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BY MONA SIMPSON

Washington Square

By Henry James

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Washington Square

By Henry James

Level 2

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Chapter 1

An Ordinary Girl

Many years ago in the city of New York, there lived a doctor. America likes doctors and New York liked Dr Sloper. At the time our story begins, in 1843, Dr Sloper was fifty years old. He was a good doctor, he was a man of the world, and he was honest.

Life was good to him. At twenty-seven he married a beautiful and clever girl. She had pretty eyes, ten thousand dollars and a good place in society. For five years Dr Sloper was a happy man. Many of his wife's friends came to him and he did well in his profession. They lived in a large house in Washington Square — a quiet corner in a noisy city.

Their first child, a very clever little boy, died when he was three. His mother's love and his father's profession did not help him. Two years later, Mrs Sloper had a second child, a girl. The doctor did not want a girl. But this was not the worst. Two weeks later, Mrs Sloper died. The little girl's name was Catherine. She was strong. Her father was not afraid of losing her.



When the child was ten years old, Dr Sloper asked his sister, Mrs Lavinia Penniman, to come and stay with them. Mr Penniman, a churchman without a penny, died when Mrs Penniman was thirty-three. She had no children and no money.

'Stay for six months,' he said.

'I will look for a flat,' she said. She moved into her brother's house and never went away again. Mrs Penniman told everybody that the child wanted a clever woman near her. Dr Sloper did not think his sister was clever, but he was always very polite to her and never angry. They didn't speak much. He gave her his opinions about Catherine's schooling and not much more.

Catherine was very good and honest, but she was not pretty or clever. She was quiet. She loved her father and was very afraid of him. She was happy when her father was happy. The doctor wanted to be proud of her, but he wasn't. He was sometimes angry because his only child was ordinary.



When she was eighteen, Catherine was a quiet young woman, but she began to wear strong, noisy colours. Dr Sloper did not like her new dresses. He thought she was vulgar.

One day, Catherine's other aunt, Mrs Almond, asked a lot of people to her house. Mrs Almond was the younger of Dr Sloper's two sisters. She was the wife of a rich city man and the mother of nine children. She was pretty, happy and clever, and her brother liked her. When he wanted to talk about Catherine, he went to her and not to Mrs Penniman. Catherine was close to her aunt's children. There were seven boys and two girls. The older girl married young. The younger girl, called Marian, soon decided to marry too. She found a young man called Arthur Townsend. And so the Almonds asked everybody to the house.



Mrs Penniman and Catherine arrived at the Almonds'. The doctor planned to come later.

Soon after the dancing started, Marian Almond brought a tall young man over to Catherine.

'Catherine, this is Mr. Morris Townsend. He is from the same family as Arthur! He wants to meet you very much!'

Marian Almond was a pretty woman. At seventeen she moved easily in society. She left Catherine and Mr Townsend together. Catherine looked at the young man. He was very handsome. 'What can I say to this handsome man?' thought Catherine. But Mr Townsend began to talk to her with an easy smile.



'Catherine, this is Morris Townsend,' said Marian. 'He wants to meet you very much!'

'What a nice evening! What a beautiful house! What an interesting family!
What a pretty girl Marian is!'

He looked into Catherine's eyes. She said nothing. He talked and she listened and looked at him. The dancing began again. He asked her to dance and she gave him her arm. After the dance, her face was red and she was hot.

'We'll sit and talk,' said Mr Townsend. But he talked and Catherine listened. Catherine sat back. She thought he was very clever. 'This is my first visit to Mrs Almond's,' he said. 'And my first visit to New York for many years. I lived here when I was a child but I left when I was twenty. I went round the world. I came back to New York only a month ago. It is a nice city but I don't know anybody. You see, people forget you,' he said and smiled at Catherine.

Catherine thought, *'I'll never forget you.'*

They sat there for some time. They laughed together. He asked her about the people near them. He gave his opinions about them. She thought he was very honest. Then Marian Almond came back and took Mr Townsend away to her mother.

‘We’ll meet again,’ he said to Catherine. Marian came back and took Catherine’s arm. They walked round the room together:

‘What do you think of Morris?’ she said.

For the first time in her life Catherine did not tell the truth. ‘Oh, nothing much,’ she answered.

‘I’ll tell him that!’ cried Marian. ‘It will be good for him. He has a very good opinion of Morris Townsend! Arthur says that, and Arthur knows him.’

Half an hour later, Catherine saw her Aunt Penniman near a window. Morris Townsend stood next to her. Then Dr Sloper arrived. He usually had a little smile on his face, but never a big smile. He looked at his daughter’s red dress.

‘Can this handsome woman be my child?’ he asked. Catherine did not always understand her father’s words.

‘I’m not handsome,’ she said, quietly.

‘You’re rich!’ he said. ‘Is the evening going well?’

‘I’m rather tired,’ she answered and looked away. That evening was the beginning of something important for Catherine. For the second time in her life and in one evening, she did not speak the truth. She was not tired. They drove home. Dr Sloper spoke to his sister, Lavinia.

‘Who was the young man who spoke of his love for you?’

‘Oh, Austin,’ said Mrs Penniman. She smiled. ‘He spoke to me of Catherine.’

‘Oh, Aunt Penniman,’ Catherine cried out, quietly.

‘He’s very handsome. He’s very clever,’ said her aunt.

‘He’s in love with our expensive Catherine, then?’ the doctor asked. He laughed.

‘I don’t know that. But he liked her dress.’

Catherine did not think, ‘My dress only?’ She thought what a warm and rich thing to say.

