had seemed better than simple idleness. Mrs. Newsome and Strether had allowed themselves a small hope.

But that hope had not lasted. Chad had left the Latin Quarter and moved into a more expensive and easier life. There had been women, or so Woollett believed. One after another had seemed to pull him farther from home. Strether did not know the exact truth, but he had built a sad order in his mind. The early women had wounded Chad, and the last woman had finished the work.

By now Chad lived on the Boulevard Maiesherbes. Strether knew the address,

and later that morning he went there. Before crossing the street, he stood for several minutes on the opposite side and looked up. The house was handsome, broad, clear, and well built. Its long balcony caught the March light. Strether did not want to like it, but he did.

This troubled him. Chad's house seemed too good, too distinguished, too sure of itself. It did not look like a place of ruin. It looked like a place where a young man might have learned taste, ease, and order. Strether had expected signs of moral danger. Instead he saw balance, space, and quiet beauty.

While he watched, a young man came out onto the balcony. He lighted a cigarette, threw down the match, and leaned on the rail. For one instant Strether wondered if this might be Chad, changed almost beyond belief. But no, the young man was too different. He was bright, quick, and openly young in a way Strether could not connect with Chad's remembered face.

The young man noticed Strether watching and looked back with mild amusement. Strether felt suddenly old, visible, and outside. Yet he also felt that this balcony, this house, and this unknown young man belonged to the world he had come to enter. The hotel where he and Waymarsh were staying seemed cold and poor by comparison. Waymarsh, the bank, the newspapers, and the American world all stood behind him. Chad's door stood before him.

At last Strether crossed the street. Passing through the great entrance felt like leaving Waymarsh outside. It also felt like stepping across the first real line of his mission. He told himself that he would tell Waymarsh everything later. But for the moment he went in alone.

## Part 5: Chad's Circle Without Chad

That evening Strether told Waymarsh what had happened at Chad's rooms. They were dining together at the hotel, and Strether knew that he might have been dining somewhere more interesting. Little Bilham, the young man he had met in Chad's apartment, had almost asked him to stay. Strether had not accepted, partly because of Waymarsh. He had also not brought Bilham back to the hotel, because

he was not sure Waymarsh would like him.

Waymarsh listened across the table with a serious face. Strether felt that Paris was in the room around them, in the soup, the wine, the bread, and the waiter who moved quickly between the tables. He wanted Waymarsh to help him enjoy the story. But Waymarsh did not easily help anyone enjoy anything. Strether had the strange feeling that the whole evening was ready to become pleasant, if only his friend would allow it.

Strether explained that Chad was not in Paris. Chad had gone south to Cannes about a month before, and he was not expected back for several days. Strether could have turned away after learning this from the concierge. Instead, he had gone upstairs. He had allowed his curiosity to carry him inside Chad's world.

In the apartment he had found Little Bilham, who was staying there while Chad was away. Bilham had called himself a small artist, or almost an artist. He was young, friendly, and not easy to place. He was not from Boston, he had said, and he seemed to enjoy that fact. Strether had liked him at once, though he could not explain exactly why.

Waymarsh asked what Strether had learned. Strether paused, drank some wine, and wiped his moustache. Then he said he had learned that he knew nothing. This answer annoyed Waymarsh. He asked what good such knowledge could do. Strether answered that this was exactly why he needed help.

Waymarsh wanted simpler facts. Did Chad live there with a woman? Had he taken her to Cannes? Would he bring her back? Strether had to answer each question in the same way. He did not know. He only knew that Chad's rooms were full of charm, comfort, and beautiful things. There was even, he said, a kind of fine scent in the air.

Waymarsh looked at him as if this were not information but danger. He asked if Bilham knew what the woman was. Strether said he had not asked. He could not have asked such a question. In Paris, he said, one could not always tell what people knew. That was part of the difficulty.

Waymarsh then gave his plain advice. Strether should stop the whole business. He should not look into Chad's life, should not nose around, and should not allow

himself to be used. He was not fit for such work, Waymarsh said. People did not use a fine comb on a horse. Strether smiled at the picture, but the warning touched him.

Strether answered that he could not stop. Mrs. Newsome had sent him, and he had accepted the duty. More than that, he had already entered the matter. He had seen Chad's rooms and met Chad's friend. He could not now pretend that nothing had begun. Waymarsh's hardness made him feel both judged and protected.

The next day, at noon, Strether and Waymarsh went to Chad's apartment. They had expected Little Bilham to take them to some small artists' eating place. Instead, Bilham received them in Chad's own rooms and gave them breakfast there. This surprised Strether. It also made him feel that the trap, if it was a trap, had been prepared with great skill.

The rooms looked even better in use than they had looked empty. Sunlight came through the windows and softened the furniture, pictures, and shining objects. The city sounded below them, but not too loudly. It came up as a gentle hum, as if Paris itself were breathing near the balcony. Strether sat at Chad's table and felt that he had crossed another line.

Little Bilham was not alone. He had invited a lady named Miss Barrace to meet the two Americans. She was thin, bright, older than Bilham, and very sure of herself. She looked at people through a long-handled glass, as if each person were a picture she could study. She seemed at home in Chad's rooms, and this fact made Strether uneasy. At the same time, he could not help finding her amusing.

Miss Barrace quickly noticed Waymarsh. She called him a great American type, almost like an old prophet. Strether was surprised and a little pleased. He knew Waymarsh would not enjoy being looked at in this way, but he also saw that Miss Barrace admired him. To her, Waymarsh's dark silence had style. To Waymarsh himself, the whole scene was probably an offense.

Waymarsh sat opposite Strether with a heavy face. He accepted the food, but not the spirit of the place. Strether could almost feel his friend making notes against everything. Bilham's ease, Miss Barrace's freedom, the beautiful rooms, the fine food, and the soft Paris air were all part of one dangerous whole.

Waymarsh did not speak much, but his silence had weight.

After breakfast they moved to the small sitting room and then to the balcony. Miss Barrace smoked one of Chad's excellent cigarettes. This shocked Strether more than he expected, though he tried not to show it. Then, almost before he knew what he was doing, he smoked too. He had never cared for smoking before. Now it seemed that he had only been waiting for a lady to smoke with.

This thought amused and troubled him. Miss Barrace's smoking was not the main freedom in the room; her being there at all was the larger one. She and Bilham talked easily, sometimes about Chad, sometimes about other matters Strether did not fully understand. Their words seemed to move around things that were never named directly. Strether listened carefully, but he often could not decide what they meant.

What confused him most was the way they spoke of Chad. They did not speak of him as ruined, foolish, or lost. They praised his kindness, his taste, and his generous habits. They seemed grateful to him and fond of him. Every mention of Chad made him sound better, not worse. This was the opposite of what Strether had expected to find.

Yet the very charm of the scene made Strether suspicious. If Chad's life was wrong, then this beautiful apartment, this easy meal, these clever friends, and this warm talk all stood on that wrongness. At Woollett, such matters had been too dark to discuss openly. Here, people seemed to sit comfortably in the middle of them. Strether did not know whether this meant they were careless or simply more used to life.

He looked across at Waymarsh and suddenly respected his resistance. Waymarsh had not given himself to the place. Strether, however, had sat down, eaten Chad's food, smoked Chad's cigarette, and enjoyed Chad's friends. He had not meant to approve anything. Still, enjoyment itself felt like a kind of approval.

By the time they left, Strether knew that he had learned both much and little. He had not found the woman. He had not seen Chad. He had not discovered the exact truth of Chad's life. But he had felt the force of the world around Chad, and that force was stronger than he had imagined.

He told himself that he must keep his mind clear. He had to wait for Chad, meet him, and bring him back if he could. He must not be pulled too far into Chad's side before hearing Chad himself. Yet as he walked away with Waymarsh, he knew that the struggle had already begun. Chad was absent, but Chad's world had spoken for him.

## Part 6: Chad Appears

Maria Gostrey came back to Paris at the end of a week. She sent Strether a message, and he went to see her at once. Her rooms were small, low, and crowded, but they seemed full of life. Everywhere he looked there were old pieces of cloth, small figures, strange objects, and dark shining colors. He did not understand half the things he saw, but he understood that they mattered.

The place affected him almost as strongly as Chad's apartment had done. Chad's rooms had been large, clear, and fine. Maria's rooms were smaller and darker, but they felt more personal. They seemed made from many travels, many choices, and many old chances. Strether felt that Maria had built herself a nest out of Europe.

As soon as he sat down, he told her the truth. "They have got hold of me," he said. He meant Chad's friends, Chad's rooms, and perhaps Paris itself. Maria did not look frightened. She only asked what he had done.

Strether said he had made a strong friend of Little Bilham. He said this almost as if he were confessing a fault. Maria laughed and told him that this was exactly the sort of thing that was likely to happen. Then she asked who Little Bilham was. When Strether explained that Bilham was Chad's friend and was living for a time in Chad's rooms, Maria became more interested.

She asked if she might see him. Strether said she must see him, and the sooner the better. He liked Bilham, and he wanted Maria to tell him what Bilham meant. He also wanted her to see Chad when Chad returned. Maria asked when Chad would come back, and Strether said that Bilham had probably written to him already.

Maria listened closely. She thought Chad might be moving every piece on the board from far away. Strether did not yet know whether this was true, but the thought made him uneasy. He had come to study Chad, but perhaps Chad was already studying him. Even from Cannes, Chad might be preparing the ground.

Strether also told Maria that he had found nothing clearly wrong. Chad had a beautiful home. His friends spoke of him with real warmth. Little Bilham had said Chad was “awful,” but in a way that sounded almost affectionate. Maria turned the word over in her mind and seemed to think it important.

She asked if there was any sign of the woman. Strether had to say no. He knew only that someone, or some group of people, had helped make Chad’s life very pleasant. Maria said that this did not prove innocence. In Paris, pleasant rooms did not prove much at all. Still, she agreed that whoever had shaped Chad’s life must be remarkable.

A meeting with Little Bilham was soon arranged. They met in the Louvre, in a long bright gallery among great paintings. Strether and Maria were standing before a portrait by Titian when Bilham came toward them from the far end of the room. Strether felt, as he saw the young man approach, that he had now brought two parts of his new world together. He waited almost anxiously for Maria’s first judgment.

Maria soon gave it to him quietly. “He is all right,” she said. “He is one of us.” Strether understood her more quickly than he expected. She meant that Bilham was a special kind of American abroad: open, easy, and full of feeling for beauty. He had lost some common American fears, but he had not become false. This helped Strether like him with a clearer conscience.

Little Bilham took them through the galleries with his calm, happy air. He spoke of pictures, painters, and Paris as if these things were part of his daily bread. Strether knew that Bilham had come to Paris to become an artist. He also knew that the young man had produced very little. Yet Bilham did not seem ashamed of this. His knowledge had grown, even if his work had not.

The next day Bilham took Strether and Maria across the river to see his own poor studio. The place stood at the end of a small alley, beyond an old street and

a new wide road. It was cold, plain, and almost empty. A friend of Bilham's was using it while Bilham stayed in Chad's rooms. This friend had prepared tea, and soon other young Americans came in too.

Strether enjoyed the little gathering more than he expected. The young people were poor, but they were not bitter. They spoke quickly and freely about art, with strong likes and dislikes. Some of their words were strange to him, but their honesty pleased him. The room had little comfort, yet it had a bright spirit.

Maria watched the young people with ease. She knew how to speak to them, how to enjoy them, and how not to take them too seriously. Strether looked at her more than once to see what she thought. She gave him no full answer yet. She only said that she would wait for more evidence.

The next evidence came at the French theatre. Maria had been lent a box for the evening, and she invited Strether. Strether also invited Little Bilham, but no answer came from him. Waymarsh came instead and sat with his usual dark seriousness. Maria sat between the two men and spoke as if she were taking two students to see a great work.

Bilham did not arrive. After some time Maria said that something must have stopped him. Then she began to speak of him with great warmth. She said he was one of the best young Americans she had seen abroad. She hoped he would not spoil himself by trying too hard to become important. He was good, she said, because he could simply see and enjoy.

Waymarsh did not understand why this should be praised. He said Bilham did not seem to have become a very good American. Maria answered that people used that phrase too easily. What was a good American, after all? Did it mean someone who hurried home before he had seen anything? Strether listened, partly amused and partly worried, because Maria's words seemed to touch his own mission.

Then Maria turned more serious. She told Strether that Bilham was probably working for Chad that very night. She did not know exactly how, but she felt sure of it. Strether asked if there was a plan. Maria said there had been a plan from the beginning. Chad had arranged more than Strether guessed.

Strether felt the meaning of this deeply. Perhaps every meeting, every silence,

and every pleasant scene had been prepared for him. Perhaps Bilham had not only welcomed him but softened him. Perhaps Paris itself had helped Chad without needing to speak. Maria said Chad would not work only through Bilham. There would be someone else.

At that very moment the door of the box opened. A gentleman entered quickly, then stopped when he saw the faces inside. He had clearly come to the wrong box, or so it seemed for an instant. He smiled, lifted his hand slightly, and waited with perfect calm. Maria looked at him, then at Strether, and suddenly gave her answer. This gentleman, she said, was the other person through whom Chad would work.

Strether heard the name almost before he understood it. The stranger was Chad Newsome himself. For a moment Strether could not connect the man before him with the young man from Woollett. Chad was older, stronger, smoother, and more finished than he had expected. His dark hair showed clear grey streaks, and those streaks made him look not weak but more distinguished.

Because the play had begun again, they could not speak freely. Chad sat near Strether, and the two men had to remain quiet. This made the shock last longer. Strether felt Chad's presence beside him like a fact pressing against his whole body. He wanted to study him, question him, and judge him, but for half an hour he could do almost nothing.

Chad's manner was easy, but not careless. He seemed kind, patient, and sure of himself. Strether wondered if he himself looked foolish. He had come to rescue a ruined young man, but this man did not look ruined. He looked as if life had trained him, polished him, and given him control.

When the curtain finally fell, Maria understood what had to happen. She arranged things so that Strether and Chad could go away together and talk. Waymarsh took her home, or at least gave her his serious protection for the journey. Strether and Chad went out into the bright Paris night and then to a café in the Avenue de l'Opéra.

At the café they sat facing each other at a small table. Strether felt that Maria, though far away now, somehow knew what he was about to say. He also felt Mrs. Newsome behind him, farther away but still powerful. He had delayed long

enough. Before Chad could charm him any further, Strether gathered himself and prepared to speak plainly.

#### Part 7: Strether Gives His Message

Strether and Chad sat facing each other at a small table after the play. The café was bright, warm, and full of voices, but Strether felt almost alone with the young man before him. He knew he had to speak before Chad's charm made speech harder. So he began quickly, almost breathlessly. He told Chad that he had come to make him break with everything in Paris and go straight home.

The words sounded strong, but Strether did not feel strong after saying them. He felt as if he had run a long way and arrived out of breath. Chad did not answer at once. He only looked at him with a quiet, kind attention. That kindness troubled Strether more than anger would have done. It made him fear that Chad might simply feel sorry for him.

Strether pushed on because he could not allow the first words to weaken. He said he knew he might seem like a busybody. Still, he had known Chad since Chad was a boy, and he remembered him even in childhood. He remembered the little boy with strong legs, running about in short clothes. That memory gave him a kind of right to speak. Mrs. Newsome wanted Chad home with all her heart, and she had good reasons for wanting it.

Strether said those reasons were not his invention. Mrs. Newsome did not need anyone to invent reasons for her. But he understood them, and he had come to explain them. The matter was simple, he said, though not easy. Chad must break with his present life at once and return at once. Strether had hoped he might make that hard duty easier to accept.

Chad listened without showing offense. Then he asked, quietly, if Strether thought he had improved. The question stopped Strether for a moment. It would have been easy to say yes, because Chad had certainly changed for the better in outward appearance. He looked stronger, calmer, and more finished than Strether remembered. But Strether did not want to give too much ground.

So he answered that he had no idea. He felt this was firm, even a little hard. Chad's face was handsome, his grey hair became him, and his manner was better than anything Woollett had imagined. Still, Strether did not say so. He had not come to praise Chad. He had come to bring him home.

Yet while he talked, Strether could not stop studying him. Chad seemed like a man who had been remade. He was no longer only bold, noisy, and difficult, as he had sometimes been before. He was smooth now, but not empty. His voice was quieter, his smile easier, and his movements better controlled. He seemed to express more while doing less.

This change was the new fact that made everything difficult. Strether had prepared himself for the old Chad. He had expected resistance, selfishness, perhaps even open shame. But he had not prepared himself for this calm, pleasant, mature man. It was like coming to take a sick person home and finding him standing in perfect health.

Chad then asked if Strether's engagement to his mother was now settled. Strether answered brightly that it was. He had started for Europe after that question had been happily settled. This showed, he added, how closely he now stood inside Chad's family. He had thought Chad would already guess it.

Chad smiled and said he had guessed it for a long time. He understood, then, why Strether wanted to do something important. Bringing Chad home would be a fine gift for Mrs. Newsome, almost like a wedding gift. Chad said this lightly, but not cruelly. Still, Strether felt the point. Chad saw the whole mission from the outside and could make it sound almost comic.

Strether did not let himself be turned aside. He leaned forward and put his hand for a moment on Chad's arm. If Chad would give his word now, he said, everything could become right for all of them. He would end the painful waiting at home and the anxious waiting in Paris. Strether could leave him with a blessing and sleep in peace that very night.

Chad leaned back and considered this. He looked serious, though still gentle. For the first time Strether thought he saw real nervousness in him. Chad took off his hat, put it on again, and then pushed it back on his head. The small movement

made him look more human and less perfectly controlled.

At the same time, Strether felt something else. Chad had the look of a man marked by women. It was not that he boasted of it. It was not even that he wished to show it. The experience was simply there, in his face and body. Strether felt, with a strange mixture of fear and interest, that he was looking at a kind of life he had never truly known.

Chad asked if there might not be some questions he would like to ask first. Strether said of course there might be. He was ready to answer everything, and perhaps even to tell Chad things he would not know to ask. They could take as many days as Chad wished. But for tonight, Strether said, he wanted to go to bed.

