

*stopped directly above her. Ritter appears on the stairway, and moves down a step or two, watching his wife, narrowly.* [90]

MRS. RITTER. [*Flipping her left hand at Teddy, in an attempt to give a fly impression*] Hello, kid.

TEDDY. Hello, Mrs. Arlington. [*Mrs. Ritter swishes down towards the left, shaking her head from side to side and holding her arms akimbo. She turns around to her left, gives Florence a look, supposed to be a very contemptuous look, and stands in the middle of the room again, facing Teddy.*]

MRS. RITTER. [*Speaking directly to Teddy*] Is my sweetie in? [*Ritter moves slowly down to the landing of the stairs, watching his wife as though she were some baffling phenomenon.*]

TEDDY. No, mam, he ain't.

MRS. RITTER. [*Drawing her shoulders up, and speaking in a high unnatural key*] What!

TEDDY. He went about six o'clock.

MRS. RITTER. Why, I had an appointment with *him*!

TEDDY. He might be back, maybe.

MRS. RITTER. But, I can't wait unless I'm *certain* that he's coming back.

TEDDY. He was expecting you.

MRS. RITTER. [*Still shaking her head and trying generally to appear bold*] Yes, I know he was. [*Turning to the table at the left, back of which Florence is standing*] I suppose I'd better leave a note for him. [*She indicates the table with a waving gesture of her left hand.*]

TEDDY. You'll find that green one is the best pen. [91]

MRS. RITTER. [*Stepping to the table*] Thanks. [*She looks at Florence, who gives her a withering look over her right shoulder and turns away to the mantelpiece at the left. Then Mrs. Ritter gives her idea of a scornful laugh.*] Ha! Ha! Ha!

RITTER. [*Sweeping his hand across his brow, groaning, and falling down the stairs, into the right hallway*] Oh my God!

MRS. PAMPINELLI. [*Seeing him fall, and jumping up*] Oh, my dear! [*Everybody turns.*]

TWILLER. [*Trying to catch him*] Hold it! [*Spindler rushes past Mrs. Pampinelli and out the center-door into the right hallway. Teddy jumps into a kneeling position on the right partition-seat and looks over the partition. Florence and Mrs. Fell rush up to the center-door and try to see what's going on, Nelly dodging from one side of Florence to the other, and peering through her lorgnon.*] Are you hurt, old man?

HOSSEFROSSE. [*Handing his cane and gloves to Spindler*] Hold those, please. [*Spindler takes them, and Hossefrosse prepares to assist Twiller to lift Ritter from the floor.*]

TWILLER. Get some water, somebody! [*Spindler rushes out the left hallway. Mrs. Pampinelli sweeps up from below the table at the right to the center-door.*]

MRS. RITTER. [*Bewildered, in the middle of the room, as Mrs. Pampinelli passes her*] What is it, Betty? [92]

MRS. PAMPINELLI. Now, don't get excited, Paula. [*Mrs. Ritter steps frantically across to the piano and turns, leaning against it, looking wide-eyed at Nelly Fell.*]

HOSSEFROSSE. Lift up his head.

MRS. PAMPINELLI. [*Looking eagerly out into the right hallway*] Is he hurt, boys?

TWILLER. I want to get him under the arms. [*They lift Ritter onto a bench in the hallway. Nelly Fell turns away from the center-door with an exclamation of distress.*]