‘You see,’ said her father. ‘He thinks she has eighty thousand dollars.’

'In my opinion, he doesn't think of that; he's not a vulgar man,' said Mrs Penniman.

'The time is here,' the doctor thought. 'Lavinia is going to get a lover for Catherine. I'm sorry for the girl.'

Chapter 2

A Man with No Profession

Three or four days later, Morris Townsend, together with Arthur Townsend, visited Washington Square.

‘Arthur is going to marry my sister’s daughter, Marian, so the polite thing is for Arthur to visit me,’ Aunt Penniman said to Catherine before they came.

And here they were. Arthur sat with Catherine, Morris sat with Mrs Penniman. Catherine tried to listen to Morris and her aunt. Morris often looked over at Catherine and smiled. Then Arthur began to talk about Morris so Catherine began to listen to him.

‘Morris asked me to bring him. He wanted to come very much. He loves going out into society.’

‘We’re very happy to see him,’ said Catherine.

‘Most people like him — he’s very interesting. But some people call him too clever.’

‘Now he’s back in New York, will he stay here?’

‘Ah,’ said Arthur, ‘he wants to find a job.’

‘What? He has no profession?’ said Catherine.

‘No. He’s looking round, but he can’t find anything.’

‘I’m very sorry,’ said Catherine.

‘Oh, he takes life easy,’ said Arthur. ‘The job must be right for him.’

‘Will his father take him into his office?’ she asked.

‘His father is dead — he only has a sister.’ He looked at Morris and began to laugh. ‘We’re talking about you.’

Morris stood up. ‘I cannot say the same about you, Arthur,’ he said. ‘But I can about Miss Sloper.’

Catherine’s face went red. She thought he spoke very well.

‘I came to talk to you, Miss Sloper,’ he said. ‘So now I must come another time.’ The two young men left.

‘He’s very interested in you, Catherine.’

‘Did he say that?’

‘Not in those words. But he wanted me to think it. I understand young men.’

‘But he doesn’t know me.’

‘Oh yes, he knows you. I told him all about you.’

‘Oh, Aunt Penniman. We don’t know him or his family.’

‘Catherine, you know very well that you like him.’

Catherine did not think this was a thing to talk about. And she did not think that Aunt Penniman spoke the truth.



Half an hour later, Dr Sloper came home. Mrs Penniman told him of Morris Townsend’s visit.

‘Oh, and did he ask you to marry him, Catherine?’ he asked.

‘Oh, father!’ said Catherine quietly. She turned and looked at the dark sky through the window.

‘He will ask *you* first, Austin,’ said Lavinia, and smiled.

‘The next time he comes, call me,’ the doctor said.

But the next time Mr Townsend came, the doctor was out again. Mrs Penniman left the two young people together. The visit was quite long. He sat there, in the biggest chair, by the fire, for more than an hour. He looked round the room carefully, at all the things in it. He looked at Catherine carefully. There was a smile in his handsome eyes. His talk was light and easy. He asked Catherine many questions. Did she like this? Did she like that?

‘Tell me about you,’ he said. ‘Give me a picture — I can carry it in my head.’ She said she didn’t have much to tell. She didn’t go out very often. She didn’t like reading much. Morris said he liked singing. ‘I’ll sing to you, but not today. Perhaps next time.’

He did not say, politely, ‘I will sing and you can play for me.’ He thought of this after he was in the street. But Catherine thought only about his words ‘next time’. They had a warm sound. As soon as the doctor came home, she told him about Morris Townsend’s second visit.

'And did he ask you to marry him today?' the doctor asked.

She was afraid of this question.

'Perhaps he'll do it next time,' she said, and she gave a little laugh. She ran out of the room.

The doctor stood and thought. Perhaps his daughter wanted to marry Morris Townsend. He decided to learn about this young man, who came in and out of his house when he liked. He went to see Mrs Almond.



Morris looked round the room carefully, at all the things in it.

'Lavinia is very excited, but I know very little about him,' said Mrs Almond.

'And our young man is from Arthur's family?'

'Yes, but not close family. The name is the same, but I understand there are Townsends and there are Townsends. Arthur is from the best line of that family,

Lavinia's young man is not. I know his sister. She is very nice. Her name is Mrs Montgomery. Her husband is dead, she has a nice small house, and she has five children. She lives on Second Avenue.'

'What does Mrs. Montgomery say about him?'

'That he's clever and perhaps he'll be important.'

'But he does nothing.'

'She doesn't say that.'

'She's proud,' said the doctor. 'What is his profession?'

'He hasn't got a profession. He's looking for something. He was at sea.'

'Was? How old is he?'

'Thirty-something. He went to sea when he was very young. Some money came to him — somebody in his family died, I think. He went all over the world. He has no money now. He decided to begin his life again and so he came back to America.'

'Does he want to marry Catherine, then?'

'Don't forget that after you die she'll have thirty thousand dollars.'

'And that's why he thinks she's nice!'

Mrs. Almond went red. 'Not only that!' she said. 'But many young men think money is important.'

'The young men of New York are not only interested in money. They also like clever, pretty and exciting girls. Marian is clever, pretty and exciting. Catherine is not.'

'Marian is ordinary. Catherine is not. She has no lovers because men are afraid of her. She is large and dresses richly. They think she is older than they are. Catherine will be the right wife for an older man.'

'Is Mr. Townsend honest?'

'Lavinia thinks he is. And he's very handsome.'

'What money does he have?'

'I don't know. He lives with his sister.'

'Perhaps I'll visit Mrs. Montgomery.'