Chad was surprised and amused. He said he had not yet put Strether through very much. Strether answered that if more was coming, he had all the more reason to gather his strength. He rose from the table. Chad looked up at him and said they would get on. The tone was kind, and Strether accepted it almost as a small agreement.

They left the café together and walked into the bright Paris night. The great street was still awake, with lights, voices, and movement. For a time they walked without speaking. Then Chad said that Mrs. Newsome had naturally told Strether many things about him, but Strether must also have filled out the picture for himself. Strether answered that they had not gone into every detail. It was enough that Chad had been missed.

Chad stopped under a street lamp and asked if they had imagined horrors. Strether felt the force of the word. The man before him did not look like a horror, and his life did not yet look like one. Still, Strether answered honestly that they probably had imagined some. If those fears were true, he said, then there was no harm in having imagined them.

Chad accepted this without anger. He admitted that he had let himself go in Paris. But he said he was coming round now and was not so bad anymore. They walked on toward Strether's hotel, and Strether asked the question that had waited behind everything else. Was there, he asked, no woman with him now?

Chad seemed surprised by the directness of this. He asked what that had to do

with going home. Strether answered that it was the whole question. The fear at home had been that some woman, or perhaps several people, had kept Chad from wanting to return. If no one now held him, then everything should make him free to go.

Chad said such questions were always vague. What did it mean to be in a woman's hands? Sometimes one was, and sometimes one was not. Sometimes both were true at once. Besides, one could not simply give people away. He insisted that he had never been really trapped. If something better had called him, he had never been afraid to choose it.

Then Chad asked if Strether did not understand how much he liked Paris itself. Strether almost resented this answer. If that was all, he said, then surely the matter was easier. Chad smiled and asked if liking Paris was not enough. Strether answered that it was not enough for his mother.

Chad laughed, and Strether laughed too, but only briefly. Strether said they would still keep their theory. If Chad was truly free and strong, then he had no excuse. Strether would write to Mrs. Newsome in the morning and say he had found him. Chad asked how often Strether wrote. Strether answered that he wrote all the time.

Chad said his mother wrote beautiful letters. Strether looked at him closely and said she wrote better letters than Chad did. But if Chad was not entangled, their fears did not matter. Chad's pride seemed touched by this. He said again that he had never been entangled. He had always had his own way, and he had it now.

Strether then asked why he had stayed in Paris if he had always been free to leave. Chad threw himself back in surprise. Did Strether think people were kept only by women? Was that what they thought in Woollett? Then he said, with clear force, that such an idea showed a low mind.

The words hurt Strether because they carried some truth. Woollett had perhaps imagined Chad's life too simply and too darkly. Strether himself had looked for vulgar signs of ruin. But Chad, by standing there so calm and clear, made those old fears seem smaller than the man before him. For a moment Strether wondered if Chad was not only a man of pleasure, but also, in some real sense, a gentleman.

Chad did not leave him wounded for long. He covered the harshness with a final simple assurance. "I am all right," he said. Strether had no answer ready. He went into his hotel with those words still in his mind. That night he had to go to bed not with victory, but with a new and difficult question.

#### Part 8: The Unknown Woman

After that night, Chad behaved with great care toward Strether. He was kind, attentive, and never seemed impatient. He gave Strether time, answered questions, and listened to long explanations about Woollett. This was not what Strether had expected. He had prepared himself for a fight, but Chad gave him something softer and more difficult.

Strether now had two kinds of reports to make. In his room at the hotel, he wrote long letters to Mrs. Newsome. In Maria Gostrey's rooms, he gave another kind of report, more free and more confused. These two duties did not cancel each other. Instead, they made him feel more deeply divided. To Mrs. Newsome he owed loyalty; to Maria he gave his living thoughts.

Strether also decided to tell Chad about Maria. He did it openly, almost proudly, because he did not want Chad to discover it later and turn it against him. He described how he had met her in Chester, how quickly they had become friends, and how much help she had given him. He even made the meeting sound a little comic, as if that would protect it from suspicion. Then he asked, with some surprise, why Chad did not know such a remarkable person.

Chad accepted this with calm interest. He seemed to have heard of Maria, but he had never really known her. He said that he did not move very much among the American colony in Paris. His friends were chosen in another way. Strether felt the meaning of this, though he could not yet name it. Chad had not only stayed away from Woollett; he had also stayed away from many Americans who might have judged him by Woollett's rules.

During the next ten days, Strether and Chad talked again and again. Strether explained Mrs. Newsome's wishes, the business waiting at home, and the hopes

built around Chad's return. Chad did not laugh at these things. He asked serious questions and seemed to consider every point. Sometimes he went deeper into the matter than Strether expected, and this made Strether remember that Chad had always had ability, even if he had once used it badly.

Still, the talks did not move Chad. He seemed free, but his freedom itself became hard to move. His pleasant rooms, his beautiful objects, his good manners, and his easy care for Strether all seemed to say that he was not trapped. But they also seemed to hold him exactly where he was. Strether began to feel that Chad's life in Paris was not a prison. It was worse than a prison for Strether's purpose: it was a home.

Strether wrote to Mrs. Newsome that Chad said there was no woman. As soon as he wrote the words, he could almost hear the answer from Woollett. He imagined Mrs. Newsome reading the letter and telling Sarah Pocock. He imagined Sarah's sharp face and her cold question: if there was no woman, what was there? Sarah had never fully trusted Strether's ability to discover the truth. He knew that she would think a woman existed precisely because he had not found her.

Maria, after meeting Chad, did not at once give Strether the comfort he wanted. She seemed careful, almost too careful. Strether wanted her to say clearly that she liked Chad, that he had improved, and that his case was a miracle. But Maria did not hurry. When Strether said that the whole thing looked like a strange plan, she listened with a smile that did not promise safety.

At last she said what she thought. Chad was not free. Strether was startled, though part of him had been waiting for this. Maria said she had seen enough in the theatre box to be sure. There was a woman, and not a common or low woman. If Chad had changed so much for the better, then some strong and fine influence must have helped make that change.

Strether tried to understand this. Did Maria mean that the woman herself was good? Maria answered that she might be excellent. A poor or ugly influence could not explain the new Chad. Strether then asked why Chad denied her. Maria said he might deny her because she was too good to be easily named. In Paris, she said, such things were often understood without being spoken.

This made Strether uneasy in a new way. If the woman had helped Chad, should he judge her only by that help? Maria told him to look at her through Chad. If Chad had become finer, then she must be part of that fact. But Maria also warned him not to make up his mind too soon. There was still a hidden part, and Chad might be trying to push the woman out of sight.

Strether asked, almost with pain, whether Chad could wish to shake her off after all she had done for him. Maria looked at him and smiled sadly. Chad, she said, was not quite as good as Strether thought. Those words stayed with Strether. Yet every time he saw Chad again, the warning lost some of its force. Chad still seemed kind, patient, and wonderfully changed.

Chad now drew Strether into more of his life. There were walks through Paris, visits to places Strether had never known, and evenings in Chad's rooms. Men came in, talked, smoked, and sometimes made music. The talk was quick, varied, and full of opinions. In Woollett people had opinions too, but only on a few safe subjects. In Chad's rooms, people seemed to have opinions on everything.

Waymarsh was also drawn for a time into this circle. He remained dark and heavy, but even he could not wholly stand outside it. Miss Barrace took a strong interest in him and treated him as a great American figure. Strether saw that this pleased him, though Waymarsh would never have admitted it. When Miss Barrace carried Waymarsh away in her carriage after one gathering, Strether felt both amused and relieved.

After that gathering, it began to rain, and Strether found himself in a café with Little Bilham. They had left Chad's rooms together and taken shelter there. Strether was full of questions. At last he asked if Chad was honest. Was he truly free, or was some woman still holding him?

Little Bilham did not answer quickly. He seemed to understand that the answer mattered. He said Chad was a rare case and had certainly changed. But he was not sure Chad was happier. Chad, he said, wanted to be free, and perhaps also wanted to go home and begin a real career. Still, something held him.

Strether pressed him. If Chad was good, why was he not free? Bilham looked straight at him and gave the answer that settled everything for the moment.

“Because it is a good attachment,” he said. Strether carried the words away as if they were a key. They did not open the whole door, but they changed the shape of the lock.

Soon after this, Chad gave Strether another reason for delay. Two ladies, a mother and daughter, were returning to Paris. They were his very close friends, and he wanted Strether to meet them. He said they had taken a deep interest in everything that concerned him. Strether saw at once that these must be the people behind Bilham’s words. Chad had been waiting for them.

Strether went straight to Maria with the news. He told her that Chad wanted him to meet the two ladies before any final decision was made. Maria listened closely. They wondered together which of the two women mattered more, the mother or the daughter. Perhaps Chad wanted to marry the daughter. Perhaps the mother had helped him. Perhaps the truth was more difficult than either guess.

Mamie Pocock came back into Strether’s mind as they talked. If Chad was to marry anyone, Woollett had its own answer ready. Mamie was pretty, bright, and safe, and Mrs. Newsome would welcome her. Maria said Mamie was her girl too, and for a moment she almost wished she could take Mamie in hand. Strether protested at once. He needed Maria on his side and could not spare her.

Still, Maria would not give him an easy answer. She said Chad had clearly been studying Strether and reporting on him to these ladies. He had decided that Strether would do for them. This was a compliment, but it was also part of the game. Strether asked if Maria believed the attachment was innocent. Maria answered that she did not know. Then she gave him the hard truth: he had come to find everything out, and he must be ready to find out more.

## Part 9: Gloriani’s Garden

The next Sunday was a beautiful spring day, and Chad had arranged something special for Strether. He was going to take him to the house of Gloriani, a famous sculptor who received visitors on Sunday afternoons. Chad had already mentioned the visit before, but it had not happened then. Now the weather was fine, and Chad

said the old garden would be worth seeing. Strether felt that Chad was again showing him Paris as if Paris itself were part of his answer.

Strether gave himself to the day more freely than he had meant to do. By now he had accepted many introductions, walks, meals, and surprises. Sometimes he suspected Chad of hiding the real question behind beautiful scenes. But at other moments he felt angry with himself for being so suspicious. If beauty was before him, why should he always treat it as a danger?

Chad had also let him know that Madame de Vionnet and her daughter might be there. This was the only clear thing Chad had said about them. Strether, after talking with Maria, had decided not to push too hard. If these women were ladies, then he must behave like a gentleman before them. He wondered whether Chad was saving them for a strong effect, as if their simple presence would answer all charges from Woollett.

Gloriani's house stood far back from the street, behind a quiet court and a long passage. The garden seemed hidden inside old Paris, like a secret room without a roof. Tall trees stood above the walls, and birds moved and called among the branches. The air was soft, and the garden felt both private and grand. Strether had the sense that old names, old families, and old histories were all around him.

Gloriani himself came to meet Chad and his guest in the garden. He had a worn, handsome face, full of life and long experience. Strether had seen some of his work in museums, but meeting the man was much stronger than seeing the statues. Gloriani looked at him kindly, yet Strether felt almost examined by that look. For a moment he wondered if the great artist was measuring him and deciding whether he was worth anything.

Chad introduced him with perfect ease and then moved away to greet other people. This ease impressed Strether almost painfully. Chad seemed at home with everyone: artists, ladies, older men, young people, and even the famous host. He did not boast, and he did not seem proud of his place there. That made his place there still more impressive. Strether saw again how much Chad had changed.

Little Bilham soon came toward him across the garden. Strether was glad to see him, because he needed someone who could explain the company. He asked

who all these people were. Bilham said there were artists, important men, women of society, and all sorts of guests, though all within a certain chosen circle. Strether looked from face to face and felt that they were very far from Woollett.

The women especially held his attention. Some seemed strange to him, but they also seemed to belong perfectly to the place. He asked if Madame de Vionnet and her daughter had arrived. Bilham said he had not seen them yet, but he knew they had returned to Paris only the day before. Chad had told him this, though Chad had said nothing about it to Strether. Strether realized that perhaps Chad told him only what he was ready to hear.

Strether then asked if these women were the good attachment Bilham had spoken of before. Bilham said only that they were taken as such. Strether asked if Madame de Vionnet's husband was dead. Bilham answered that he was alive. This disturbed Strether, and he asked how the attachment could then be so good. Bilham only said that Strether would see for himself.

Miss Barrace came up while they were talking. She had been moving alone through the party with her long-handled glass, watching everyone as if everyone were part of an amusing show. She told Strether that he had many things to see about, but that she was helping him as much as she could. She had placed Waymarsh safely inside the house with Maria Gostrey. Strether could hardly imagine what those two were saying to each other.

Bilham joked that Strether was making all the ladies work for him. Miss Barrace laughed and spoke of Waymarsh with delight. She said he did not understand anything, and that this was what made him so wonderful. She had shown him Paris, but he had not changed his face. Strether felt a little sad at this, because Waymarsh's resistance had a kind of greatness. Strether himself knew he was no longer resisting in that way.

Then Strether asked Miss Barrace about Madame de Vionnet. Did she show what she really was? Miss Barrace answered at once that Madame de Vionnet was charming and perfect. Strether asked why she had cried out so strangely at the name a few minutes before. Miss Barrace said it was simply because Madame de Vionnet was wonderful. Before Strether could ask more, Bilham told him not to

ask any question. Chad was coming to take him to her, and he should judge for himself.

Strether saw Chad approaching. The moment made him more nervous than he wished to show. Chad led him toward the house with a calm and graceful air. Near the steps, a young woman in black came forward to meet them. This was Madame de Vionnet. She greeted Strether in English that was correct and easy, but also different from any English he had ever heard.

She was fair, slim, and quietly dressed, with dark light-looking clothes and many gold bracelets under her sleeves. She did not seem grand in the way Strether had expected. In fact, at first she seemed almost simple, almost like a woman one might meet in Woollett. This surprised him and lowered his fear. Yet her smile, her stillness, and the careful softness of her manner made him feel that he was already being drawn into something.

Chad left them together, saying lightly that they were made to know each other. He asked about Jeanne, and Madame de Vionnet said her daughter was probably still inside with Maria. Chad answered that Strether must see her, and he went to find her. Strether and Madame de Vionnet moved toward a bench. She said she had heard much about him, and he answered, honestly, that he had heard almost nothing about her.

Madame de Vionnet smiled and asked if Maria had not spoken well of her. Strether was surprised, because he had not known that they knew each other. She said Maria would now tell him everything. She was glad he was close to Maria. This made Strether feel that he had been discussed, judged, and perhaps prepared for before he even arrived.

They sat together only a short time before other guests approached. A lady whom Madame de Vionnet called Duchess spoke to her in French, and two gentlemen were with her. Madame de Vionnet did not introduce Strether. This would have seemed strange and almost rude in Woollett, but here it appeared to belong to another social rule. One of the gentlemen quickly took Madame de Vionnet away, and Strether was left alone on the bench, not offended but full of new thoughts.

Bilham soon came back and sat beside him. Strether asked again if Madame de Vionnet's husband was truly alive, and Bilham said yes. Strether thought for a moment and then said he was sorry for them. He felt that he had already seen enough and did not need more introductions. He had seen Gloriani, the garden, the guests, and Madame de Vionnet. The whole afternoon seemed to tell him that some things came too late in life.

When Bilham said that late was better than never, Strether corrected him. Early was better than late, he said. Then, almost before he knew it, he began to speak from the deepest part of himself. Bilham was young, and that was a great gift. He must live as much as he could. It was a mistake not to live. It did not matter so much what one did, if one truly had one's life.

Strether said he himself had missed too much. He had been too careful, or too dull, or perhaps too clever in the wrong way. Now he could see what he had lost, but seeing it did not bring it back. Life was like a train that had waited for him at the station, and he had not understood that he should get on. Now he could hear it far away down the line. He told Bilham not to make the same mistake.

Bilham listened with great seriousness. Strether had meant to encourage him lightly, but his own words had become heavy. To break the mood, he put a hand on Bilham's knee and said he would keep an eye on him. Bilham smiled and said he was not sure he wanted to be very different from Strether when he was older. Strether answered that he should at least try to be more amusing.

Then Strether saw Chad again, coming through the garden with a young girl in white. She wore a white dress and a soft white hat, and she looked shy, bright, and fresh. Strether knew at once that she was Jeanne de Vionnet. In that same moment he thought he understood everything. Chad must be in love with the daughter, and this beautiful girl was the good attachment.

Chad brought Jeanne directly to him. He said she was a dear young friend who knew all about him and had a message. Then he told her that Strether was the best man in the world and could do a great deal for them. Jeanne blushed and spoke gently. Her mother, she said, hoped Strether would come to see them soon because she had something important to say.

Strether looked from Jeanne to Chad and felt many ideas rush through him. Perhaps Madame de Vionnet wanted to speak about the young people. Perhaps she hoped for some way to join Chad and Jeanne without sending Jeanne to Woollett. Chad seemed proud, happy, and confident as he stood beside the girl. After only a few minutes he took her away again, saying that they would all meet soon. Strether watched them disappear, then turned to speak to Bilham, but Bilham was gone.

#### Part 10: Maria's Warning and Madame de Vionnet

Chad did not come back to Strether in the garden as he had promised. Instead, Maria came. She explained that Chad had gone away with Madame de Vionnet and Jeanne, and that he had asked her to take care of Strether. Strether was sitting alone on the bench when she found him. The long afternoon light lay across the garden, and most of the guests had gone inside for tea.

As soon as Maria sat beside him, Strether spoke out what was in his mind. "It is the child," he said. He meant Jeanne de Vionnet. He believed now that Jeanne was the reason for Chad's changed life and for Madame de Vionnet's wish to see him. Maria did not answer at once. She looked as if the truth had come too quickly and was too large to put into a few words.

Then Maria told him something important. She knew Madame de Vionnet already. They had been school friends long ago in Geneva, though they had hardly seen each other for many years. If Strether had told her the name earlier, Maria could have explained much sooner. This amused her a little, because Strether had been so careful and yet had missed the one simple fact that mattered.

Maria said Madame de Vionnet had once been a brilliant girl. She had been lively, clever, and full of feeling. She spoke several languages easily and moved between countries and people as if she belonged everywhere. Soon after school she had married Count de Vionnet. The marriage had not been happy, and Maria said plainly that the husband had been a cruel and impossible man.