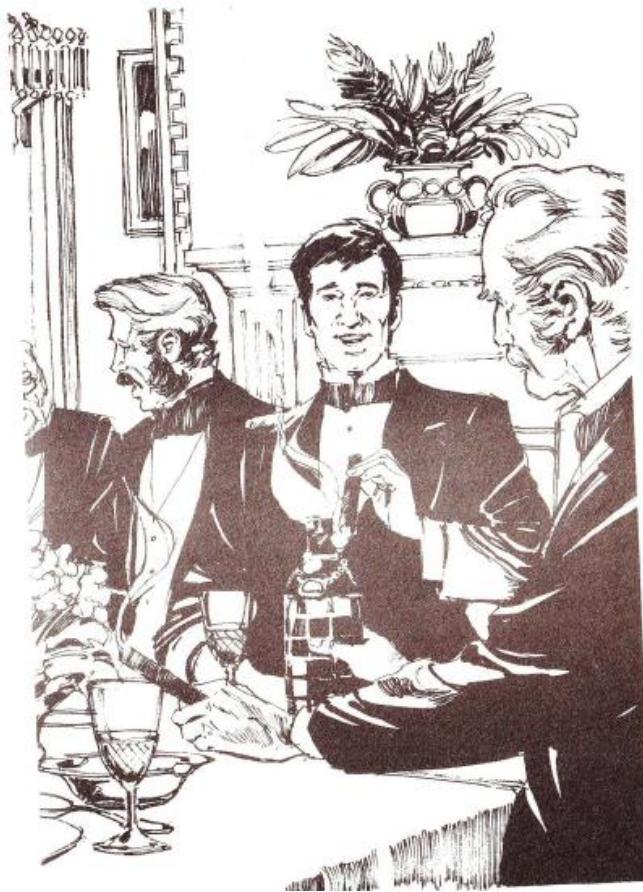
Chapter 3

Secrets

To Dr Sloper, the thing was a game. He slept well, he ate well. ‘This young man is trying to catch Catherine. I’ll watch and wait,’ he thought. He did not think his daughter was in danger. Morris Townsend was not rich, but that was not important. The doctor did not want Catherine to marry a rich man. ‘Two people can live on her money. She can marry a man with no money. But he must be honest and strong and have a good schooling,’ thought the doctor.

‘The next time Mr Townsend visits the house,’ said the doctor to Mrs Penniman, ‘ask him to dinner.’

The dinner happened a week later. Eight people sat down to eat. The doctor watched Morris carefully. The women left the room after dinner, and then the doctor asked Morris some questions. Dr Sloper pushed the bottle of Madeira over to Morris. Morris liked the doctor’s Madeira. He thought a lot of bottles of Madeira was a good thing for a wife’s father to have. The doctor saw that this was not an ordinary young man. ‘He’s clever,’ he thought. ‘He has a very good head when he wants to use it. And he’s very handsome and he dresses well. But I don’t like him.’ The doctor listened politely to his young friend talk about countries round the world. ‘He talks well — and after a bottle of Madeira! But does he always tell the truth?’



Dr Sloper pushed the bottle of Madeira over to Morris. Morris liked the doctor's Madeira.

After dinner, Morris went and spoke to Catherine. She stood by the fire in her red dress. 'He doesn't like me,' said the young man. 'You must tell him he's wrong.'

'I never tell him he's wrong. I won't talk about you.'

Morris Townsend's face was angry, but Catherine did not see it. And then he smiled again.

'Then I must try to get his good opinion.'

He spoke to Mrs Penniman later in the evening. 'He thinks I'm all wrong,' he said.

'That's not important,' she said. She gave him a sugary smile. She thought that she understood everything.

'Ah, you say the right thing!' said Morris. Mrs Penniman was proud that she always said the right thing.

The next day, the doctor saw his sister, Mrs Almond.

‘And what do you think of him?’ she asked. ‘Lavinia tells me Catherine loves him.’

‘She must stop loving him. He’s not a good man. He’s vulgar. After thirty years as a student of people, I know what people are. My profession teaches me to understand people in an evening.’

‘Well, perhaps you’re right. But the thing is for Catherine to see it.’

‘I’ll give her some glasses.’



Morris visited Washington Square often. A young man in New York with no profession has a lot of time. His visits were the most important thing in Catherine’s life. Each time Morris left the house she thought only of his next visit. Catherine did not tell her father about these visits. He did not ask: he wanted her to decide that Morris was no good. Lavinia loved secrets and did not say anything.

‘What is happening in this house?’ he asked his sister politely a few weeks later.

‘“Happening”, Austin?’ Mrs Penniman cried. ‘Why, nothing.’ ‘Lavinia, you’re not being honest with me,’ he said. ‘Mr Morris Townsend is coming to my house four times every week, and nobody tells me. Does the young man ask you to say nothing, or is it Catherine?’

‘Catherine doesn’t tell me anything,’ said Mrs Penniman. ‘I find Mr Townsend very interesting. But that’s all. He tells me a lot about his life and his bad luck.’

‘Ah! His bad luck! Tell me about it.’

‘It’s a long story. In his earlier life he was bad. He says so. But he paid for it.’

‘And now he has no money.’

‘And he has nobody in the world.’

‘He lost his friends, then, because of his bad life?’

‘No, he had bad friends.’

‘He has good friends, too — his sister and her children.’

‘The children are young and the sister is not nice.’

'Does he say bad things about her to you? But he lives with her and does nothing. She pays for him.'

'He's looking for a profession. He looks every day.'

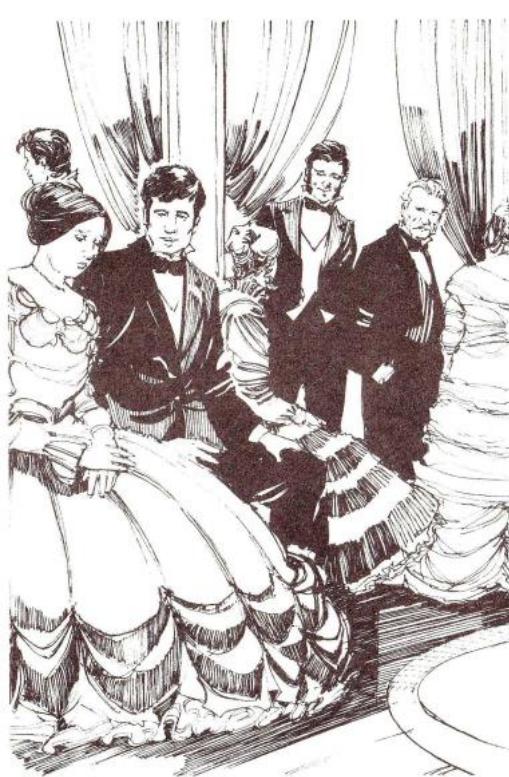
'He's looking for it here. The profession of husband to a weak woman with thirty thousand dollars!'



Every Sunday evening, the family at Washington Square went to Mrs Almond's. The following Sunday, Morris Townsend was also at Mrs Almond's. He sat next to Catherine and talked only to her. Catherine was not happy and easy with Morris because her father was in the room. Her father was sorry for her. Perhaps he was wrong about Morris. Perhaps Morris was honest and wanted to marry his daughter for love. The doctor decided to give the young man time.

Later, he spoke to Morris. 'I hear you're looking for a job,' he said.

'Yes, I am looking for honest, quiet work. Something to bring me an honest dollar. I have only my good right arm.'



Catherine was not happy and easy with Morris because her father was in the room

'Yes, your good right arm,' said the doctor, 'but you have a clever head, too. Sometimes I hear about openings. Will you think about leaving New York — going away?'

'No, I'm afraid not. I must make my life here. My sister is here and I am everything to her. Her husband is dead and I must help with her five children. I give them lessons.'

'That's good. But it's not a profession.'

'It won't bring me a lot of money.'

'Money is not the most important thing,' said the doctor.

Later that evening, Morris spoke to Catherine again. 'Can we meet tomorrow? I have something to say to you. Not in your house -Mil the square. I cannot come into your house again. Your father laughed at me because I have no money.'

'Laughed at you? Oh no, you mistake him. Lie's a good man. You must not be too proud,' she said.

" I'll be proud only of you,' he said.

Catherine went quite red. 'Now you're laughing at me,' she said. 'You know I'm not pretty or clever.'

Morris made a sound; it was difficult to understand.

Catherine understood from it that he loved her.

'Come to the house,' she said. 'I'm not afraid of that.'



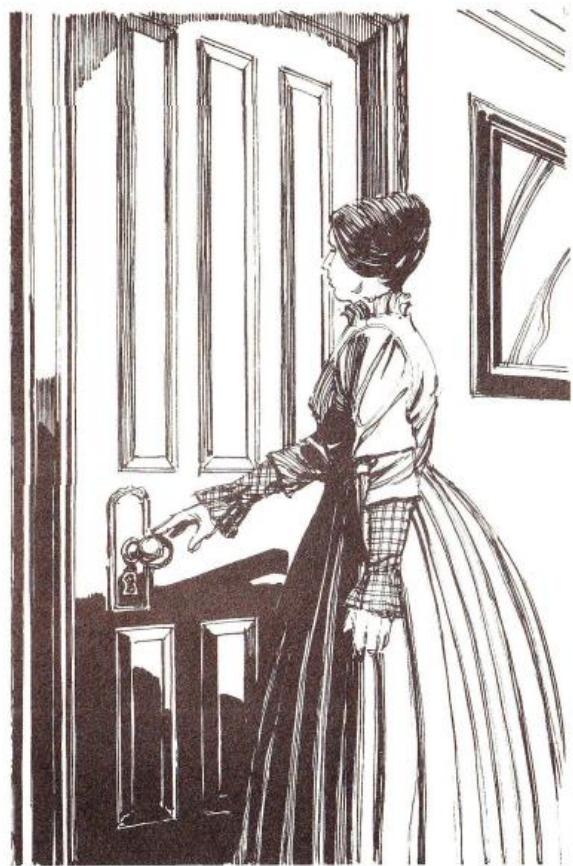
The next day Morris came to the house. He told Catherine that he loved her. She sat down suddenly. She said he must go — she wanted time to think. A picture of a fight with her father came into her head. She was afraid.

Before Morris left, she said, 'We must speak to my father. I'll do it tonight; you must do it tomorrow.'

'Your father will tell you that I want your money.'

'Then I'll say that he mistakes you,' said Catherine.

'Other men are interested only in money, you are not.'



Catherine stood outside the door of her father's room for nearly half an hour.

Chapter 4

For Love or Money?

Catherine heard her father come home that evening. She stood outside the door of his room for nearly half an hour. Then she went in. He sat in his chair by the fire, with a cigar in his hand, and read the newspaper.

‘I have something to say to you,’ she began, very quietly. She sat down. ‘I’m going to marry Morris Townsend.’ The doctor looked at her. ‘When did he ask you?’

‘This afternoon — four hours ago,’ she answered.

‘Usually the man asks the girl’s father. Is he afraid to ask me? You’re moving very fast.’