Madame de Vionnet had lived apart from her husband for years. In her world,

Maria explained, people did not easily divorce. They accepted separation, pain, silence, and public difficulty, but they did not break the form. This made Madame de Vionnet's position hard. Still, Maria believed she had carried herself with great dignity.

Strether listened with deep attention. The story gave Madame de Vionnet more shape and more history. She was no longer only the charming woman in black whom he had met in the garden. She had become a person with a past, a wounded marriage, a daughter, friends, and a careful life in Paris. All this made her harder to judge.

Maria also spoke of Jeanne. Madame de Vionnet, she said, had brought up her daughter with great care. Jeanne was not only pretty; she was protected, trained, and placed inside a very special world. Maria thought the mother had perhaps prepared Chad for Jeanne. She had made him better, finer, and more fit to stand near such a girl.

Strether took this in slowly. If Maria was right, then Chad's good attachment might be Jeanne after all. Madame de Vionnet might be trying to join Chad and her daughter. Strether asked if Madame de Vionnet was counting on him to help this happen. Maria answered that she was counting on him first to be convinced.

This troubled Strether. He asked if Madame de Vionnet would try to make a fool of him. Maria did not laugh the question away. She said only that she wondered what Madame de Vionnet might make of him if she had the chance. Strether knew then that Maria was warning him, though she was also telling him he must go.

Maria said he could not refuse to see Madame de Vionnet. He had come to Paris to learn the truth about Chad's life. If there had been a worse kind of woman, he would have had to see her too. Strether admitted that he had not come to see this kind of woman. Maria looked at him sharply and asked if he was disappointed that Madame de Vionnet was not worse.

Strether answered honestly. Yes, in one way he was disappointed. If she had been worse, everything would have been easier. A bad woman would have made his duty clear. But a charming and possibly good woman made everything

confused. Maria said that perhaps this would at least be more pleasant. Strether answered that he had not come for the pleasant.

Before they left the garden, Maria said she wanted to stay out of Madame de Vionnet's business. She would help Strether, but she would not help Madame de Vionnet use her. Strether was frightened by the thought of losing Maria's support. She said she was not abandoning him. She was only refusing to take Madame de Vionnet's side too soon.

The next morning Chad came to Strether's hotel before Strether had even properly begun his day. He wanted to speak in private, away from Waymarsh. They went out to a café and sat at a small table with coffee and hot milk before them. Chad was more serious than usual, though he still smiled with his easy grace. He said Madame de Vionnet had been deeply impressed by Strether and wished very much to see him again.

Strether felt that the real matter had now begun. He told Chad that he wanted to know where he stood. Was Chad engaged to Jeanne de Vionnet? Chad shook his head and said no. He had no such secret. He might have other secrets, but he was not engaged to the young lady.

Then Strether asked where the difficulty was. Chad answered that he wanted Strether to stay in Paris as long as possible, because Paris was clearly doing him good. But there was also Madame de Vionnet. She was his difficulty, his "hitch," as he called it. She had been too good a friend for him to leave without arranging things properly.

Strether asked if leaving her would be a sacrifice. Chad answered that it would be the greatest loss he had ever known. He owed her a great deal. This answer struck Strether strongly. It seemed to explain Chad's change. If Madame de Vionnet had helped make Chad what he now was, then she could not be dismissed as a bad influence.

Still, Strether needed a promise. He asked Chad if, after seeing Madame de Vionnet and listening to her, Chad would give himself in return to Strether's hands. Chad put his hand firmly on Strether's and gave his word. This was enough for the moment. Strether agreed to go to Madame de Vionnet's house that afternoon.

Chad took him there at about five. Madame de Vionnet lived on the first floor of an old house in the Rue de Bellechasse. They entered through a quiet court and went up a wide old staircase. The house was not new, bright, or rich in a loud way. Its beauty came from age, care, memory, and silence.

Strether noticed the room before he could fully notice its owner. There were old chairs, mirrors, small pictures, books, and objects that seemed to have belonged to earlier generations. Nothing looked recently bought for display. Everything seemed received, kept, and respected. The room had an air of private honor, and this surprised him. He had expected danger, but he found dignity.

Chad stayed only a short time. Then he looked at his watch and said he had another engagement. He left Strether with Madame de Vionnet, telling him lightly that she was perfectly safe. The words might have made the moment awkward, but Strether found that he was less embarrassed than he expected. Madame de Vionnet sat near the fire, very still, with her hands together in her lap.

She began by saying that she did not think Strether truly believed in what he was doing. Even so, she would treat him as if he did. Strether answered that the way she treated him would not change his duty. She said the only thing that mattered was that he should get on with her. Strether replied at once that he did not. Yet as soon as he said it, he knew the answer was not simple.

Madame de Vionnet asked him to go on with her a little, at least for the present. She said she was asking only for common kindness. Strether felt that she had crossed a stream toward him and now stood before him with real need. He could not pretend she was only part of Chad's plan. She had her own fear, her own hope, and her own request.

Then she spoke of Mrs. Newsome. She asked, carefully but directly, whether Mrs. Newsome had given Strether up. Strether answered quietly that she had not yet done so. Madame de Vionnet said Chad had talked with her about that possibility. She wanted to know what sort of man Strether was, and whether a woman like Mrs. Newsome could give him up. She had already judged, she said, that he was safe.

Strether did not know whether to be pleased or offended. Madame de Vionnet

then said what she wanted. She wanted him to keep Mrs. Newsome patient. He asked how he could possibly do that. She answered that he should tell Mrs. Newsome the truth. When he asked what truth, she said he should tell her about herself and Jeanne. He should tell Mrs. Newsome that he liked them.

Strether said Mrs. Newsome had not sent him to Paris in order to like people. Madame de Vionnet answered that she had sent him to face the facts. Strether accepted that, but he still did not know what the facts were. So he asked the plain question. Did Madame de Vionnet want Chad to marry Jeanne?

She said no at once. Chad liked Jeanne too much, she said, to do anything that might harm her. He was tender with her and careful of her. Madame de Vionnet wanted Strether to see Jeanne again, to understand her, and perhaps to help protect her. Jeanne was her joy, she said, and the simple force of the words moved him.

Then Strether asked if Jeanne was in love with Chad. Madame de Vionnet surprised him by saying she wished he would find out. He protested that he was a stranger. She answered that he would not be a stranger for long. This made him feel again that he was being drawn into a family matter that was not his and yet now seemed to need him.

At last Madame de Vionnet came to the deepest point. She asked him to tell Mrs. Newsome that she had been good for Chad. Did he not think she had? Strether could not deny it. If Chad's new self came from her influence, then her work was wonderful. He looked at her and felt that the old simple story from Woollett had broken apart.

She rose, and he rose too. The room, the old objects, the quiet court outside, and her still face all seemed to press on him. He understood that she was asking him not only to report her fairly, but to protect her if he could. The word came to him before he could stop it. "I will save you if I can," he said.

## Part 11: Strether Takes a Side

Ten days later, Strether was again in Chad's lovely home. This time he was there for dinner, with Madame de Vionnet, Jeanne, Gloriani, Miss Barrace,

Waymarsh, and several other guests. Chad's rooms looked warm, easy, and full of taste. Strether felt again that he was being placed inside Chad's life, not just shown it from the door. He also felt that each new visit made it harder to keep his old judgment clear.

Strether had not gone back to Madame de Vionnet's house after his first visit. Chad had asked him to dine there, but Strether had refused. He told himself this was necessary. He had promised to help her if he could, but he had not promised to become her constant visitor. Still, Chad had found another way. If Strether would not go to Madame de Vionnet's home, Chad could bring Madame de Vionnet into his own.

Strether comforted himself by thinking of his letters to Mrs. Newsome. He was still writing to her often, and he told himself that he told her everything. If a new fact appeared, he wrote it. If his own feeling changed, he tried to explain the change. Sometimes, late at night, he asked himself if he was hiding anything. When he found some small thing he had not said, he usually decided that it was not really central.

Yet there was one thing he had not written. He had not told Mrs. Newsome that he had promised to save Madame de Vionnet if he could. He had not written the exact words, and he was glad he had not. They sounded too large when he remembered them. They also sounded too close to a promise made on his own account, not on Mrs. Newsome's.

After dinner Chad asked Strether to speak with Jeanne in the small sitting room. He said it would be a good chance to see a young French girl as she really was. Strether understood that Chad wanted him to compare Jeanne with the girls of Woollett, especially Mamie Pocock. He also understood that he was again being used. But the use was gentle, and he could not yet decide whether it was wrong.

Jeanne was sitting near Madame Gloriani when Strether came to her. Madame Gloriani moved away kindly and left them together. Strether began by saying that he was almost afraid to talk with a little foreign girl. Jeanne answered quickly that she was not so foreign. She was almost English, and almost American too, because her mother had wanted her to know freedom.

Her English charmed Strether. It was clear, soft, and pretty, with a music he had never heard at home. She was shy at first, and her cheeks were bright with the excitement of the evening. But as he spoke gently to her, she became calmer. She trusted him after a few minutes, or at least she seemed to feel that he would not hurt her.

Strether found her beautiful in a quiet and delicate way. She seemed to him like a pale picture in an old frame. She was not only pretty; she had been carefully formed. Her manners, her voice, her modest freedom, and even her silence all showed training. He did not want to think of her as a possible wife for any man. The thought seemed too rough for such a young and protected person.

While Strether was still near her, Gloriani came in and looked closely at a small picture on the wall. The famous artist studied it with sharp interest. Then he turned to Strether and said that their young friend had wonderful taste. Strether knew he meant Chad. The praise seemed to settle something. If Gloriani could admire Chad's taste, then Chad's life here had truly become part of this world.

Miss Barrace soon drew Strether back into talk. She had been watching everything, as usual, through her long-handled glass. She told him that Waymarsh was in another room with Madame de Vionnet. Strether was startled by the picture of those two together. But Miss Barrace said Madame de Vionnet made nothing of Waymarsh and that Waymarsh made nothing of her. This pleased Miss Barrace, because it left Waymarsh safely hers.

Strether then asked Miss Barrace whether Madame de Vionnet would ever divorce her husband. Miss Barrace asked why she should. Strether said, quite directly, that she might divorce in order to marry Chad. Miss Barrace treated this as too simple. Marriage, she said, was not the wonder. Anyone could marry. The wonder was when people did something finer without marrying.

This answer helped Strether more than he expected. He asked if she meant that Chad and Madame de Vionnet's relation was beautiful because it was unselfish. Miss Barrace laughed and said he could call it that if he liked. She added that Madame de Vionnet would never divorce. Her husband was a bad man perhaps, but also charming, and the whole matter was not as simple as Americans might

think.

Strether said firmly that the attachment was innocent. Miss Barrace looked at him and understood what he meant. He was speaking of Chad and Madame de Vionnet. He said he saw the whole thing now. Their relation was not vulgar, not low, and not what Woollett had feared. It had helped Chad become better.

Then Madame de Vionnet came near them. Strether saw at once that she was different that evening. Her dress was silvery grey, and she wore old green jewels around her neck. Her shoulders and arms were bare and beautiful, and her whole person seemed bright, free, and alive. At Gloriani's garden she had seemed gentle and almost simple. Tonight she seemed brilliant.

Madame de Vionnet asked Miss Barrace to leave them for a few minutes. When they were alone, she asked why Maria Gostrey had suddenly gone away. Strether explained that Maria had gone south to visit a sick friend. Madame de Vionnet listened and then said that Maria had not written to her. She believed Maria had gone partly to avoid seeing her again.

Strether did not know what to answer. He disliked being placed between two women, especially two women so clever and so difficult to read. Madame de Vionnet said she was happy for Maria's happiness, and Strether felt the hidden meaning. She seemed to suggest that he himself was Maria's happiness. He said nothing, because to answer would make the matter larger.

Madame de Vionnet then asked about Jeanne. Did Strether think the girl had any feeling for Chad? Strether answered that he could not know such a thing. He had spoken with Jeanne, but not about Chad. Madame de Vionnet reminded him of his promise to save her. Strether said he had been thinking what that promise meant.

She asked him to trust her a little, because she trusted him. She also said that, whether he liked it or not, Chad made her present to him every day. Strether answered that Chad never spoke of her. Madame de Vionnet replied that he did not need to. Strether understood. To know the changed Chad was already to know something of her.

Strether then said what he had come to believe. She had made Chad what he

now was. He could see the result, though he did not understand the method. Madame de Vionnet accepted this quietly, almost with pride. She asked what use there was in refusing to know her when knowing Chad already meant knowing her work.

Then Strether made one request of his own. She must leave Jeanne alone. She must not try to find out whether Jeanne had a feeling for Chad. Jeanne was too charming, too innocent, and too young to be touched by such questions. Madame de Vionnet understood that this was a favor he was asking for himself. She agreed at once, and her thanks made Strether feel that he had somehow tied himself more closely to her.

Little Bilham came near soon after, and Strether was glad to speak with him. They sat together and looked across the room at Jeanne. Strether asked why a young man like Bilham did not fall in love with such a girl. Bilham answered that Jeanne was wonderful, but too far above him. She would need a great name or a great fortune, and he had neither.

Strether asked whether Chad might marry her. Bilham said no. Chad was fond of Jeanne and cared about her future, but he was not in love with her. Besides, Bilham added, how could Chad be in love with any other woman? Strether knew what he meant. The real attachment was not to Jeanne. It was to Madame de Vionnet.

Bilham then said that Madame de Vionnet cared more than Chad did. Strether asked if he meant more than Chad cared for her. Bilham hesitated and asked if Strether would keep that fact to himself. Strether promised not to report it home. Then Bilham said yes: Madame de Vionnet cared more.

This did not make Strether turn against her. It made him pity her more. He said she had saved Chad in his manners, his morals, his character, and his way of living with people. Bilham answered that he had thought Strether was the one sent to save Chad. Strether replied that perhaps she had saved Chad for them. The words surprised him, but they also seemed true.

The two men sat side by side and thought about the difficulty before them. Chad might still go home because he had a future there. Madame de Vionnet had

less future. Her husband might live for years, and she could not marry Chad. Bilham said that Chad ought to marry someone he could marry, some very nice girl. Strether looked again toward Jeanne and asked if he meant her. Bilham made it clear that he did not.

Strether saw more and more clearly where his own feeling had moved. If Chad left Madame de Vionnet after all she had done for him, something in it would be shameful. She had helped make him better, and now another world wanted to take the better man away. Strether did not yet know what he should do, but he knew what he felt. If Chad gave her up, he said at last, he ought to be ashamed of himself.

## Part 12: Notre Dame and a New Duty

Some days later, Strether sat alone in Notre Dame. It was not the first time he had gone there. He had been there with Waymarsh, with Maria, and with Chad. But lately he had begun to go there by himself. The great dark church gave him a kind of rest that he could not find anywhere else in Paris.

Maria was still away in the south. She had written from Mentone, saying that her own life was more difficult than he knew. She asked him to be patient and not to judge her absence too harshly. Strether had written to her twice, but he had not told her everything. He spoke of Waymarsh, Miss Barrace, Little Bilham, and Chad's friends, but he did not tell her fully what he himself was becoming.

He did not tell her because he was trying not to look too closely at himself. He was seeing Chad often now. He was also seeing Madame de Vionnet and Jeanne often enough to feel their power. Yet he had kept away from Madame de Vionnet's house after the first visit. He had promised to help her, but he still feared what that promise might mean.

Notre Dame helped him put the question aside for an hour. He walked slowly through the nave, sat in the choir, and looked at the chapels. The church was not his church in any deep religious sense. Still, its age, darkness, and quiet beauty calmed his nerves. It made the outside world seem far away.

He liked to watch other people there. Some came to pray, some came to rest,

and some came with troubles he could only imagine. He felt a gentle pity for them. He did not know their stories, but he could see that they had come for help. In that place, the hard judgment of the world seemed to stop at the door.

On this morning, one woman especially held his attention. She sat very still in the shadow of a chapel. She did not kneel or bend her head, but her whole body seemed given to some private need. Strether passed her more than once as he moved slowly through the church. Each time he noticed the same stillness.

Her back was turned to him, so he could not see her face. Yet he imagined that she must be young, interesting, and deeply serious. She seemed to belong to the place more naturally than he did. He was only a visitor, almost like a student in a museum. She looked like someone who knew what she had come for.

Later, before leaving, Strether sat again in the nave and looked up into the dark height of the church. He thought of Victor Hugo and of the great story connected with Notre Dame. A few days before, he had bought many volumes of Hugo in red and gold. He wondered, with a little shame, whether those seventy books might be the main thing he would carry back to Woollett from his mission.

While he was thinking of this, someone stopped near him. He turned and saw Madame de Vionnet. In the same instant he understood that she was the woman from the chapel. This gave him a small shock, but she saved him from awkwardness at once. She smiled and asked if he too came there often.

Strether stood and answered that he did. Madame de Vionnet said she loved churches and came to them very much. She even joked that she was becoming one of the old women who seemed to live inside them. Strether brought a chair for her, and they sat down together. Her voice was low, and the place made their talk quiet.

Strether noticed how simply and carefully she was dressed. Her veil was a little thicker than usual, and her black clothes had a soft dark color in them. Her hands, folded in grey gloves, were very still. She looked not like a woman making a display, but like a woman who had come for strength. This pleased him and moved him more than he wanted to show.

Her presence there strengthened what he had already begun to believe. If her

relation with Chad had been low or vulgar, would she come here in this way? Would she sit in a chapel with such quiet need? Strether knew this was not a perfect argument, but it had power over him. He felt that a woman who looked for peace in such a place could not simply be dismissed as guilty.

They talked first about the church, its beauty, and its history. Madame de Vionnet said she liked the outside view best and suggested that they walk around it together when they left. Strether agreed, but he felt that another purpose was growing in him. He wanted to give her some sign that he understood her need. He wanted to show that, if she reached toward him for help, he would not pull himself away.

Outside, they walked slowly around the great building. The river shone near them, and the spring air was mild. Strether then asked if she had time to have an early lunch with him on the other side of the river. He named a small restaurant that he had already visited with Maria, Chad, Waymarsh, and Little Bilham. Madame de Vionnet stopped for a moment, clearly pleased and surprised.