‘He says he loves me. And I like him very much.’

‘But you met only a few weeks ago.’

‘I liked him from the beginning.’

‘I know that you’re not a little girl now, but a woman. But I don’t like Morris Townsend. I’m sorry that you didn’t ask me first. I was too easy with you.’

‘I was afraid of your opinion. But, father, you don’t know him,’ she said.

‘You don’t know him. He only shows you half the man.’

‘You think he wants my money.’

‘Why do I think he’s the wrong man? I’ll tell you.’ And he smoked his cigar for a minute. ‘I think that your money is more important to him than is right. Perhaps a clever young man will fall in love with you and not be interested in your dollars. You’re an honest, loving girl. But what do we know about this clever young man? We know that he lost his money because he lived a bad life. Now, he’s looking for more money to lose and he has his eye on your money.’

‘That’s not the only thing we know about him, father. He wants to do something very much. He’s honest and he’s good. And he lost very little money.’

‘Then he was not careful with it,’ said the doctor. He got up with a laugh. Catherine stood up. He put his arm round her. ‘I’m sorry for you. I’ll see Mr Townsend tomorrow.’



‘Yes, Dr Sloper,’ said Morris the next afternoon. ‘We arrived quickly at an understanding. But then I was interested in Miss Sloper the first time I saw her.’

‘Were you interested in her before you saw her?’

‘I knew she was a beautiful girl.’

‘I’m her father and I love her very much. I’m her father and I know that she is not “a beautiful girl”. I told Catherine yesterday that I do not like your plans.’

‘I’m very sorry,’ answered Morris. He looked at the floor.

‘I don’t want my daughter to marry a man with no money and no profession. My daughter is a weak young woman and will be quite rich when I die.’

‘I’m not interested in her money. You have my word.’

‘I want more than your word.’

‘What can I do to get your good opinion?’

‘Nothing. I do not want to give you my good opinion.’

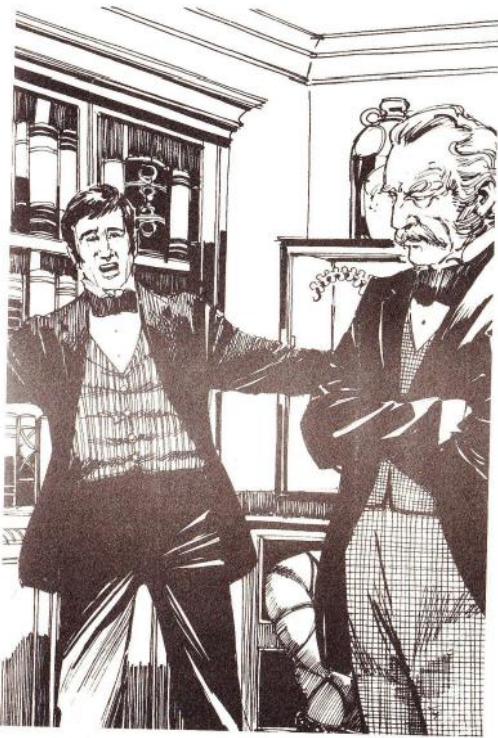
‘But I love Catherine. I’m going to work hard. My old life is behind me. Without me she won’t be happy.’

‘I want you to break with her now,’ said the doctor. ‘For six months she will perhaps not like me. I can wait. She’ll see that a life with you can never be happy.’

‘Ah, sir, you are not polite!’ Morris cried angrily.

‘You push me too hard, Mr Townsend,’ the doctor answered.

‘Perhaps Catherine will not want to break our understanding. She won’t forget me easily. I have nothing more to say.’ Morris left the room.



'But I love Catherine. I'm going to work hard. My old life is behind me. Without me she won't be happy.'

Dr Sloper decided to visit Morris Townsend's sister, Mrs Montgomery. She lived in a pretty little red house with a pretty garden. She was a small woman with blue eyes and an honest face. At the moment her face was a little red. She did not usually have visits from important society people.

Dr Sloper began. 'Your brother wants to marry my daughter. I want to learn about him. Tell me about your brother.'

'I find talking about my brother difficult,' she said.

'With a husband I don't like, Catherine will get nothing from me when I die. She has ten thousand from her mother and nothing more.'

'Does Morris know this?' she asked.

'I'll be happy to tell him.'

'You say you don't like Morris. Why?'

'He's a good man to talk to at a dinner. But I don't want him to be my daughter's husband. I think he's more interested in Morris Townsend than in Catherine Sloper. Tell me I'm wrong.'

'No, you are not wrong. But we are all interested in our lives, I think,' said Mrs Montgomery. 'And he's handsome.'

'Some young men do as little as they can,' said the doctor. 'They live on the love of other people. And ninety-nine times out of a hundred, those other people are women. You, my sister, Lavinia, and Catherine are all working to make an easy life for Morris.'

Mrs Montgomery's eyes were suddenly wet. She moved her head proudly. "I don't know how you know this!" she cried.

'Now,' said the doctor. 'Answer this: Do you give your brother money?' She answered yes.

'Do you have much money?' She answered no.

'Does your brother know this?' She answered yes.

'I hear that your brother teaches your children.'

Her eyes were suddenly big and round. 'Oh, oh yes,' she said quickly, 'he teaches them Spanish.'



'Now', said the doctor. 'Answer this: Do you give your brother money? She answered yes.'

The doctor laughed at this answer. 'Spanish! That will help them! Now I know the answer to my question. Your brother lives on you.' Mrs Montgomery began to cry. 'I know he's a clever man. But he's not the right man for my Catherine. You must meet her. Then you'll understand me.'