She said she had heard of the place but had never been there. Strether had supposed that Chad might have taken her, and she guessed the thought. She explained that she did not go about in public with Chad. She had few chances for such simple pleasures. She had duties at home, but she would put them aside. For once, she said lightly, she would take her small share of disorder.

Soon they were seated at a little table by a window, looking out at the river. There was white cloth on the table, a simple meal before them, and a bottle of pale wine between them. Strether felt that he had come very far since his dinner with Maria in London. That evening had seemed daring enough. Now he was sitting alone with Madame de Vionnet, and the situation seemed to have carried him away like a fast river.

Madame de Vionnet first asked if Maria was still away. Strether said yes. She asked if he missed her very much. He answered that he did, though he was not completely sure what the truth of that answer was. Madame de Vionnet then said that a man in trouble must always have a woman near him in some form. If one woman was absent, another came.

Strether asked why she called him a man in trouble. She answered gently that this was how he seemed to her. He said he was not in trouble yet, and not in trouble now. The word “now” made her smile. She knew that his safety was not very firm.

Then Strether brought up the question she had once asked him. After his first visit to her, he had said he would save her if he could. Later, at Chad’s dinner, she had asked him what he had meant. He had not answered then. Now, he said, he knew.

Madame de Vionnet listened with great care. Strether told her that he had written to Mrs. Newsome about her. He had spoken of what she had done for Chad. He had tried to make Mrs. Newsome understand that Madame de Vionnet was worth saving. He did not know yet how Mrs. Newsome would answer, but he expected a reply soon.

Madame de Vionnet was deeply moved. She asked whether Strether truly believed this himself. He said he did. He had written again and had left Mrs. Newsome in no doubt about what he thought. He had told her as much as he could about Madame de Vionnet’s influence. She thanked him, but she also understood the danger.

She said Mrs. Newsome could not like owing anything to another woman. No woman, she said, liked such a debt. Strether could not deny this. Madame de Vionnet then asked if Mrs. Newsome might come to Paris and see for herself. Strether answered at once that he had not asked for that. If anyone went first, he said, it would more likely be himself going home.

This made her serious. She asked if he was thinking of leaving. Strether said of course he thought of it all the time. His work was nearly done. Chad had heard the case from Woollett, and the final choice now belonged to Chad. Strether had enjoyed Paris more than he expected, but he could not stay forever.

Madame de Vionnet shook her head. He was not ready to go, she said. If he went too soon, Chad might break away from what had made him better. Strether asked what she meant by “break away,” though he already knew. She answered that he understood perfectly. He had not come all this way only to destroy Chad’s best chance.

Strether said that Chad could go to America and show his mother what he had become. He could plead for Madame de Vionnet there. But she asked whether Strether would give his word that Mrs. Newsome would not try to marry Chad off once he was home. Strether looked out at the river before answering. He knew that Mrs. Newsome would see Chad's improvement and want him home even more.

Madame de Vionnet said the money in Woollett was too great a force. If Chad went back, he might stay for it. Strether said the only thing that could truly hurt her would be Chad's marriage. She gave a small strange laugh and reminded him that something could also hurt Chad. Strether saw that she was right.

Then she pressed him more directly. He had taken up her case, and now he could not honorably drop it. He was not saving her for herself alone, but because of Chad. If he wished to see Chad through, he must also see her through. Her words were quiet, but their force was strong.

Strether looked at her across the table and felt the seriousness of her whole being. Mrs. Newsome was serious too, but not in this way. Madame de Vionnet's seriousness was softer, deeper, and more personal. At last Strether said that he could not honorably refuse to see Chad through. She asked if he would do it. He answered that he would.

Madame de Vionnet rose and held out her hand across the table. Her thanks were simple, but they carried great meaning. Strether felt that the promise he had made before had now gone much deeper. He had not changed his place suddenly; he had only stayed where he had already planted his feet. But now he knew more clearly where that place was.

### Part 13: Mrs. Newsome Answers

Three days after his lunch with Madame de Vionnet, Strether received a telegram from America. It did not come through the bank. A small boy in uniform brought it to the hotel, and the concierge sent him across the little court. Strether opened the blue paper in the evening light and stood still for a long time. The

streets outside were full of spring air, but the message made the air around him suddenly colder.

The telegram was from Mrs. Newsome. Its meaning was short and hard. He was to come back by the first ship. Strether read it once, then read it again. He folded it, opened it, smoothed it out, and finally crushed it in his hand as if he could make it disappear. But he did not throw it away.

Waymarsh appeared while Strether was sitting in the court with the telegram hidden in his fist. For a moment the two men saw each other clearly. Waymarsh looked at him through the glass of the reading room and seemed to understand that something had happened. Strether knew, with a sharp new certainty, that Waymarsh had probably written to Woollett. Someone had warned Mrs. Newsome that Strether was no longer safe.

They dined together that evening, but Strether said nothing. Waymarsh also said almost nothing. Their silence was heavier than usual, because both men seemed to be waiting for the other to speak first. At last Waymarsh asked if anything special was wrong. Strether answered that nothing was wrong, except what was usually wrong.

That answer was not true enough to satisfy him. Later, alone in his room, he began a long letter to Mrs. Newsome. He wrote sheet after sheet, trying to explain himself. He wanted to be clear, loyal, careful, and brave all at once. But the more he wrote, the less he trusted the words.

Before going to bed, he tore the unfinished letter into small pieces. The act gave him a strange peace. He slept better than he expected and rose later than usual. When Chad came to his door in the morning, Strether was still dressing. The little blue telegram lay on the open window ledge, held down by his watch.

Chad saw it at once. He looked at it and then looked at Strether. "It has come, then?" he said. Strether asked if Chad had received one too. Chad said no. He had only guessed from the sight of the telegram and from Strether's face.

Chad had come with his own news. He was ready to go home. He said he had really been ready for some time and had only waited for Strether. Now Strether was better, stronger, and more settled. Chad thought the proper moment had come.

They could return to America together.

Strether turned from the mirror and looked at him. Chad seemed more successful than ever that morning. He was fresh, handsome, calm, and perfectly dressed. His dark face was full of health, and the grey in his hair made him look still more finished. Strether thought, almost with pain, that this was the man Woollett would receive if Chad went home now.

Yet the very success of Chad's appearance strengthened Strether's new decision. He did not want Chad to go yet. This surprised Chad deeply. Strether explained that Mrs. Newsome's telegram had changed the situation. If Strether did not return immediately, then Sarah Pocock, Jim Pocock, and Mamie would come to Paris. Mrs. Newsome was sending reinforcements.

Chad laughed when he heard Mamie's name. He asked if Mamie was being sent to corrupt him back into goodness. Strether said she was very charming. Chad answered that he would like to see her. The answer was easy and bright, and for a moment Strether saw how little fear Chad had. He was curious about the people from Woollett, not frightened by them.

Strether told him that Sarah deserved the chance to come. Paris would do her good, if nothing else. Chad answered that she could have come years before if she had really wanted to see him. Strether said that now she had a better reason. Mrs. Newsome had sent Strether first, and now Strether himself had become the reason for Sarah's journey.

Chad asked why his mother did not come herself. Strether looked at him for a long moment and asked if he wanted her to come. Chad did not answer at once. Strether said Chad had every right to ask for her. He could cable for her that day if he wished. Chad thought about this, but he saw that Strether himself did not want Mrs. Newsome in Paris.

Strether admitted it. He did not want her there. Madame de Vionnet might wish to meet her, and might even think she could win her. Chad said that was true. Madame de Vionnet would be charming to Mrs. Newsome if she had the chance. Strether answered quietly that she would not succeed.

Chad asked if Strether had already answered the telegram. Strether said he had

not. He had waited not for Maria, not for anyone else, but for his own mind to become clear. Now it was clear. He wanted Chad to stay with him. Chad asked how long. Strether answered that Chad must stay until he gave another sign.

Chad was puzzled. Strether had come to take him home, and now he was asking him to remain. Strether knew how strange it sounded. But he said he was not ready to return. Chad had helped him feel the charm of life in Paris, and Strether admitted this openly. He had received something here that he had missed for many years.

Chad asked what all this would lead to for Strether. They both laughed, because the question turned their positions upside down. Strether had arrived as the guide and judge. Now Chad seemed to be asking whether Strether himself was safe. Strether said only that he had gained a certainty which had passed through fire.

Chad then suggested another possibility. He could go home alone for a month or two while Strether remained in Paris. Madame de Vionnet could look after Strether during the interval. Strether rejected this at once. The idea seemed grotesque. If Chad went, Strether would follow him on the next ship.

This brought them to the real point. Chad saw that Strether had been damaged in Woollett's eyes. If Mrs. Newsome had sent for him, she no longer fully trusted him. That fact touched Strether's future with her. Chad understood this more clearly than Strether wished. Strether answered that this was exactly why Chad owed him loyalty now.

Chad asked how he could pay that debt. Strether told him not to desert him. He must stand by him. Chad did not make a solemn speech, but as they went downstairs he put a firm hand on Strether's shoulder. It was a promise of a kind. After that they separated, and Chad went to send his cable.

Later that afternoon, Strether went to see Maria Gostrey. She had returned from the south, and he found her in her familiar rooms. He told her everything at once. Waymarsh, he believed, had written to Woollett. Mrs. Newsome had answered with a cable ordering him home. Strether had not obeyed it. Instead, he had made Chad cable that he too would not come yet.

Maria listened with close attention. She asked if Strether meant that he had stopped Chad from going. Strether said yes. Chad had been ready, and Strether had stopped him. This, he said, was where he now stood. Maria understood at once that the matter had become much more serious.

Strether explained that the Pococks would now come. Sarah would speak for her mother, and Jim and Mamie would come with her. Maria said Mamie would be their strongest card. Strether agreed without saying so directly. He was sorry for Mamie, and perhaps even more sorry because her coming could not easily be prevented.

Maria asked why he stayed if Sarah was now to take up the case. Strether said he stayed to play fair. New facts had appeared in Paris, and the old reasons from Woollett no longer answered them. If there were new reasons for taking Chad home, Sarah could bring them. Strether would see them, hear them, and judge them. He also wanted to make sure that the Pococks played fair too.

Maria asked if Chad would introduce Sarah to Madame de Vionnet. Strether said he would be surprised if Chad did not. Maria looked at him carefully. He had thought of that possibility and was prepared for it. She told him he was magnificent. Strether answered, with tired seriousness, that for once in his dull life he would like to have been that.

Two days later Chad received the answer from Woollett. Sarah, Jim, and Mamie were leaving for France at once. Strether also sent his own cable to Mrs. Newsome. He said he judged it best to take another month and welcomed any help she chose to send. Then he wrote again, as he was always writing. The letters were long, careful, and full of good faith, yet he often wondered whether they were only words pushed out against the dark.

Mrs. Newsome herself stopped writing. This silence was more powerful than any letter. Strether knew she would wait for Sarah's report before trusting him again. Yet her silence made her more present to him, not less. He walked with her in thought, sat with her in thought, and felt her clear cold nobility near him in the very streets of Paris.

He spoke of her often to Maria now. Earlier he had been careful, almost

guarded, when talking about Mrs. Newsome. Now that guard had fallen. Perhaps he spoke so much because he wanted to keep before himself the value of the woman whose trust he had endangered. Perhaps he wanted Maria to understand the size of what he might lose.

Maria saw that he had changed. She told him that he could now walk alone. He no longer came to her as a thirsty man comes to a well. Other fountains had opened for him. She accepted this with great kindness, and that kindness touched him. He would always owe her much, but their relation was no longer exactly what it had been in Chester and London.

They spoke again and again about youth. Strether said that he was having, late in life, the youth he had never properly had. Chad and Madame de Vionnet gave him that feeling. Their life, their danger, their beauty, and their courage all seemed to belong to him in a strange borrowed way. If they failed him, he said, something in him would fail too.

Maria asked what their work was supposed to be. Strether could only say that they were to see him through this experience. Maria reminded him that, in the beginning, she herself had been the one who was to see him through. Strether remembered it tenderly. She said that if he came to grief, perhaps she could still help patch him up.

Strether answered that if he truly broke, there would be no patching. It would not kill him, he said. It would do something worse. It would make him old. Maria told him that nothing could do that, because the special charm of him now was that he was, at last, young.

The days passed, and Strether waited for the POCOcks. He told himself that he wanted their arrival because it would bring facts into the light. Yet he knew that he was not completely honest with himself. He was afraid of what Sarah might do and also impatient to know the cost of his own choice. The first payment would be her arrival in Paris.

Part 14: The POCOcks Arrive

During the next few days, Strether moved about Paris with more freedom than he had felt before. Waymarsh no longer asked many questions. He had probably guessed that Strether knew about his message to Woollett, but he did not confess it. This silence suited them both. Waymarsh sat apart, large and serious, as if waiting for justice to arrive from across the sea.

Strether, meanwhile, took whole days for himself. Chad had gone out of Paris for a short time, and this absence helped Strether feel still freer. He visited Chartres and stood before the great cathedral with a deep, quiet happiness. He went to Fontainebleau and thought for a few hours that he might almost be on the road to Italy. He even went to Rouen with a small bag and spent the night there, feeling as if he had stolen a small private life.

Yet this freedom was not simple peace. The Pockocks were coming, and each day brought them nearer. Sarah Pockock was Mrs. Newsome's daughter and would come with her mother's authority. Jim Pockock was Sarah's husband. Mamie Pockock, Jim's sister, was also coming, and Mamie carried Woollett's hope for Chad in another form. Strether knew that this group would not come only to enjoy Paris. They were coming to act.

One afternoon, before the Pockocks arrived, Strether found himself near Madame de Vionnet's house. He passed through the great doorway and asked if she was at home. Then, before the answer came fully to him, fear rose inside him. He was not afraid of her kindness, her beauty, or her power over Chad. He was afraid of what might happen if he saw her too often. He suddenly knew that he could trust her less easily because he trusted himself less.

He turned away without going up. The dark court, the old stairs, and the quiet house had almost drawn him in, but he escaped them. Outside, in the open street, he breathed more freely. Still, he did not feel proud. He knew that he had not escaped from her case. He had only escaped from one more meeting.

On the day the Pockocks were to arrive, Strether and Chad drove together to the station. Waymarsh had gone with them to the court of the hotel first, but Chad and Strether were the two who took charge of the actual meeting. Strether tried to speak lightly while they waited. He told Chad that Sarah and Waymarsh would

certainly understand each other. They both had serious minds, strong judgments, and a deep belief in being right.

Chad seemed amused by this. Strether then said that Sarah was coming as Mrs. Newsome's true representative. In a way, Strether himself felt like an old ambassador leaving office while a new one arrived. The phrase struck him as soon as he said it. It was almost too exact. He had been sent to speak for Woollett, and now Woollett was sending someone else because his voice had changed.

Chad said that his mother was worth fifty Sarahs. Strether answered that she was worth a thousand, but Sarah would still carry her message. Chad accepted this, but he seemed less troubled than Strether wished. He even spoke of Sarah, Jim, and Mamie as if they were children playing at life. Strether felt a small shock. This was not only disrespectful; it was also strangely comforting. Chad did not seem afraid of them.

Strether warned him that Sarah had come with a clear purpose. She had not crossed the ocean to be charmed, confused, or softened. Chad could be charming, Madame de Vionnet could be wonderful, and Paris could be full of light. But Sarah had come to take Chad home. That fact had to be kept in view.

Chad answered easily that if Sarah asked him to go, he would go with her. Strether said nothing at first. Then Chad asked if Strether expected that, after seeing Sarah, he would not want to go. Strether still hesitated. Chad then said that, at least, the visitors should have the best possible time while they were in Paris.

This made Strether look at him sharply. If Chad truly wished to go home, Strether said, he would not be so anxious about their good time. He would not care whether they enjoyed Paris or not. Chad understood the point and smiled. He said he could not help being decent. Strether sighed and said that yes, Chad was too decent. For a moment, this seemed the absurd end of the whole mission.

As they came near the station, Chad asked if Strether meant to introduce Sarah to Maria Gostrey. Strether answered at once that he did not. Chad asked whether Mrs. Newsome knew about Maria. Strether said he believed she did. Chad then wondered whether Mrs. Newsome would have told Sarah. Strether said that was one of the things he wished to discover.

The train arrived, and the question was no longer distant. Sarah appeared at the window of her carriage, fresh, bright, and handsome after the journey. For one second she reminded Strether strongly of Mrs. Newsome. The likeness passed quickly, but it was enough to hurt him. It showed him again what he might lose if the break with Woollett became complete.

Sarah greeted Chad first, then Strether. Her manner was gracious, direct, and full of control. She showed no open anger and made no attack. This gave Strether a sudden feeling of relief. He had not expected a scene, but he had feared some visible sign that he was no longer trusted. Instead, Sarah treated him as the valued friend of the family.

Mamie Pocock came next, pretty, fresh, and perfectly ready to please. She seemed to bring with her the best social face of Woollett. She was young, well dressed, and confident without being loud. Strether looked at her and thought that she would have done credit to any place that had sent her out as its representative. She was not deep, perhaps, but she was charming in a clear and useful way.

Jim Pocock followed with cheerful noise and good humor. He was small, round, light-colored, and dressed with careful brightness. His large cigar, pale clothes, and lively manner made him look less serious than the women. He was clearly happy to be in Paris. Strether understood at once that Jim had not come to judge Chad. He had come, if possible, to enjoy himself.

Chad handled the whole arrival beautifully. He saw to the luggage, the maid, the carriage, and the comfort of the ladies. He greeted Sarah with warmth but no anxiety. He spoke to Mamie with friendly ease and made her smile. Strether watched all this with rising hope. Surely Sarah must see how much Chad had improved.

Yet Sarah said nothing of the kind. She remained bright and pleasant, but her brightness did not seem to notice the very thing Strether wanted noticed. Mamie also gave no sign. Jim, who might have spoken most freely, said nothing about Chad's change. Strether began to feel, even before they left the station, that the visitors might look straight at the evidence and not see it.

Chad took Sarah, Mamie, the maid, and the luggage in one carriage. Strether

found himself in another cab with Jim. As they drove through the sunny streets, Jim laughed with real pleasure. He said the trip was a great piece of luck. He did not know exactly what Sarah had come for, but he himself had come for a good time. Strether found this honesty almost refreshing.

Jim said he was not there to fight Chad. Sarah would do that if fighting was needed. It was her business, not his. He thought Strether and he might as well drive around a little before going to the hotel. This would give Sarah time to begin, if she wished to begin at once. Strether agreed, partly because he wanted to know what Jim really thought.

They rolled through wide streets and bright open spaces. Jim looked at everything with hungry amusement. He said he would be glad to come out and live in Paris himself, if he could. He asked why Chad should hurry back just to take charge of advertising. Strether said the business needed Chad's ability. Chad had a real head for it and could do important work at home.

Jim asked whether Chad had got that ability in Paris. Strether said no. The wonder was that he had not lost it in Paris. Chad had always had natural business sense, but Paris had added something to him instead of destroying him. Jim listened, but he did not give the answer Strether wanted. He did not say that Chad looked magnificent, or that Strether had been right.

Jim then said that people at home had been anxious about Strether. Strether admitted that he had liked Paris, perhaps too much. Jim laughed and called him an old sinner. Strether went on more seriously. The case, he said, was more complex than it had looked from Woollett. Jim answered that it had looked bad enough from Woollett, especially after Strether's letters and Chad's failure to return.

Strether asked if Sarah had come in a mild spirit. Jim explained that Sarah and Mrs. Newsome never showed their claws at once. They were quietest when they were most dangerous. They did not leap about or make noise, but they always reached what they wanted. Strether laughed, but the laugh was nervous. Jim's joke felt too close to the truth.

At last Strether asked about Mrs. Newsome. Had she given way under the

strain? Jim laughed again and said she was quite overcome, just as Sarah was. But women like them, he added, were never more active than when they were overcome. Mrs. Newsome was sitting up all night, and she was sitting up for Strether.

The words struck him deeply, though Jim said them with a vulgar little laugh. Strether felt that this was the true message from Woollett. Mrs. Newsome had not disappeared behind Sarah. She was still awake, still judging, still waiting. As the cab reached the hotel, Jim added that Strether had better not go home. Strether sat for one moment longer before getting out, wondering whether that too was a true message from Woollett.

#### Part 15: Sarah Meets Madame de Vionnet

The next morning, Strether went to Sarah Pocock's sitting room at the hotel. It was still well before noon, but the day had already begun for the people from Woollett. As the door opened, he heard Madame de Vionnet's voice. The sound stopped him for a second on the threshold. She had come before him, and the meeting he had feared had already begun.

Sarah was standing to receive him. Her face was bright, but too bright, and there was a small hard color in her cheeks. Strether knew at once that Madame de Vionnet had not found an easy welcome. Then he saw Waymarsh at the far window, his broad back turned toward the room, his hands in his pockets. Waymarsh looked out at the Rue de Rivoli as if he belonged to neither woman, but his very distance gave Sarah support.

Madame de Vionnet had come as a friend of Chad's, and she had offered her help. She said she would be delighted to do anything she could for Sarah in Paris. Sarah answered politely that she was not helpless. She had her brother, her American friends, and her own knowledge. She had been to Paris before, she said, and she knew Paris. The words were simple, but they carried a chill.

Madame de Vionnet accepted the coldness with perfect grace. She answered that, in Paris, things were always changing, and one woman of good will might

still help another. Perhaps they knew different parts of the city. She smiled at Strether as she spoke and held out her hand without rising. That small familiar gesture made Strether feel, with sudden fear, that he had been placed on her side before Sarah's eyes.

He saw how carefully Madame de Vionnet had dressed for the visit. Her clothes were quiet, delicate, and almost modest, as if she had come not to shine but to please. Yet this very care made her dangerous. Sarah would see the care, the title, the manner, and the long French ease behind it. Strether noticed Madame de Vionnet's card on the table, with the small sign of her rank, and imagined Sarah's private judgment working quickly.

Madame de Vionnet spoke of Chad with admiration. He had made Paris his own, she said, in a wonderful way. She asked Strether if he had not seen this too. Strether felt her drawing him into the boat with her, as if she needed him to help keep it floating. He could have tried to stand aside, but Sarah's eyes were on him. If he refused Madame de Vionnet now, it would look like betrayal.

So he answered. He said he had seen a great deal and had done what he had come to do. Madame de Vionnet quickly helped him. He had renewed his friendship with Chad, she said, and had learned to know him again. Waymarsh turned from the window at this, as if the word "friend" had touched him. He said that Strether had also renewed his friendship with him, though he was not sure how much Strether liked what he had found.

Madame de Vionnet laughed gently and said she had not been thinking of Waymarsh. She had meant Chad, whose sister had now come to take up the old family threads. Sarah met this with calm resistance. She said she had never lacked chances to know her brother. They had many duties at home, many reasons for what they did, and Woollett was not an impossible place. Then, with a hard little brightness, she added that she had come because they did come.

The talk moved on, but the room remained tense. It was a grand hotel room, full of mirrors, red cloth, gold edges, and clocks. The shutters were half closed against the summer morning. Through the openings one could see parts of the Tuileries garden, the bright points of railings, and the movement of Paris outside.

The city seemed to invite them all, but no one in the room was truly at ease.

Sarah said she would probably have the chance to visit Chad's rooms. She had no doubt they were very pleasant. Madame de Vionnet answered that Chad's rooms might be common ground for them. It would give her the best hope of seeing Sarah again. Sarah looked straight at her and said she would return the visit, since Madame de Vionnet had been so kind. Strether understood that Sarah would not go back to Woollett without being able to say she had seen everything.

Madame de Vionnet then spoke of Jeanne. She said she had hoped to meet Mamie Pocock and would have brought Jeanne if she had first asked permission. Her daughter was gentle, good, and rather lonely, she said. She wished Jeanne might know an American girl of the most delightful kind. Strether felt the deep purpose under the soft words and knew again that Madame de Vionnet was fighting with all her skill.

Sarah did not refuse, but she did not open herself. She said she would speak to Mamie. Strether, moved by Madame de Vionnet's appeal, said that Mamie was indeed charming among the charming. Waymarsh added, in his heavy way, that the American girl was something America could truly show Europe. Madame de Vionnet accepted this beautifully and said that was exactly why she wanted Jeanne to know Mamie.

Then Strether, almost against his own caution, praised Jeanne. He said Mademoiselle de Vionnet was perfect and exquisite. Sarah only answered with a bright little "Ah?" Waymarsh, trying to be fair, said Jeanne was very handsome in the regular French style. This made both Strether and Madame de Vionnet laugh, though Strether caught Sarah's quick look at Waymarsh. It seemed to ask whether even he had begun to leave her side.

Madame de Vionnet did not press too hard. She said Jeanne was good, but different, and perhaps too different from the splendid American type. She wanted only a chance for the two girls to meet. She and Jeanne would wait and wait, she said, until Sarah and Mamie came. Sarah promised no more than that she would speak of it.

As Madame de Vionnet prepared to leave, she turned the talk toward Maria

Gostrey. She said Strether gave all his best hours to dear Maria and left only crumbs for everyone else. Sarah said she was not sure she knew whom they meant. Strether answered that Mrs. Newsome surely knew everything and must have told her. Then, with a boldness that surprised even himself, he said Maria was as wonderful as anyone wished to say.

Madame de Vionnet continued the joke. Strether, she said, never allowed anyone to see Maria. He kept her to himself. Waymarsh then spoke with weight. He had seen some of Maria, he said, and could tell Sarah about her if she wished. He had watched her carefully and did not know that there was any real harm in her.

Madame de Vionnet cried out softly that Maria was dear and clever. Waymarsh answered that the Countess herself came close to her. Still, Maria knew her way around Europe, and, more than that, she loved Strether. Madame de Vionnet laughed and said that everyone loved Strether, so that was no special merit. Strether felt himself grow red, and he hated being made visible in this way before Sarah.

In that moment he also understood something about Waymarsh. His old friend was not only watching him. He was trying, in his heavy and awkward way, to save him. Waymarsh had begun the morning with Sarah, and perhaps long before this he had been in secret touch with Woollett. Strether felt no fresh anger. He saw the loyalty inside the betrayal and knew they would probably never speak of it directly.

Strether then accepted the part forced on him. He said there was no Maria for anyone but himself, not even a small glimpse. He kept her to himself. Sarah answered that it was good of him to tell her, though she hoped she would not miss Maria too much. Madame de Vionnet said he was not ashamed of Maria, because Maria was really very good-looking.

Then Madame de Vionnet asked Strether to come to see her soon. She said she would be at home whenever it suited him. Strether reminded her that he had lately called when both Chad and she were out of town. She answered that he had chosen his moment too well, but that she would not leave Paris again while Sarah was there. At last they agreed on Tuesday at five forty-five.

Sarah said she would not be in Paris long. She had plans for other countries and friends to meet. Madame de Vionnet answered that this was all the more reason to arrange things quickly. She again asked to see Mamie and to let Jeanne meet her. Strether, feeling that he could not stand by silently, promised that something would come of it. He said he took a great interest.

A few moments later, he went downstairs with Madame de Vionnet to her carriage. He had helped her openly now, and everyone upstairs had seen it. The morning had not brought peace between Paris and Woollett. It had shown, with painful clearness, that they were two different worlds. Strether returned to the hotel door knowing that Sarah had judged Madame de Vionnet, but also knowing that Sarah had judged him.

#### Part 16: Trying to Make Them See Chad

A couple of days later, Strether went again to Madame de Vionnet's house. He kept the appointment exactly, because he had been thinking of it almost every hour. He had much to tell her, but he also felt that he had nothing clear to say. The POCOcks had now been in Paris long enough for him to watch them, and what he saw troubled him. They looked at Chad, spoke with Chad, and received Chad's kindness, but they gave no sign that they saw the new man before them.

"The difficulty," Strether told Madame de Vionnet, "is that I cannot make them show that they know he has changed." He walked up and down her room as he spoke, just as he often walked in Maria's room when his thoughts were too many. "They look at him as if he were still the same Chad they have been blaming for three years from across the sea. They will not admit anything. As a plan, it is really quite strong."

Madame de Vionnet listened with great patience. She told him that he was in too great a hurry. If she could wait, surely he could wait too. Her tone helped him, and so did the room. He felt again the quiet age of the house, the old furniture, the faded colors, and the deep stillness behind the windows. This place made haste seem vulgar.

Yet his mind would not rest. Sarah, he said, was deeper than he had expected. She did not speak much of Mrs. Newsome, and that was almost the worst part. She did not bring messages. She did not ask open questions. She behaved to him almost as if he were a distant poor relation who had been politely invited into the room.

This made Strether feel watched. Sarah knew that he could be made uneasy, and that gave her power. Madame de Vionnet asked why he could be made uneasy at all. Strether laughed and said it was because he was made that way. He thought of everything. Madame de Vionnet answered that one should never do that. One should think of as few things as possible.

Strether said that if one thought of only a few things, one must choose the right ones. Then he added that Sarah's power over him did not matter much. He could suffer a little watching and a little silence. What mattered was Chad, and whether Sarah would ever see what Paris had done for him. If she refused to see, then all the beauty of the case might be useless.

Madame de Vionnet said that he was being very kind to her. Strether wanted to be kind, but he knew there was more in it. He admitted that his own case was also involved. If Sarah judged Chad badly, she would judge Strether badly too. But he did not want to speak of Mrs. Newsome to Madame de Vionnet. That part of his life, though always present, still seemed to belong to another room.

They both understood many things they did not say. That silence made their talk more intimate, not less. Strether would have liked to ask Madame de Vionnet what she truly thought of Sarah. He guessed that she found Sarah without charm. But he did not ask, because such a question would have been too easy and not quite honorable. He was trying, even now, to keep some line of fairness between the two women.

They could speak more freely about Chad. Madame de Vionnet said she had not seen him since Sarah arrived. Then she admitted, with a little smile, that she missed him. Sometimes she saw him every day, she said. Their friendship was like that. But she wanted him to give himself fully to the visitors for the present. She had asked him to be beautiful to them, and she believed he would be.

Strether said Chad was doing exactly that. He was giving himself up to them, and especially to Jim Pocock. He wanted to get his own full impression of them. Strether thought this was important. Chad had to see Woollett again, not only through letters and memories, but through people standing before him in Paris.

Madame de Vionnet listened closely. Strether said he trusted Chad more and more. He trusted him to behave well and to make the best possible show. But Madame de Vionnet asked what would happen if Sarah shut her eyes to it. Strether thought for a moment and said perhaps that would not matter. If Chad saw Sarah clearly, Sarah's blindness might only help him see.

Then they spoke of Jim. Strether had begun to think that Jim might matter more than anyone expected. Jim was careless and worldly in a simple American way. He wanted Paris, pleasure, movement, and jokes. He did not seem eager to bring Chad home. Perhaps, Strether said, Jim would quietly work against Sarah's seriousness simply by being himself.

Madame de Vionnet asked if Jim would help her. Strether said he might help Chad and Strether first, and her afterward. Jim thought Strether and Chad had come to Paris for a good time, or had stayed there for one. He did not believe in their fine explanations. To him, Madame de Vionnet would probably seem dangerous, delightful, and much more interesting than anything at home. This made her laugh, and she said she must know Jim.

Strether warned her that she might disappoint him. Jim's idea of wickedness was probably simple. Madame de Vionnet accepted the risk with good humor. Strether then explained that Jim's view was useful because it stood against Sarah's view. Sarah and Mrs. Newsome had no patience with late freedom, late pleasure, or strange turns in middle life. Jim, however, could enjoy such things, especially when they did not cost him much.

They also spoke of Waymarsh. Strether said Waymarsh now belonged very much to Sarah. Madame de Vionnet seemed interested in this. Strether said Sarah wanted a man to herself. Everyone else, from her point of view, seemed to have someone. Chad had Madame de Vionnet. Strether had Maria. Maria had Strether. Jim had Paris. So Sarah had taken Waymarsh, and Waymarsh had perhaps allowed

himself to be taken.

Madame de Vionnet asked what would become of Mamie. Strether said Chad would not neglect her. As soon as he had finished showing Jim Paris, he would turn to Mamie and be kind. Madame de Vionnet said Mamie must not suffer. Strether promised that she would not. He was watching her closely now and had begun to think of her as a real case.

Madame de Vionnet asked if Mamie was truly charming. Strether could not yet say. He had known Mamie at home, but in Paris she seemed different. At home she had been only Mamie, bright and pretty and suitable. Here she had become a question. She had seen Chad again, and perhaps she saw him now as a new person. Strether could not tell how deeply she felt this, but he suspected there was more in her than he had thought.

Madame de Vionnet said Jeanne greatly wanted to meet Mamie. They had called Mamie Chad's cousin, because that was the easiest name for her in their talk. Strether smiled at this and said Jeanne would help her mother. Madame de Vionnet answered with sudden feeling that she truly wanted Jeanne to do what she could for her. Strether looked at her kindly and thought of the girl as a poor little creature drawn into a large adult game.

He was about to leave, but Madame de Vionnet walked with him through the outer rooms. The rooms opened one into another, quiet, old, and slightly cold. Their faded colors, polished floors, and old prints made a long still view behind them. Strether stopped and looked back. He felt again that the place itself was an argument. Sarah and Mamie should see this, he said. Even Mrs. Newsome should see it, if that were possible.

Madame de Vionnet seemed doubtful. Her old rooms looked poor to her beside the rich comfort of the Pockocks. Strether said that was not the point. The point was that some things could not be described in letters. They had to be felt on the spot. Mrs. Newsome, he said, did feel things, though not always the things he wished she would feel.

In the antechamber, Madame de Vionnet leaned near the doorway and looked at him. She said he would have been a friend because he was not stupid. Then,

almost suddenly, she told him something she had not told him before. They were arranging Jeanne's marriage. The words struck Strether like a quick change of light.

For one confused second, he thought of Chad. Then Madame de Vionnet explained that Chad was not the man. Chad had helped find the opportunity. A young man from a good family had seen Jeanne, become interested, and approached the matter carefully. Chad had looked into it quietly and had helped guide the whole affair. Nothing was yet formally announced, because a few points still depended on Monsieur de Vionnet, but Madame de Vionnet believed the hope was safe.

Strether listened with great attention. The news relieved him and troubled him at the same time. Jeanne was not waiting for Chad, and Chad had not been using the girl for himself. He had been helping her future. Yet this also showed how deeply he stood inside Madame de Vionnet's private life. He was not outside the family; he was helping to arrange its most delicate matters.

Madame de Vionnet said Jeanne was pleased and had been perfectly free. Strether hoped with all his heart that it would succeed. He asked if nothing depended on Jeanne herself, and Madame de Vionnet said everything had depended on her. She spoke with pride, fear, and hope all at once. Strether felt that he had been allowed to see deeper than before.

When he finally took her hand, he said he did not think Chad would tell him any of this. Madame de Vionnet said perhaps not yet. Strether answered that he would not ask Chad yet either. There was too much to judge. Madame de Vionnet looked at him with quiet passion and said he had everything to judge. That was the word he carried away with him into the Paris street.

## Part 17: Mamie's Position

For nearly a week Sarah did not come directly at Strether. She was polite, cold, and careful, but she did not ask the question he had expected. She did not accuse him of failure or speak openly for her mother. This quietness troubled him more

than attack would have done. It made him feel that Sarah was waiting for the right hour, while he was left to move in uncertainty.

Chad, on the other hand, gave himself fully to the visitors. He took them out, arranged meals, found theatres, and made Paris easy for them. Jim accepted all this with open pleasure. Sarah accepted it with calm control. Mamie watched everything with a soft brightness that Strether could not yet read.

One afternoon Strether went to Maria Gostrey with a report. The group had divided itself for the evening in a way that amused him. Sarah was to dine with Waymarsh, and he believed they would go afterward to the circus. Mamie was to go with Chad to the French theatre. Jim was to be left to Strether, who had promised to take him later to a lighter show.

Maria laughed at the arrangement. It seemed to her both comic and deeply American. Waymarsh and Sarah, so serious and so sure of themselves, going together to dinner and then perhaps to the circus, made a picture she could hardly bear. Strether laughed too, but not freely. He saw more in it than a joke.