'Yes,' she answered. 'Please bring your daughter to meet me.' And then suddenly, 'He must not marry her.'

The doctor went happily away with these words in his ears.

Chapter 5

Mrs Penniman's Plan

Catherine did not speak about Morris to her father.

After some days, he said to her, 'I'm lucky to have a good daughter.'

'I'm trying to be good,' she answered.

Catherine did not see Morris at this time, but she wrote to him. A long letter of five pages. Morris thought it was long. She asked him not to visit for a time.

Morris wrote back. He talked about his meeting with Dr Sloper. 'Your father was very angry,' he wrote. 'I was very polite. You must be strong. You must fight.'

Catherine did not like to think of fighting her father. But she did not like to think of losing her lover. She tried to think of an answer to make everybody happy. She decided to be quiet and to wait. 'Good fathers are always very careful about their daughters' husbands,' she thought.

Mrs Penniman did not help Catherine much. She loved this little story and her place in it. She wanted Catherine to run away with Morris and marry him. She carried a picture in her head: two lovers — with Mrs Penniman — marrying in a small church in a New York back street; living in a dark flat with no money; waiting for visits from Mrs Penniman, their only friend. She wanted to put this picture before Morris. She wrote to him daily about Washington Square. She asked him to meet her in a small restaurant on Seventh Avenue. When Morris arrived, half an hour late, they sat together in the darkest corner at the back of the place. This was the happiest half an hour of Mrs Penniman's life. Morris was not happy. He listened to her but he did not like her. He was happy to use her at the beginning, to get a foot in Washington Square. But he did not want her now: she always said the wrong thing. He was cold but polite. Mrs Penniman told Morris her plan.

'Run away with Catherine?' cried Morris.

'Yes,' said Mrs Penniman, now afraid for her plan. 'Tell Catherine's father about it only after you marry. You can show him that you're not interested in the money. And then you'll get his good opinion. And there's always the ten thousand from her mother. He cannot cut that off'

'Oh, don't speak of that,' he said. 'I'm afraid of coming between Catherine and her money.'

‘Be afraid of nothing; then everything will go well.’

Mrs Penniman paid for her cup of tea and they went out together into the dark street. Morris walked with Mrs Penniman back to Washington Square. She went in. He looked up at the house. He thought it was a very nice house.



When Mrs Penniman told Catherine of her meeting with Morris, Catherine was angry for the first time in her life.

‘I don’t think it was right,’ she said.

Mrs Penniman began to read the evening newspaper. After a long wait, Catherine spoke. ‘Was he sad?’

‘He was dark under the eyes. Very different from when I first saw him. But very handsome.’ A long wait again.

‘Why are you always cold and quiet, Catherine?’



'And I don't think it's your place to teach me what's right,' Lavinia said.

The girl turned quickly. 'Does he say that?'

'He says you are afraid of your father.'

'I *am* afraid of my father.'

'So will you break with Morris?'

Catherine looked at her aunt. 'Why do you push me?'

'I'm afraid you don't see the importance of what you do. You must not lose this young naan.'

'I don't think that you understand me or know me. Please do not have any more secret meetings with Mr Townsend. I don't think it's right.'

‘And I don’t think it’s your place to teach me what’s right.’ Lavinia said a short goodnight and went to bed.



Later that evening, Catherine spoke to her father.

‘Father, I want to see Morris again.’

‘To say goodbye?’ asked the doctor.

‘No, to ask him to wait.’

He looked at her. ‘You’re a good child.’ She went to him and he put his arm round her. ‘I want you to break with him. My opinion of him is the same as when I first met him. You’re not happy now, I know. But in three months or three years, you can be happy again. Marry Morris, and you’ll never be happy.’

‘But you *can* like him,’ said the sad child. ‘We can wait.’

‘When I die, you can marry,’ the doctor said quietly.

‘Don’t say that, father,’ cried Catherine. ‘Try to like Morris. He’s a good man.’

‘I never want to speak to him again. But tell him this. You marry him, and you get nothing from me.’

‘You’re right to say that. We don’t want your money.’

‘Say that to him. Listen to his answer and watch him. Watch for an angry face.’

‘He’s never angry with me, father,’ she said. Her eyes were wet.



Her father pushed her out of the room and shut the door.

‘I think I’ll see him. Only one more time.’

‘Then you’re a bad daughter to me.’

This was too much for Catherine. She cried and cried. She ran to her father but he turned away. He pushed her out of the room and shut the door. He heard her crying and knew she was behind the door. But he did not move. He was sorry for her, but there was a smile round his eyes.



That night Catherine cried for many hours, with Aunt Penniman’s arm round her. ‘Good!’ thought Mrs Penniman. The next morning, she came back into Catherine’s room. Catherine was dressed and ready for breakfast. ‘Don’t go to breakfast, Catherine,’ Aunt Penmman said. ‘You won’t move your father — you must be weak and ill, not well and strong.’

‘I must go, aunt. I’m only afraid of being late.’

Catherine wrote to Morris that day. She asked him to visit the next day, at a time when her father was not at home.

Chapter 6

The Long Wait

Morris was more handsome than Catherine remembered. He put his arms round her. She knew that she loved him very much.

‘Why did you send for me?’

‘Because I wanted to see you,’ said the girl quietly.

‘Do you want only to look at me? Or to tell me something?’

He waited. Then he suddenly said, ‘Marry me tomorrow. Take me or leave me. Decide between me and your father.’

‘I want you, Morris. But we must wait. We must be strong. I said to Father last night, “We don’t want your money.”’