He told Maria that Sarah might almost be having a romance. Not a real romance perhaps, and not one that would change her life, but something useful to her imagination. Waymarsh was helping her through Paris in his heavy, loyal way. He gave her a man of her own, just as everyone else seemed to have someone. Chad had Madame de Vionnet, Strether had Maria, Jim had Paris, and Sarah had Waymarsh.

Maria asked if Waymarsh himself was in love. Strether lowered his voice, as if giving away a great secret. He said Waymarsh believed Sarah might be touched, but he was not afraid for himself. He liked helping her. He would carry her safely over the dangerous air of Paris, even if he did it by giving her expensive dinners and solemn walks.

Maria enjoyed this very much, but she soon gave Strether a more serious piece of news. Jeanne de Vionnet was now definitely engaged to young Monsieur de Montbron. The matter would soon be public. Strether did not jump, because Madame de Vionnet had already told him that something of the kind was coming. Still, hearing it from Maria made it feel fixed.

They both understood what this meant. Jeanne was no longer the possible answer to Chad's life. If she was to marry someone else, then the relation that remained was between Chad and Madame de Vionnet. Strether said this made everything simpler, but also stronger. Chad's help in arranging Jeanne's future was a sign to Madame de Vionnet. It showed that he accepted the special place he held in her life.

Maria asked if Chad had once cared for Jeanne. Strether said he might have wished he could care for her. It would have been easier, cleaner, and more acceptable. Jeanne was young, charming, and free to marry. But Chad could not truly choose her, because he was already tied too deeply to her mother.

Strether felt that the whole burden would fall on him. Chad would leave the explanation to him. Madame de Vionnet would count on him. Sarah would question him sooner or later, and Mrs. Newsome would judge him from far away. Maria told him he must keep at least a little blood for her too, because she might need it. Strether smiled, but the words touched him.

They then spoke of Jim. Strether said Jim was the real note of home, the sound of the business and the future Mrs. Newsome wanted for Chad. Jim was cheerful, vulgar, useful, and almost terrible in his common sense. Sarah did not truly know how bad he was for her case. Mrs. Newsome probably did not know either. Maria said this suited her perfectly, because it made Woollett even more blind than she had thought.

Strether added that Mamie did know. Maria was surprised. What good could that do? Strether did not yet know, but he felt that Mamie's knowledge mattered. She saw more than Sarah saw, and perhaps more than Jim saw about himself. She had become, in Paris, a real case.

Two days later, Strether called at Sarah's hotel. A servant showed him into her sitting room and left him there. At first he thought there had been a mistake, because no one seemed to be present. The room was full of signs of the visitors' life: purchases on the table, a new magazine, and a book from Chad for Mamie. Then he saw a large unopened letter addressed to Sarah in Mrs. Newsome's hand.

The sight of that letter held him still. Mrs. Newsome had not written to him,

but she was writing fully to her daughter. The heavy envelope seemed almost like Mrs. Newsome herself in the room, silent and refusing to soften. Strether looked at the strong writing and felt again that he might already have lost her. He turned away from the letter as if from a face that would not smile.

Then he noticed a reflection in the glass of one open window. Someone was outside on the balcony. For a moment he thought it might be Sarah, and his heart tightened. Perhaps the scene he had expected would begin at once. But when the person moved, he saw that it was Mamie.

She stood with her arms on the balcony rail, looking down into the Rue de Rivoli. The afternoon light touched her dress and hair. She did not know he was there. Strether watched her for a few seconds and felt, suddenly, that he understood more about her loneliness. Chad was out with Jim, Sarah was somewhere with Waymarsh, and Mamie had been left alone in Paris to wait.

At last he stepped out to her with a light movement, as if he had just entered the room. She turned quickly at his voice and looked, for one second, disappointed. Then she said she had thought he was Mr. Bilham. The words surprised Strether, but they also opened a new door. Little Bilham was expected, and Mamie had been waiting for him.

They went back inside and talked for some time. At first they spoke of Woollett, because that was easy and safe. Yet the safe talk said more than direct questions would have said. Strether felt that Mamie had seen Chad's change completely. She knew what had happened to him, and she knew she must keep her knowledge private.

Mamie spoke of Madame de Vionnet and Jeanne. She and Sarah had called on them that afternoon after many delays caused by shopping. Mamie praised both women with a warmth that made Strether almost blush. Madame de Vionnet was too charming for words, she said. Jeanne was perfect, almost too perfect to be touched by anything more.

Strether asked if she had heard of Jeanne's engagement. Mamie said of course she had. Monsieur de Montbron had been there, and Madame de Vionnet had presented him. Mamie liked him because he was in love with Jeanne. She said

any man was nice when he was truly in love.

Strether asked if Jeanne was in love too. Mamie gave him a smile that seemed wiser than her years. She said Jeanne did not know whether she was or not. Jeanne wanted to do right. First she wanted to please her mother, then Mr. Newsome, and only after that Monsieur de Montbron.

Strether understood how close they had come to the secret without naming it. Mamie had seen that Jeanne's feeling turned first toward Chad, or at least toward what Chad meant in her mother's life. Yet Mamie said all this without jealousy and without sharpness. She seemed generous toward the girl, kind toward Chad, and calm about herself.

Then Strether asked, almost directly, whether everyone would be suited in the end. Mamie paused only a moment. She said she could speak for herself: she would be suited. The answer told Strether much. She would not make a claim on Chad, and she would not help Sarah harm him. She had quietly moved to Strether's side.

He rose to go and took her hand. For a moment he could only admire her. She was not the simple Woollett girl he had thought he knew. Paris had not ruined her or made her foolish. It had shown her good sense, her pride, and her kindness. "Splendid," he said, and then said it again. He left her there, still waiting for Little Bilham.

#### Part 18: What Madame de Vionnet Feels

Three evenings after his talk with Mamie, Strether sat again with Little Bilham on Chad's deep sofa. It was the same sofa where they had once talked during the earlier dinner at Chad's rooms. But the evening was much larger now. Chad had filled the apartment with guests, music, light, flowers, food, voices, and movement. Strether felt that he had never been in a party so rich and so carefully made.

Only a small number of people had dined first, though even that small number would have seemed large in Woollett. Later many more came, until the rooms

were full. Yet the crowd did not feel common or careless. Everyone seemed chosen. Strether had not asked Chad how he had chosen them, but he understood the answer well enough. Chad was showing Sarah, Jim, and Mamie the whole world he had made in Paris.

This was clever, and Strether saw how clever it was. Chad had not argued with Sarah. He had not tried to explain himself like a guilty man. Instead, he had opened his doors and placed his life before her. The result was almost too much. Sarah could not easily attack him while she was being treated like an honored guest in the middle of such beauty.

Strether also felt partly responsible for the evening. He had asked Chad to wait and give the Pockocks time to see everything. Now Chad had done exactly that. If Sarah was being carried along too fast, Strether had helped set the movement going. He had wanted her to see Paris, Chad, and Madame de Vionnet. Now she was seeing them all, but he still did not know what she saw.

That question had brought him to Little Bilham. Bilham had been sitting where he could watch Sarah during dinner. Strether had been placed on the same side of the table and had not seen her face. Now, while music filled the next room, he asked Bilham what Sarah made of it all. He asked in a low voice, as if the whole future might depend on the answer.

Bilham said Sarah was pleased, but not in the way Strether wanted. She was pleased because Chad could do such things. She saw his power, his taste, his manners, and his success. But she wanted all these gifts carried back to Woollett. In her view, Chad had no right to waste such ability in Paris among people who could not belong to his family's purpose.

Strether thought about this and saw the sharpness of it. Sarah did not deny Chad's improvement. She simply took the improvement as another reason to bring him home. If Paris had made him able to lead a room like this, then Woollett should have the profit of it. The very evidence Strether had trusted might now be used against him.

Bilham warned him that Sarah had made up her mind. The expensive music, the fine guests, and the shining rooms had not softened her. They had perhaps

made her clearer and harder. Strether accepted this with a kind of sad amusement. He said that if Sarah was going to fall on him, he must meet her alone.

Then he turned the talk to Mamie. Strether said that Bilham had once thought Chad should marry her, but he must now change his mind. Chad must not marry Mamie. In fact, Strether wished Bilham himself would marry her. He said this lightly, but there was a real wish beneath the joke. He wanted to save Mamie, clear Chad's path, and do one useful good thing before everything broke apart.

Bilham laughed and asked what proof Strether had that Mamie liked him. Strether reminded him that Mamie had waited alone in her hotel room, hoping Bilham would come. She had stood on the balcony watching for his cab. That, Strether said, was surely proof enough. Bilham answered that he had not kept her waiting on purpose. He had come at the proper hour, and he would never have treated her carelessly.

This answer pleased Strether. He said it made the matter even better. If Bilham could care for Mamie, and Mamie could care for him, then one clean and happy thing might come out of this troubled business. Bilham asked whether Strether was trying to marry him off simply to make Chad's case easier. Strether admitted that it would make his own case easier, but he also insisted that Mamie was splendid.

Then Bilham became more serious. Mamie, he said, had come to Europe with an idea already formed. She had thought Chad was lost, and perhaps she had hoped to help save him. But she had arrived too late. Chad was already saved, or at least he seemed saved. There was nothing left for Mamie to do.

Strether understood this with sudden pain. Mamie had wanted her own miracle. She did not want to enjoy another woman's work. If Chad had been broken, weak, or ashamed, perhaps she might have loved him while saving him. But Chad was already strong, graceful, and formed by someone else. That made him useless to her in the very way he was most admirable.

Bilham said Chad was not to blame. He would have been kind to Mamie, and perhaps he might have accepted what had been planned. But the deep moment had passed. Mamie's pride had seen the truth. Strether listened and felt his respect for

her grow. He had called her splendid, and now he knew even better why the word had come.

Bilham then left him and went back toward the music. Almost at once Miss Barrace came in and took the same place beside Strether. She had her long-handled glass, her quick smile, and her usual air of knowing the whole scene. Strether told her that all the ladies were very kind to him. She answered that they could hardly be anything else, since he was the interesting person of the evening.

They spoke first of Maria, who had not come. Strether said Maria was sitting up for him at home, full of worry and hope. Miss Barrace understood. Maria had too much at stake and did not want the responsibility of being present. Strether admitted that he would have liked her there, but perhaps her absence was safer.

Miss Barrace then explained Chad's whole party in her own quick way. Sarah, she said, had been placed in the middle of it and could hardly move. Chad had built the evening around her like a wall. Everyone had been introduced to her, everything had been offered to her, and nothing had been left empty enough for attack. Strether said Sarah was not dead yet. Miss Barrace agreed. Sarah could still breathe, and that might be enough.

Strether said that even through the music and all the voices, he could hear Sarah breathing. Her hidden resistance drowned every other sound for him. Miss Barrace looked at him kindly. She had tried to help him, she said, but she feared she always made things worse. Waymarsh had brought Sarah to see her, and that itself had become part of Sarah's small victory. Sarah believed she had taken Waymarsh from Miss Barrace.

This amused Strether, but only for a moment. He said the evening was too good for Sarah and could not last. Tomorrow would come, and with tomorrow the real question. Miss Barrace said everyone knew that now. They were all watching him, because he was the hero of the drama. Strether said the hero was hiding in a corner because he was afraid of his own part.

Miss Barrace told him not to let Chad go. Chad had done enough. He was loved in Paris, and he was charming. Strether said everyone in Paris made things sound very simple when they wished. Miss Barrace answered that he too would

become simple when he had to. The words struck him like a warning. He knew that the hour for clear action was coming.

Then Strether said they should not think of the hero, but of the heroine. He meant Madame de Vionnet. He had hardly gone near her that evening. He had avoided looking at her, perhaps because he felt ashamed before her. Miss Barrace said he had lost a great deal by doing so. Madame de Vionnet was more wonderful than ever, especially with Jim Pocock.

Strether was startled. Madame de Vionnet had taken Jim in hand because Chad's hands were full with Sarah. It was her way of helping Chad and helping Strether. She was being light, young, and charming for a man who would understand only that kind of charm. Miss Barrace said this took real bravery. Strether saw at once that she was right.

Then the whole truth came closer to him. Madame de Vionnet cared. She cared deeply, and everything she did that evening came from that care. She was not merely clever, not merely graceful, and not merely social. She was fighting for Chad with every soft weapon she had. Strether felt how much more she was doing for him than he was doing for her.

He sat beside Miss Barrace and let this knowledge enter him. The music continued, the guests moved, Sarah breathed somewhere in the center of the rooms, and Madame de Vionnet shone for Jim Pocock like a young girl. All of it was beautiful, funny, dangerous, and sad. Strether knew that he was still hiding from the hardest part. But he also knew that Madame de Vionnet's courage had now made hiding more difficult.

## Part 19: Sarah's Judgment

The next day Strether did not see Sarah. This surprised him, because he had expected that Chad's great evening would be followed at once by some clear word from Woollett. Instead, the day passed almost quietly. Chad sent him no message, Maria remained in her own rooms, and Waymarsh did not appear until late. The silence made Strether feel that everyone was gathering strength.

When Waymarsh finally came, he brought the change with him. He entered Strether's room with a look of solemn purpose. He did not sit at once, and for a few moments he only stood there, large and dark, with his hat in his hand. Strether saw that his old friend had become an ambassador too, though not for the same side. Waymarsh had come from Sarah, and behind Sarah stood Mrs. Newsome.

Waymarsh said Sarah wished to see Strether. She would come to him if he would receive her. Strether laughed a little and asked if she was coming to kill him. Waymarsh did not smile. Sarah was coming to be very kind to him, he said, and Strether must be kind to her in return. The words were simple, but they carried a warning.

Strether understood almost everything then. Sarah had not attacked him at Chad's party because she had been waiting for this private hour. She would not fight before the others. She would come quietly, with Waymarsh as her forerunner, and she would bring the voice of home into Strether's own room. This was Woollett's way of doing battle.

Waymarsh then said that the POCOcks were leaving Paris. Strether was startled, though he hid it. Leaving already? Waymarsh answered that it was less sudden than it seemed. Sarah had come to explain that very point. Strether said he would be glad to hear any explanation from her, and Waymarsh looked at him with troubled eyes.

Strether asked whether anything new had come from home. Waymarsh said he knew nothing about Sarah's private messages. But the answer was too careful, and Strether did not believe it. He saw in a flash the chain of messages: Mrs. Newsome to Sarah, Sarah to Waymarsh, Waymarsh to him. There had perhaps been cables almost every day. Mrs. Newsome was still far away, but her hand was on everything.

Then Strether asked if Sarah had been told to invite him to go with them. Waymarsh again said he knew nothing certain. Yet his voice, his color, and his discomfort told more than his words. He was not a good liar, and this almost restored him to Strether's affection. The old honesty was still there, struggling under the new duty.

At last Waymarsh spoke plainly. He hoped Strether would come with them. He said this with real feeling, not only as Sarah's messenger. Strether felt the kindness inside it. Waymarsh believed that Strether was in danger and that going away with the Pococks might still save him. He did not understand the danger as Strether understood it, but his concern was sincere.

Strether thanked him without saying yes. Waymarsh warned him not to do anything he would be sorry for. The words were almost a plea. Strether saw that Waymarsh feared a complete break between him and Mrs. Newsome. He also saw that Waymarsh could not imagine why such a break might now be necessary. To Waymarsh, the good road still led straight back to Woollett.

After Waymarsh left, Strether waited. He did not try to write, read, or go out. He only walked slowly around his room and looked at the things on the table: letters, books, gloves, and the small signs of his Paris life. These things had seemed light when he first gathered them. Now they looked like evidence. Sarah would come and see, not the objects only, but the man who had chosen them.

Sarah arrived in the late afternoon. She came dressed for travel or for serious business, in clothes that were neat, rich, and without softness. Her face was calm, and her voice at first was gentle. She said she hoped she was not disturbing him. Strether answered that he had been waiting for her, and this was true in more ways than one.

She began with ordinary things. She said Paris had been interesting, and Chad had been extremely kind. Jim had enjoyed himself greatly, and Mamie had also seen much. Madame de Vionnet had been most civil. All these sentences were correct, but each of them stopped before warmth. Strether listened and waited for the door behind the words to open.

At last Sarah said they were going to Switzerland. After that, they might go to other places. Their time in Paris was finished for the present. Strether asked if Chad was going with them. Sarah answered that she hoped he would follow soon. She did not say that Chad had promised. This told Strether that Chad had not promised.

Then Sarah turned to Strether himself. She said her mother had expected him

to return when he had been asked. Mrs. Newsome had trusted his judgment, but his judgment had changed too much. He had been sent to help Chad leave Paris. Instead, he had helped Chad stay. Sarah said this without anger, and that made it colder.

Strether answered that new facts had changed his judgment. Chad was not what they had believed him to be. He was better, finer, and more serious. Paris had not ruined him. Something in Paris had improved him. Sarah listened with a bright, fixed look. When he had finished, she said that this was exactly why Chad must come home.

Strether felt the trap close. The evidence he had gathered for Chad's defense had become evidence for Woollett's claim. If Chad had become valuable, Woollett wanted him more. If he had gained taste and power, the business could use them. If he had learned manners, his mother and sister would be proud to show them. Sarah had not failed to see Chad's change. She had simply given it another meaning.

Strether then spoke of Madame de Vionnet. He said she had had the greatest share in Chad's improvement. He said she was noble, kind, and deeply worthy of respect. Sarah's face changed only a little, but the change was enough. She said Madame de Vionnet was very charming, and that charm was exactly the danger. Strether said charm was not a crime. Sarah answered that it was sometimes worse, because it made crime look beautiful.

The word was not spoken loudly, but it struck Strether hard. He asked if she meant that Madame de Vionnet had done something shameful. Sarah answered that she did not need to name things. The facts were plain enough for decent people. Madame de Vionnet was a married woman, and Chad was tied to her in a way that could not be brought home and placed before Mrs. Newsome. That, Sarah said, was enough.

Strether stood still. He knew that Sarah's view was the view Woollett had sent across the sea. It was clear, strong, and almost impossible to answer in its own language. But he also knew it was not enough. It left out the patience, the pity, the care, the suffering, and the strange good that he had seen. It left out the living

human case.