His face went red, but he smiled and spoke. No, he was not angry. The money was not important. He loved her very much.

‘Yes!’ cried Catherine, ‘we must marry as soon as we can!’ She put her arms round him and closed her eyes.

He left soon after. They did not decide on a day to marry. Morris wanted to think. When was the cleverest time to marry? He did not want the girl without the money. He thought about the ten thousand from Catherine’s mother. That was not a good living. Not for Morris Townsend. But then, it was better than nothing.

*

Mrs Penniman asked Morris Townsend to a second secret meeting. This time they met outside a church.

‘I see the thing differently from our last meeting,’ said Mrs Penniman.

‘Every time I see you, you say something different.’

‘My head is never quiet. I don’t think you can marry Catherine now. My brother says he’s going to throw me out of the house. You know I’m not a rich woman.’

‘But Catherine says we must marry now, in secret. How can I get out of it now?’

‘Catherine loves you very much. You can do anything with her. You can say you must wait.’

‘Ah!’ said Morris quietly.

Catherine’s days were long at this time. Her father never looked at her or spoke to her. This was his plan. He waited for Catherine to speak first.

‘I think that Morris and I will marry,’ she said one day.

‘When? In the next four or five months?’ he asked.

‘I don’t know, father,’ said Catherine, ‘we cannot decide.’

‘Then wait for six months. I’ll take you to Europe. I want you to come with me.’

Catherine was happy to say ‘yes’ to her father.



Mrs Penniman asked Morris Townsend to a second secret meeting. This time they met outside a church.

Dr Sloper did not ask Mrs Penniman to go to Europe. She wanted to go but she did not show it. ‘Washington Square is going to be nice and quiet,’ she said to Mrs Almond. Catherine met Morris before she left. Tie asked questions.

‘Do you want to see all those famous things over there?’

‘Oh no, Morris!’ said Catherine quickly.

‘What *is* this woman interested in!?’ thought Morris.

‘Father thinks I’ll forget you,’ said Catherine, ‘but I won’t. He’ll be angry with me.’

‘Yes, I think you’re right. But the visit to Europe is a good thing. He wants you to go and he’ll be happy,’ said Morris. ‘I don’t want you to lose your money — not for me, but for you and your children. When you’re in Europe, decide on a good time and place — an evening in Venice — and then perhaps you can move your father. Ask him to say yes, you can marry Morris.’ Catherine thought this was a clever plan.



Europe was very interesting to Dr Sloper, so they stayed for twelve months, not six. Mrs Penniman lived well in Washington Square, and so did Morris Townsend. Mrs Penniman liked to ask him to tea. He had his chair — a very easy armchair — by the fire in the back sitting room. He drank the doctor’s Madeira and smoked his cigars.



In the first six months that Dr Sloper and his daughter were in Europe, they never spoke of Morris Townsend. Catherine followed her father quietly and politely through the mountains of Switzerland and the buildings and pictures of Italy. She gave no opinion about any of these places or things and her father did not ask for it. She was not a thinking woman.

One day father and daughter were in a quiet place in the Alps. The driver took their bags on and they walked together a little. Cold red light washed over the sky. Next to the mountains the two people were very small, but they were not afraid. They walked on in the dying light. Dr Sloper came close to his daughter and stopped. He suddenly asked her, ‘Are you going to break with him?’

‘No, father,’ Catherine answered.

‘Does he write to you?’

‘Yes, I get two letters every month.’

The doctor looked at the mountains above them. ‘I’m very angry,’ he said, ‘and I must tell you that I can be a very hard man.’

For the next week they did not say a word. And for the next six months they did not speak about Morris. But on their last night in Europe, before their ship left Liverpool for New York, he spoke again. ‘Are you going to marry him as soon as you arrive in New York?’

‘I cannot tell before we arrive,’ Catherine answered.

‘Please tell me before you marry. When a man is going to lose his only child, he likes to know before.’

Chapter 7

A Difficult Time

'I saw Morris often when you were away,' said Catherine's aunt.

'I know from his letters that you were very nice to him. I won't forget that, aunt.'

'He liked to come and talk. I gave him tea — that was all. Your Aunt Almond thought it was too much. He liked to sit in your father's room,' she said and smiled.

Catherine was quiet for a minute.



They talked for some time as lovers. Catherine questioned him closely about his job and he asked about Europe and her father's opinion.

'I'm sorry that he went into Father's room,' she said. Then she asked, 'Does he have a job?'

'Yes, only a week ago, he found a job. He's working with a friend, buying and selling something. He asked me to tell you as soon as you arrived.'

'Oh, that's good to hear!' said Catherine, very happy.

'You see, Morris was right to wait for the right job. What can your father say now?'

'Father's opinion is the same as before, only stronger. But his opinion isn't important to me any more,' she said.

'You're much stronger now,' said Mrs Penniman. 'What about your father's money?'

'I'm not interested in my father's money. Morris doesn't think it's important.'

'Perhaps he thinks it's a little important,' said Aunt Lavinia after a minute,

'I have money from my mother. And now Morris has a job. He and I have everything. I'm never going to ask my father for anything. I am home and I want to marry.'



Morris came to Washington Square the next day.

'I'm very happy to see you again,' he said with a smile.

'They talked for some time as lovers. Catherine questioned him closely about his job and he asked about Europe and her father's opinion. He often got up and walked round the room, and came back and smiled again.'

Morris smiled all the time. 'I must try to move him,' he said. 'I'm a proud man. I want to show him that he's wrong.'