He told Sarah that he could not accept her judgment. He did not say Madame de Vionnet was innocent in every possible meaning of the word. He said only that she had been good for Chad and that Chad would be shameful if he used her and then threw her away. Sarah looked at him as if he had spoken in a foreign language. Perhaps, in a sense, he had.

Sarah said he had gone over to them. Strether answered that he had gone over to what he had seen. She asked if he was prepared to lose her mother for that. The question brought Mrs. Newsome fully into the room. Strether felt her there, silent, proud, and wounded. For a moment he could hardly breathe.

He said he did not want to lose Mrs. Newsome. Sarah answered that he had already chosen the way to do so. Her mother could not be asked to accept this new loyalty of his. She could not be expected to bless Madame de Vionnet, to wait for Chad, or to receive Strether as if he had done his task. Sarah spoke with control, but the force behind her words was final.

Strether asked if there was any message from Mrs. Newsome for him. Sarah said her mother wished him to return. She had wished it before, and she wished it now. If he returned with them, perhaps much could still be saved. If he stayed, Sarah did not say what would happen. She did not need to say it.

Strether looked out of the window for a moment. Paris lay below him, bright and careless, as if no private life could change its light. Then he turned back. He told Sarah that he could not go with them. He must stay until he had finished what he now believed to be his duty. Sarah received the answer without surprise. She had known it before he said it.

When she left, she gave him her hand. It was a proper farewell, but not a warm one. Strether watched her go and understood that the break had happened. It had not come with shouting, tears, or open cruelty. It had come in clear sentences, spoken in a quiet room. Sarah had judged him, and through her Mrs. Newsome had judged him too.

Part 20: After the Break

Late that same evening, Strether went to Chad's rooms on the Boulevard Malesherbes. He had asked for Chad more than once during the day, but Chad had not been at home. He had also gone once to Sarah's hotel, only to learn that everyone was out. At last he decided that Chad must return home to sleep, and so he went up and waited. The night was hot, and from the balcony he could hear the wide soft noise of Paris below.

Chad's servant had made him comfortable and then gone to bed. A lamp burned quietly in the room, and an unread yellow book lay on a table with a paper knife across it. Strether sat for a while, then walked about, then went out again to the balcony. He had been alone in these rooms before, but never at such an hour. The place seemed to belong to him for a little while, and that feeling was both sweet and painful.

He remembered the first time he had entered Chad's home. Then the rooms had spoken to him of a secret life he did not understand. Now they spoke with many voices. They reminded him of Bilham, Miss Barrace, Madame de Vionnet, Jeanne, Mamie, Sarah, and Chad himself. They also reminded him of the young life he had missed. The beauty of the rooms was no longer only Chad's beauty; it had become part of Strether's own loss.

From the balcony he looked down at the carriages moving in the bright street. They passed and passed, small and quick, like signs of a life that never stopped. Strether felt almost guilty for standing there in another man's room and breathing this freedom so deeply. He had come after a day of judgment and pain, but the night still gave him pleasure. This made him understand how far he had moved from the man who had first arrived in Europe.

At last he heard Chad behind him. Chad had come in quietly, as if late returns were part of the natural order of his life. He greeted Strether with his usual ease, and the ease itself was almost a comfort. Then he said that Sarah had told him everything was now being put on Strether. She had sent him back to Strether, so to speak, as if Strether must answer for Chad, for Madame de Vionnet, and for himself.

Strether told him fully what had passed with Sarah. Chad listened with clear attention and no sign of anger. He said he had told Sarah she must see Strether and hear from him. He had also told her that he himself was ready to be questioned at any time. Sarah, however, had not found the moment she wanted. Strether answered that Sarah's real difficulty was that she was not afraid of him, but she was afraid of Chad.

Chad seemed surprised by this. What had he done, he asked, to make Sarah afraid? Strether said Chad had been too wonderful. He had been kind, handsome, patient, and perfectly placed in his life. He had not tried to frighten Sarah, and that was exactly what made him powerful. Sarah could fight a guilty man more easily than she could fight a charming and successful one.

Chad said he had only tried to be decent. He had wanted to give Sarah, Jim, and Mamie the best possible time. Strether answered that this was the very thing. Chad's good manners had reduced his own offense and placed the burden elsewhere. The burden had fallen on Strether. Chad did not fully accept this, but he did not deny that things had happened so.

They stood together on the balcony, smoking and talking in the warm night. Chad said they had been judging together, and that the judgment was not Strether's alone. Strether answered that he did not fear the burden. He had come almost to take it. But he had also thought Chad had been doing his own private judging. Now he wanted Chad's conclusion.

Chad looked up at the night sky and said simply that he had seen. Strether waited. Chad said that the Pockocks and his mother would never accept his present life. It had been open to them to leave him alone after seeing him for themselves. It had been open to them to believe that he could go on as he was. But they would not have it for a minute.

Strether said there had never really been a chance that they would. They had not come only to see Chad. They had come to see what Strether had been doing. As his delay had grown worse in Woollett's eyes, their curiosity had turned from Chad to him. Sarah had crossed the sea, in the end, to judge Strether. Chad understood this and said, with some kindness, that he had got Strether into a

serious business.

Strether answered that he had already been in it when Chad found him. Then he asked what Sarah had been like with Chad. Chad said she had been very polite. Her hands were tied by the kindness she had already accepted from him. She had taken so much before she knew how much she was taking. She had enjoyed his care more than she had expected, but she did not like him. In Paris, Chad said, Sarah hated him.

Strether asked why she wanted him home if she hated him. Chad said that when people hate, they still want to win. If Sarah could place him safely back in Woollett, she would feel she had won. Strether understood. Sarah did not hate Chad simply as a brother. She hated what Chad was in Paris, and she hated the woman who had helped make him so.

They did not name Madame de Vionnet at once, but both men knew she was in the air between them. Chad said that if Sarah and his mother hated his good friend, it came to the same thing as hating him. Strether felt the weight of that phrase. Chad had never spoken more directly for Madame de Vionnet. The bond between them seemed, in that moment, both deep and impossible to escape.

Chad then said that Mamie did not like him either. Strether protested. Mamie did not hate anyone, he said. Mamie was beautiful. Chad answered that this was why he minded it. He would like Mamie if she liked him. Strether asked what he would do for her, and Chad said again that he would like her, really and truly, if she could like him. But the answer did not sound like love.

Strether then asked Chad whether he cared for Madame de Vionnet. Chad's answer was strange and honest. He said the difference was that he did not want to care. He had tried not to care, and Strether himself had pushed him toward trying. Six weeks earlier, he had thought perhaps he had begun to come out of it. Now he did not know.

Strether asked if Chad still wanted to want freedom. Chad covered his face for a moment with his hands, half laughing and half troubled. Then he suddenly said that Jim Pocock was a terrible dose. The answer was an escape, but it was also a truth. Chad had seen Woollett again in Jim, Sarah, and Mamie, and what he had

seen was not inviting.

Strether spoke very gravely then. More had been done for Chad, he said, than he had ever seen one human being do for another. Madame de Vionnet had not only pleased him or entertained him. She had made him better. Strether could not help Woollett demand that Chad repay such work with ingratitude. That was where his own difficulty lay.

Chad understood this. He said that if Strether could not see his own way to that demand, he naturally could not see Chad's way either. Then he asked whether Strether still thought his mother did not hate him. Strether said Mrs. Newsome did not hate Chad. Chad answered that if they hated Madame de Vionnet, it came to the same thing. If they hated Strether too, that also mattered.

Strether said Mrs. Newsome did not hate him. Chad answered that she might, if he did not look out. Strether said he was looking out, and that was why he wanted to see Sarah again. Chad could not understand what Strether hoped to gain by it. Strether said Chad had no imagination. Chad accepted this with interest and asked whether Strether had too much. Strether laughed softly and admitted that perhaps he did.

The next day Strether saw Sarah once more, and after that he went to Maria Gostrey. By then Sarah, Jim, Mamie, Waymarsh, and Little Bilham were leaving Paris. Waymarsh was going with Sarah, and Bilham was going because of Mamie, or at least because Strether had wished it. Strether told Maria that this was beautiful and comic and sad all at once. The group was breaking apart, but each person seemed to have found a temporary place.

Maria listened while he reported everything. She asked whether Mamie and Bilham were engaged. Strether said no, but perhaps that did not matter. Mamie needed a young man, and Bilham would do anything for Strether. Jim, he admitted, had simply fallen back on the world, and the world had been very good to him. Jim had even gone alone to tea with Madame de Vionnet and had come away more amazed than ever.

Maria asked if Strether was in love with Madame de Vionnet. He said it did not matter whether he knew or not. It had no practical importance for either of

them. Maria pointed out that the five were going away, while Strether, Chad, Madame de Vionnet, and Maria remained. Then, with sudden feeling, she said she herself seemed to have ceased to serve him.

Strether told her that she still served him, though she did not always know how. If that ever stopped, he would tell her. Maria said Paris was growing hot and dusty and that other people elsewhere wanted her. But if he wanted her in Paris, she would stay. Strether felt, more sharply than he had expected, that he did want her. He said so, and Maria thanked him very quietly.

Then he asked why she had once gone away so suddenly, when Madame de Vionnet had first come into the case. Maria answered at last. She had gone because she feared Madame de Vionnet might tell Strether something against her. If it had been something very bad, Maria would have left him altogether. But Madame de Vionnet had not separated them. Maria admired her for that.

Strether then told Maria about his second interview with Sarah that morning. He had gone to Sarah's hotel before the departure and had asked for one more delay. He had told her that if Chad did not go home, he himself would take the responsibility. Maria said this meant he knew he might lose everything. Strether agreed that perhaps it came to the same thing. But Chad, after seeing what Woollett wanted, did not truly want it.

Maria asked what Strether himself wanted. He answered that he had stopped being able to measure that. Mrs. Newsome had treated him as she had perhaps been forced to treat him, because she had already imagined the whole case and left no room for surprise. Sarah had brought that fixed mind to Paris. Strether saw it now like a great cold block before him. He had once thought he could take it, but now he knew how large it was.

Maria said one never knows the size of such a block in advance. It grows before one's eyes until at last it is fully there. Strether said he saw it all now, and then, strangely, called it magnificent. Maria understood him. People without imagination could make themselves deeply felt, she said. Mrs. Newsome had imagined horrors, but she had imagined them meanly and ignorantly. Sarah had kept the same theory, even after seeing the facts.

Strether said his claim was only that Madame de Vionnet was good for Chad. Maria asked if he claimed she was good for him too. He did not answer directly. He said he had wanted them to come and see whether she was bad for Chad. Now they had seen, but they would not admit that she was good for anything. They believed she was bad for Chad, bad for Strether, and perhaps bad for every clear duty they knew.

Maria reminded him that he might still break down. Strether said that he might. Then he asked whether, if he did break, she would take him for as long as he could bear it. Maria did not answer lightly. She asked how long he could bear it without Chad and Madame de Vionnet if they left Paris. Strether smiled, but the question remained. He had stayed after the judgment, and now he was more alone than before.

## Part 21: The Country Scene and the Boat

A few days after the others had left Paris, Strether took a train almost at random. He chose one station to leave from and another station to arrive at, without much care. He only wanted a whole day outside the city. For weeks he had looked at the French country through train windows, pictures, books, and old dreams. Now he wanted to walk inside it for himself.

The day was warm, clear, and still. Strether felt, as the train carried him away from Paris, that a weight had been lifted. Sarah had gone, Waymarsh had gone, Mamie had gone, and Jim had gone. Their judgment remained, but their faces were no longer before him. For the first time in many days, no one was asking him to explain himself.

When he reached the small country station, he began to walk without hurry. The village roads, low houses, gardens, fields, and lines of trees pleased him deeply. Nothing was grand. Nothing forced itself on him. The charm was small, green, quiet, and human. It reminded him of old French pictures he had seen long ago in America, pictures with rivers, trees, cattle, and pale skies.

He felt almost young as he walked. Once, many years before, he had hoped to

know such things well. He had planned to read, travel, learn, and come back to Europe. Then life had taken him another way. Now, late in life, he was walking alone under French trees, and the lost wish seemed to come back in a softened form.

After some time he turned off toward a hillside. Poplars stood there in a long line, and grass lay beneath them. Strether sat down, then stretched himself on his back. He placed his straw hat over his eyes and listened to the small sounds around him. There were insects, leaves, far voices, and the light movement of air in the trees.

For half an hour he slept. It was not deep sleep, but it rested him. When he woke, he felt that he had dropped to the bottom of his tiredness. His tiredness had not come from walking. It had come from three months of thought, choice, fear, and watching. The body had only now been allowed to feel what the mind had carried.

He thought of Paris waiting behind him. He thought of Maria, Madame de Vionnet, and Chad. He had seen Madame de Vionnet twice since the POCOcks left, and those visits had seemed both few and many. He had not yet grown careless with her. Some special shyness still held him back. But he knew that the shyness was weakening.

Toward the afternoon he grew hungry and walked down toward another village. He found an inn with the sign of the White Horse. It had a little garden, some tables, and a view of the river. The woman of the inn said she could give him something to eat, though she had already laid a table for two people who had come by boat. They had gone farther up the river and would soon return.

Strether was glad to wait. He asked for a drink and went into the garden. At the edge of the water there was a small rough shelter, with benches, a table, a rail, and a little roof. He sat there and looked at the river. The water moved slowly past him, grey and blue under the sky. On the other bank were reeds, flat fields, trimmed trees, and a wide quiet light.

The peace of the place entered him. He was hungry, but he was not impatient. The soft sound of the water and the slight movement of the tied boats near the

landing made him feel almost afloat. He rose once and looked out more carefully, as if he might take one of the boats and move into the picture. Then, while leaning against a post, he saw something coming round the bend.

It was exactly the thing the picture seemed to need. A boat was coming slowly down the river. A man sat with the oars, and a lady sat at the back under a pink parasol. At first Strether took them for two happy strangers. They seemed young, free, and used to this kind of pleasure. They had clearly known where to come and what the inn could give them.

Then the boat came nearer. The lady moved her parasol, perhaps to hide her face, and the boat shifted a little from its course. Strether felt, in one sharp instant, that she had recognized him. A second later he recognized her. The lady was Madame de Vionnet. The man at the oars, with his coat off and his back half turned, was Chad.

For a few seconds, everything became strange and painful. Strether saw that they had seen him and were not sure what to do. He also saw that they might pass on, pretending not to know him, if he gave them no sign. The beautiful picture had suddenly become full of fear. It was still the river, the boat, the parasol, and the summer light, but all the meaning had changed.

Strether acted quickly. He waved his hat and stick and called out to them with open surprise and pleasure. The gesture saved the moment. Chad turned, looked, and then waved back. Madame de Vionnet lifted the pink parasol in greeting. The boat came in awkwardly toward the landing, and Strether went down to help them ashore.

They all spoke at once, or seemed to. What a chance, what a miracle, what a strange and delightful meeting. Madame de Vionnet was full of quick French words, bright laughter, and charming surprise. Chad smiled and said less, but his ease helped cover the shock. The woman from the inn appeared too, pleased that all three could now eat together. The table already laid for two became a table for three.

During the meal, everyone tried to make the accident seem simple. Strether explained how he had chosen the train and walked from the station. Madame de

Vionnet explained how she and Chad had come by the river. Chad added a few practical details about the boat, the time, and the return. The more they explained, the more Strether felt that they were all working hard.

Madame de Vionnet said they had only come out for the day. She spoke as if they had left Paris that morning and would return that evening. Strether accepted the story as one accepts food offered at a table. He did not question it. He even helped it along, because there was no kind way to do otherwise. Yet the story did not sit easily in his mind.

He noticed small things. Madame de Vionnet had no shawl, though the evening would be cool. Chad had no overcoat. Their clothes did not quite look like the clothes of people who had planned only a light day from Paris. The more Strether smiled and listened, the more these small signs arranged themselves silently in him.

Still, the meal had its charm. The room was plain, the food was simple, and the windows stood open to the river. Madame de Vionnet was more alive than he had ever seen her. She was nervous, but also brilliant. Chad let her lead the talk, and this too told Strether something. They could speak without words. Chad seemed to leave the whole danger in her hands.

After the meal, the inn woman told them that the carriage for Strether's station had been arranged. This solved another problem. It would take all three of them to the train. Madame de Vionnet laughed at the luck of it and said everything had arranged itself perfectly. Strether smiled, but he felt that perfection had come at a price.

The drive to the station was short but full of hidden strain. The evening air was cooler now, and Madame de Vionnet admitted that she was cold. Chad let her explain this as she wished. Strether could not decide whether he admired his silence or feared it. The road, the fields, the village houses, and the pale sky moved past them, while the real matter sat between them without being named.

On the train back to Paris, they talked of ordinary things. They spoke of the country, the river, the inn, and the strange chance that had brought them together. Strether did his part. He made the meeting seem easy. He even made it seem

pleasant. But inside, something had opened that he could not close.

That night, alone in his room, Strether went over the whole scene again. He saw the boat turning the bend, the pink parasol shifting, Chad's back at the oars, and Madame de Vionnet's quick effort to control the moment. He saw that they had not been only two friends taking a simple afternoon on the river. They had been together in a deeper and more private way than he had allowed himself to imagine.

The truth made him cold and lonely. He did not hate them, and he did not wish to judge them harshly. But the soft vagueness in which he had dressed their attachment was gone. Their intimacy had become visible, physical, and real. He had found it not through a confession, but through a picture on a river. Now he had to live with what he had seen.

## Part 22: Madame de Vionnet's Fear

The next morning, Strether received a small blue note at the hotel. He had almost expected some sign from Chad, but the note was not from Chad. It was from Madame de Vionnet. She asked if he could come to see her that evening at half past nine. If that was not good for him, she wrote, she would come to him instead.

Strether answered at once. He went to the telegraph office on the boulevard and sent a short reply. He would come at the hour she named. He did not stop to think too much before sending it. If he had waited, he might have found reasons not to go.

After sending the answer, he had the whole day before him. It was a hot day, with thunder somewhere in the air, but no storm came. He did not go to Maria. He did not go to Chad. He walked, sat in cafés, drank cold drinks, smoked, watched people, and let the hours pass. For once, he did not try to make his day useful.