'Morris, we must ask for nothing. I know now that he doesn't like me much. It's because of my mother. She was very beautiful and I'm not. He's always thinking of her. Aunt Penniman told me that.'

Morris was angry. 'What a difficult family!'

'You must be nice to me, Morris. You must always like me.'

Morris said, 'I will.' It was not difficult to say.



The doctor spoke to Mrs Almond. ‘I know of his visits to my house. I can see where he sat in the chair by the fire.’

‘His plan is to take anything,’ said Mrs Almond. ‘He lived on Lavinia for a year.’

Mrs Penniman wrote to Morris. She wanted to see him. Morris angrily threw her letter into the fire. She wanted to come to his office. He said no — his office was very difficult to find. They met for a walk. Mrs Penniman had nothing new to say. But Morris had something to say.

‘I know the doctor is the same. He’s never going to give us anything. Don’t talk to me about him. The fight is finished. I’m the loser. I’m not going to marry Catherine!’

‘Morris, she loves you very much. Do you know that?’

‘No, I don’t. I don’t want to know. You must be a good friend to her. The doctor can help you.’

‘The doctor! He’ll say, “I told you! He was no good!”’

Morris went very red. ‘You can tell her that I don’t want to come between her and her father. And I don’t want her to lose her money because of me.’

‘You’re very clever with words,’ said Mrs Penniman.

‘I must do something very clever with my life next,’ he said. ‘This is not clever at all.’



Morris came to see Catherine. He said suddenly, ‘I’m going away to New Orleans. I’m going to buy some coffee.’

‘Take me with you,’ said Catherine.

‘No, it’s a dirty and dangerous place. People get ill there.’

‘Then *you* must not go. When people are going to marry, buying coffee is not important. Think about me, not coffee. We must not wait too long.’ She spoke strongly, her hands on Morris’s arm. Was this the time to break with Catherine?

‘I don’t like this noisy Catherine. I like you when you’re quiet,’ said Morris.

‘But I don’t ask much of you. When are you coming again?’ ‘Saturday,’ he answered and smiled.

‘Come tomorrow. I’m very quiet now. Please, tomorrow.’

‘I said Saturday,’ he said, but did not smile this time. ‘Tomorrow I’ll be in the office.’ She looked at his hard, cold eyes.

‘Morris,’ she said quietly, ‘you’re going to leave me.’

‘Yes. I’ll write to you — that’s better.’

‘Morris, I gave up everything for you!’ she cried.

‘You can have it all back.’

‘Morris, why are you doing this now? What is different?’

‘Wait for my letter.’

‘Ah, you’re not coming back.’

He got away from her and closed the door behind him.

Chapter 8

After the Dance

Catherine cried all day and sat up all night. She waited for Morris to come to the house. He did not come. He did not come the next day. He did not write.

Catherine wrote a short letter to him: 'Morris, I'm sorry and I don't understand. You're killing me!' No answer.

The doctor watched all this happening. After a few days he spoke to his sister, Lavinia. 'The story is finished,' he said. 'I'm very happy to be in the right.' He put his hands together, jumped up and laughed. 'Hah! I knew it.'



One Sunday afternoon Catherine came back from a walk. Her face was red and her eyes were wet.

One Sunday afternoon Catherine came back from a walk. Her face was red and her eyes were wet. Mrs Penniman questioned her closely and learned that her walk was to Mrs Montgomery's house on Second Avenue. There she heard that Morris left New York some days before.

◆

Two days later, a letter arrived from Philadelphia. The writer did not want to come between Catherine and her father or her father's money. He wanted her to be happy and to stay friends with him in the years to come. He was sorry. Catherine thought it was a beautiful letter and read it many times over the next few years.

One day Dr Sloper found Catherine sitting with her work.

'Can you tell me when you're going to leave my house? When you go, your aunt goes too,' he said.

She got up. She put her work away. Her face was hot.

'I'm not going away,' said Catherine.

'Did he break with you?' said the doctor.

'I asked him to leave New York. He's not coming back for a long time,' she said.

'Oh,' he said. 'You're not a nice girl, Catherine — to play with him for more than a year and then forget him!'

◆

Catherine learned a hard lesson. She never spoke of the pain inside her in the weeks and months following the break with Morris. Her father never learned the truth.

'Catherine had her little dance,' he said to Mrs Almond, 'and now she's sitting down.'

At different times in the following years, four men asked Catherine to marry them. She said no to them all. She worked hard for churches and hospitals. She went out in society and everybody liked her.



Twenty years later, Morris Townsend, now fat and with very little hair, arrived at Washington Square.

Dr Sloper died when he was seventy. Some of his money went to Catherine and her aunts. But most of it went to hospitals across the United States.



Twenty years later, Morris Townsend, now fat and with very little hair, arrived at Washington Square. Catherine did not ask him to sit down. This was not her Morris, her lover of years ago.

‘Can we be friends again?’ he asked, and came closer to her. ‘Catherine, I think of you always.’

‘Please don’t say these things,’ she answered.

‘We can forget the past now. We can do anything.’

‘I cannot forget the past. Please do not come again,’ she said. Morris looked round the room at all the things. ‘Goodbye then. I’m sorry.’

Outside the room, an excited Mrs Pennirnan waited.

‘Hah! That was a good plan, Mrs Pennirnan!’ said Morris, and pulled his hat hard on his head. ‘She’s not interested in me! But she never married — why?’

‘Good question,’ said Mrs Pennirnan. ‘But you must come back. You must try again.’

‘Come back! Never!’ and he walked out of the house. Catherine took up her work and sat down — for life.

— THE END —

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