This idleness was strange to him, but not unpleasant. He felt almost like a man who had stopped pretending to be safe. The boat on the river had shown him something he could not unsee. Chad and Madame de Vionnet had been together

in a more private way than he had allowed himself to believe. Now he moved through Paris with that knowledge inside him.

He asked himself whether he should end everything and go home. He could leave the matter where it now stood. Perhaps he could do no more good. Perhaps any further act would only make the damage greater. Yet by evening he knew he would go to her. The note, his answer, and the long waiting day had already carried him there.

When he entered Madame de Vionnet's rooms, he felt at once that he might never see them again. The room was dim and cool, though the night outside was heavy. Candles burned near the fireplace, and the windows stood open toward the court. From far away came the soft, restless sound of Paris. The small fountain in the court made a quiet sound below.

Madame de Vionnet was dressed in simple white. A small black scarf lay around her shoulders. She looked both very plain and very noble. The room, the candles, the old furniture, and her still figure all seemed to belong together. Strether felt that everything around her helped her without effort.

She welcomed him gently, and for a few minutes they spoke of the country day. They spoke of the river, the inn, the weather, and the strange chance by which they had met. But both knew that this was not why she had sent for him. The real subject sat between them, silent and heavy. At last she moved toward it.

She did not try to explain the boat. She did not say that nothing had happened or that he had misunderstood. Strether was grateful for this. If she had tried to make the scene smaller, he would have suffered more. Her silence about it was, in its way, the best honesty she could give.

Then she said that the last two times he had come, she had not asked him where he stood. She had let him go without pressing him. Now she had sent for him because she could not remain silent. She asked him not to think her selfish if she spoke too directly. She had behaved well, she said, for as long as she could.

Strether told her she was all right. He said it almost impatiently, because her fear of seeming improper troubled him. She had not lost his respect. That was not the question. The question was what she wanted from him now.

She answered that she did not want him to act again for her safety. She did not want to speak of Mrs. Newsome, Sarah, Mamie, Chad's fortune, Chad's marriage, or Chad's duty. She did not even want to ask him to raise a finger for her. If, after all his help, she could not care for herself or keep silent, then she deserved no pity. But she did care what he thought of her.

This was what had brought him there. She could bear danger, but not his misunderstanding. She asked if he truly had to go away. Could he not stay in Paris, not with them, but near enough for them to see him when they needed him? She had wanted to see him often during the past weeks, and now the thought of his final absence frightened her.

Then she asked him where his home now was. What had become of it? She knew she had changed his life and confused many of his old ideas. She hated herself for that, she said. She hated the way people took happiness from the lives of others and were still not happy. The only safe thing, she said, was to give.

Strether answered that she, of all people, should know this. She had given Chad the most precious gift he had ever seen one person give another. She had made him better. She had given him taste, kindness, order, and life. If she could not rest on that work, then perhaps she had been born to torment herself.

She listened, but his praise did not calm her. It seemed almost to hurt her more. She said he was telling her that the work was done and that she should let him go in peace. Perhaps she should. Perhaps she ought to be easy and proud. Then she asked, with a sudden change of voice, when he was leaving.

Strether did not answer at once. At that moment he understood her more clearly than before. Her deepest fear was not of Sarah, not of Woollett, and not even of Mrs. Newsome. Her fear was Chad. She feared losing him, and she feared that Strether's departure would take away the last strong support she had.

He saw also that she loved Chad more than Chad loved her. This truth was not new, but now it stood fully before him. She had made Chad better, but she had not made him hers forever. She had given him everything she could, and still he might leave. This seemed to Strether both terrible and strangely ordinary. A great passion could still be as helpless as a servant girl crying for her young man.

He looked at her and said quietly, "You are afraid for your life." The words broke something in her. Her face changed, and tears came before she could stop them. She covered her face with her hands and sobbed like someone too tired to keep up any more appearance. Strether stood near her and did not know at first what to do.

She said he saw her as she was, and that she must accept it. Of course she was afraid for her life, but that was not all. She was ashamed too. She had wanted to seem fine to him, perhaps even great. Instead, she felt old, weak, and poor in spirit. She said it was worst when one was old and still needed so much.

Strether told her again that there was something he could still do. He did not yet say what it was. He only knew that he must see Chad and speak one last clear word. Madame de Vionnet shook her head. Nothing could help him, she said, and perhaps nothing could help her. The only certain thing was that she would lose in the end.

Still, she could not let him go without saying the rest. She said that what was cheerful to her, if anything was cheerful, was that he and she might have been friends. That was what she wanted too. She wanted everything, she said, and she had wanted him as well. The confession came out with pain, but also with a strange simple dignity.

Strether was deeply moved, yet he knew there was no answer that could make them happy. He could not stay near her and Chad as another member of their painful circle. He could not go back to the old Woollett judgment either. He had become too involved, but not involved in any way that gave him a home.

At the door, he took her hand and gave the only answer he could give. She had said she had wanted him too. "But you have had me," he told her. He meant that he had stood with her, believed in her, defended her, and carried her case as far as he could. Then he left her there in the dim old room, with the sound of Paris and the fountain beyond the open windows.

Part 23: Strether's Last Word to Chad

Strether meant to see Chad the next day. At first he thought he would go early to the Boulevard Malesherbes, as he had often done before. Then he changed his mind. Chad now knew that Madame de Vionnet had seen him, and Chad could come if he wished. Strether decided to give him that chance.

But Chad did not come. The first day passed without a word. Then another day passed in the same way. Strether wondered if Chad and Madame de Vionnet had gone away again together, perhaps back to the country. He did not try to find out. He waited, and the waiting itself became part of the strange end of everything.

During these days, Strether spent much time with Maria Gostrey. He took her about Paris almost as if he were now the guide and she the visitor. They drove in the Bois, rode on the small river boats, and went to shops she claimed not to know. Maria accepted his care with gentle amusement. She asked fewer questions than before, and this quietness comforted him.

They did not speak much of Chad, Madame de Vionnet, or Woollett. Strether was tired of the whole matter, or at least tired of speaking about it. Maria understood this and let him rest inside the silence. Their hours together felt simple after the sharp and painful hours with everyone else. She seemed to give him a cool room in the middle of a hot day.

Yet Strether knew this calm could not last. He had still to see Chad. There was one thing he had to say, and he could not leave Paris without saying it. He wanted to be sure that he did not speak from bitterness, pride, or hurt feeling. He wanted his last word to be clean.

One evening he went to Maria's rooms after dining alone. Rain had spoiled his earlier plan to take her out to dinner, and he came to her afterward instead. As soon as he entered, he felt that someone had been there before him. Maria saw that he understood. She told him quietly that Madame de Vionnet had come, and that this time she had received her.

This news did not surprise him as much as it might have done. Maria said there had been no longer any reason to refuse. Strether had now done what he had to do, and nothing could come between them unless they themselves placed it there. He asked what Madame de Vionnet had wanted. Maria answered that she had

wanted to know how Strether judged her.

Strether was pained by this. Madame de Vionnet believed that he had taken leave of her forever because the river scene had opened his eyes. She had thought he once believed in her fully, almost too fully. Now she feared he saw her as fallen, weak, and guilty. Maria said she had not been able to make her easy.

Strether said Madame de Vionnet ought to know how he saw her. Maria offered to tell her, if he wished, that he still saw her as charming and worthy of pity. Strether refused. He said Madame de Vionnet knew enough, and Maria was to tell her nothing. Then Maria said, with a sigh, that she was sorry for them all. Strether felt the truth of this. There was no one left in the story who could be simply happy.

After leaving Maria, Strether did not go straight back to his hotel. The rain had stopped, and the wet streets shone under the lamps. He walked slowly, telling himself that he would pass by Chad's house. It was a long way round, but he was not ready for bed. The night seemed to ask for one last movement.

When he reached the Boulevard Malesherbes, he stopped. Chad's windows were open, and light came from the rooms onto the balcony. A figure stood there smoking, almost in the same place where Little Bilham had stood on Strether's first visit. This time it was Chad himself. Strether stepped into the street and made a sign.

Chad saw him at once and called down with real pleasure. Strether went in and climbed the stairs, because the lift had stopped for the night. On each landing he paused to breathe. He was tired, and the stairs seemed longer than before. As he climbed, he thought of how much Chad's life had made him do. It had pulled him through rooms, streets, gardens, churches, hotels, and now up these stairs at midnight.

Chad met him at the door and welcomed him warmly. He seemed fresh, as if he had only just returned from a journey. There were signs of a light supper on the table, and the room had the calm comfort Strether knew so well. Chad offered to let him stay the night, but Strether refused. He had come to say goodbye, though that was not the whole reason.

Then Strether gave his real message. Chad would be a cruel man, he said, if

he ever forsook Madame de Vionnet. He must never throw her away after all she had done for him. Strether spoke the words slowly and clearly. Once they were spoken, he felt that his visit had found its ground.

Chad did not show shame or anger. He answered that of course he knew this. He hoped Strether believed he felt it. Strether said he wanted this to be his last word. He could not do more than he had done, and he could not say more than he was saying now.

Chad asked if Strether had seen her. Strether said yes, to say goodbye. If he had ever doubted his duty, that meeting would have cleared the doubt. Chad understood and said she must have been wonderful. Strether answered that she had been. For a moment both men seemed to look back at the river scene and at everything it had changed.

Chad then spoke almost openly. He said there was only one way to speak about such things at first, and that perhaps Strether now understood this. Strether did understand more than before, but he did not soften his warning. He told Chad again that Madame de Vionnet had done more for him than anyone could repay. Chad owed her not only gratitude, but positive duty.

Chad said he never forgot it. He owed her everything, he declared, and he was not tired of her. The words should have comforted Strether, but they did not fully do so. The very way Chad said he was not tired made Strether uneasy. It sounded too young, too easy, and too much like a man speaking of a pleasure that might one day end.

Strether told him that Madame de Vionnet still had much to give him. She had not finished making him better. Chad asked, with a smile, if he was to leave her after she had done everything she could. Strether answered that, from such a woman, there would always be more to receive. Therefore Chad must not leave her before he had received it all, and that meant perhaps never.

They spoke then of Chad's possible future at home. Chad said he had been thinking about advertising and the modern art of making a product known. It was a new force, he said, and it could do great things if handled by the right man. Strether listened with growing coldness. Chad's mind was moving again toward

Woollett, business, and money.

Chad insisted that his interest was only theoretical. He only wanted to measure the size of the bribe he was refusing. Strether said the bribe was certainly enormous. Then he asked directly whether Chad would give up Madame de Vionnet for it. Chad laughed, lifted his foot, and kicked an imaginary object away into the street. There, he said, the bribe was gone.

The gesture was comic, but it did not calm Strether. It seemed too much like a dance at the edge of a grave. Chad said he would see him the next day, but Strether hardly heard. He looked at the young man under the street lamp and felt the whole danger in him. Chad was charming, grateful, clever, and sincere for the moment. He was also restless.

Strether told him so. "You are restless," he said. Chad looked back with his bright smile. "And you are exciting," he answered. Then they parted there in the warm Paris night, with Strether knowing that he had spoken his last warning, but not knowing whether it would hold.

#### Part 24: Maria and the Final Choice

The next day, Strether did not see Chad. He did not try to see him. The last warning had been given, and Strether knew that to repeat it would weaken it. He walked for hours through Paris, but the city now seemed different. It no longer opened before him like a promise. It lay around him like a place he had learned to love too late.

He understood that his work was over. Chad would make his own choice, and perhaps that choice was already half made. Madame de Vionnet would suffer or be spared according to forces Strether could no longer control. Mrs. Newsome, far away in Woollett, had already received enough silence and enough bad news to judge him. No letter could now rebuild the bridge as it had once been.

That afternoon he went to see Maria Gostrey. Her little rooms seemed more familiar to him than any other place in Paris. The old objects, the colored cloths, the small pictures, the books, and the quiet air all received him like friends. Maria

herself was waiting, as if she had known he would come. She looked at him once and saw that the end had arrived.

Strether told her that he was leaving. He did not say the word grandly. It came out almost gently, as a simple fact. Maria did not answer at once. She sat down, and he sat near her, and for a few moments they only looked at each other. Their silence held Chester, London, Paris, Chad, Madame de Vionnet, Woollett, and everything between.

At last Maria asked when he would go. Strether said soon, very soon. He had not yet fixed the exact ship, but the decision itself was fixed. There was nothing more for him to wait for. If he waited, he would only begin to take something for himself, and that was the one thing he would not do.

Maria understood too quickly. This was one of the things that made her both precious and dangerous. She did not need long explanations. She knew that he was not going because he hated Paris, or because he now sided with Woollett, or because he had judged Madame de Vionnet harshly. He was going because he had no right, as he saw it, to make a private gain out of this broken mission.

She asked if he was going back to Mrs. Newsome. Strether looked down at his hands. He said he did not know what remained for him there. Perhaps nothing remained. Mrs. Newsome had asked for one kind of service, and he had given another. He had meant to be loyal, but loyalty had changed shape under his eyes. She might never forgive the change.

Maria said that Mrs. Newsome might still take him back. Women of power sometimes loved what resisted them, if the resistance did not last too long. Strether smiled sadly. Mrs. Newsome, he said, was too complete for that. She had wanted him to do a clear thing, and he had failed to do it. Even if she forgave him, the old place beside her could never be exactly the same.

Then Maria asked about Chad. Strether said Chad would probably go home in the end. The idea no longer shocked him. Chad was young enough to move again, selfish enough to save himself, and clever enough to call it duty. Perhaps he would go back to Woollett, enter the business, and use all that Paris had taught him. Perhaps people at home would praise the very improvement they had once feared.

Maria asked if Strether thought Chad would leave Madame de Vionnet. Strether did not answer quickly. Then he said that he feared it. Chad had feeling, but not enough to bind him forever. He had gratitude, but gratitude could grow tired. He had charm, and charm often helped a person escape from the pain he had caused. Strether had spoken his last word, but he did not trust the future.

Maria said poor Madame de Vionnet would break. Strether answered that perhaps she would bend rather than break. She had suffered before and had lived. But he knew that this was a thin comfort. Madame de Vionnet's fear had been fear for her life, and he had seen it with his own eyes. Nothing could make that sight light.

They sat a little longer, and then Maria turned the talk toward him. If he had lost Mrs. Newsome, she asked, why must he also lose her? He had no duty now that forced him to cross the sea at once. He had finished his work and had paid for it. Could he not stay in Paris, if not with Chad and Madame de Vionnet, then with someone who wanted only him?

Strether felt the kindness of the offer before he fully took in the danger. Maria was not pleading like Madame de Vionnet. She was too proud and too clear for that. But she was opening the door. She had guided him from the first, and now she was offering him a place at the end. He saw, with sudden pain, that what she offered was the most peaceful thing left in the world.

He said her goodness to him had been beyond price. She had picked him up when he was helpless and had shown him where he was. She had explained people, places, dangers, and even himself. Without her, he would have moved blindly through Paris and perhaps done more harm. He owed her more than he could ever repay.

Maria answered that she did not want payment. She wanted him to stay. She wanted the simple human result of all their hours together. They knew each other now, and such knowledge was rare. Why should he throw it away just because Mrs. Newsome was hard, Chad was weak, and Madame de Vionnet was unhappy?

Strether rose and walked slowly across the room. He looked at the old things on Maria's walls and shelves. They seemed to say that life could be made from

fragments, from chosen pieces, from what one had found and kept. Maria had done that. Perhaps she was offering to let him do it too.

But he could not. When he turned back to her, the refusal was already in his face. He said he would not take anything for himself. He had not come to Europe to find a reward. If he stayed with her, it would feel like taking a prize from the confusion and pain of others. He would be using the wreck of one duty to build another happiness.

Maria said that sounded too proud. Perhaps, she told him, refusing happiness could be as selfish as taking it. Strether accepted the wound of that sentence because it might be true. Yet he said he had only one small piece of dignity left, and he had to keep it. He had lost too much else, or given too much else away, to lose that also.

She asked what this dignity was. Strether answered that it was to go away with clean hands, or as clean as he could make them. He had not brought Chad home. He had not saved Madame de Vionnet. He had not kept Mrs. Newsome's trust. He had not even saved himself from wanting what he had no right to want. But he could still refuse to profit.

Maria looked at him for a long time. Her face changed, and he saw that she suffered. But she did not lower herself by begging. She asked only if he was sure. Strether said yes, though the word hurt him. He had never been less happy in saying a true thing.

Then Maria gave him her last service. She helped him accept his own answer. She did not praise it too much, because praise would have made it false. She did not condemn it, because condemnation would have made him weaker. She only sat with him in the quiet room while the day began to fade outside. That was perhaps the kindest thing she could do.

At last Strether took his hat. Maria stood too, and they faced each other near the door. He wanted to say many things, but most of them would only repeat what they both knew. He told her that she had been everything to him in Europe. She answered that he must not make fine speeches if he was going away. Fine speeches, she said, were for people who stayed.

He smiled at that, and for a moment they were almost as they had been in Chester. Then the moment passed. He took her hand and held it, not too long and not too little. Maria did not pull it away. Her eyes were clear, and he felt that she saw him completely, even in his weakness.

“Then there is nothing for me?” she asked.

Strether looked at her with deep sadness and deep respect. “Nothing,” he said. Then he added, because it was the truth and because she deserved the truth, “Nothing but what you have had.” He knew the words were hard, but they were also his final gift. He had given her all the self he could give without taking what he would not take.

Maria let him go. He went down the stairs and out into the Paris street. The evening air was warm, and the city moved around him with its endless life. He did not know exactly what waited for him in America. He did not know whether Mrs. Newsome would speak to him, whether Chad would follow him, or whether Madame de Vionnet would survive her loss. He knew only that he had seen more than he had ever expected to see.

As he walked away, he felt both empty and strangely awake. He had failed in the simple mission he had been given. Yet he had learned that no human mission is simple when real lives stand inside it. He had come to rescue Chad and had found instead the sad greatness of people trying to live, love, hold, let go, and keep some honor. He carried no prize from Europe. He carried only the knowledge of what life could be, and what he had missed.