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Readers

A stylized illustration in shades of blue and black. In the foreground, the dark silhouette of a Venetian gondola is visible on the left. In the background, the silhouettes of Venetian buildings, including a large dome, are visible against a lighter blue sky. The title text is overlaid on the right side of the illustration.

THE WINGS of the DOVE

HENRY JAMES

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CHAPTER ONE

Father and daughter

One afternoon in March, Kate Croy was waiting for her father, Lionel Croy, in the living room of his small house. Mr Croy had not been well and he had asked his daughter to visit him. Kate had something to ask her father, too, but he was still upstairs in his bedroom. She had been in the living room for a long time and she was becoming impatient. She walked around the room, then she went over to the window and looked out. But there was nothing interesting to see. Her father lived in a small, ordinary street full of small, ordinary houses in a poor area of London.

Kate looked at herself in the mirror above the fireplace. She was a good-looking girl, 25 years old, with lots of thick dark hair. The mirror also showed an untidy room with cheap and **shabby** furniture. There was an old sofa and a table with a small glass lamp. Kate did not want to sit down because the chair was dirty. She thought about her father and tried not to feel sad and angry.

Lionel Croy had once been a handsome and **charming** man. When Kate's mother first met him many years ago, she had fallen very much in love. They had married and had two daughters, Marian and Kate. But Mr Croy was not a good husband or father. He was **selfish**, and he told a lot of lies. When Kate was 15, he did something terrible that **upset** people in **society**, although Kate and Marian had never **found out** what it was. But after that, Lionel Croy had to leave his family.

Things became very difficult for Mrs Croy because she had no money to pay the bills. Then, Marian married a teacher called Mr Condrip. But, Mr Condrip did not **earn** much money, and the **marriage** was not a happy one. Some years later, Mr Condrip died, leaving Marian with four children to look after. Then Mrs Croy died, too. She left Marian and Kate some money in her **will**. Every year, her daughters received £200 each and Kate gave half of her money to Marian.

But then Kate's life became much better. Kate's mother's sister, Maud, had married a rich man, Mr Lowder, who had a high position in society. Maud Lowder was now a **widow**. She lived in a big house in Lancaster Gate, near Kensington Gardens, which was a **fashionable** area of London. She had not **approved of** her sister's marriage to Lionel Croy, or Marian's marriage to Mr Condrip. She thought that both these marriages were huge mistakes. Mrs Lowder did not want her favourite niece, Kate, to make a **foolish** marriage like her mother and sister. She wanted her to marry a rich man and have a comfortable life. So she invited Kate to come and live with her at Lancaster Gate.

Kate was now able to live the life of a rich young woman. She was given a beautiful room in her aunt's house. From her window, she could look down and see people walking in the park. Mrs Lowder gave Kate lots of fine clothes. She still took her to parties and dinners, and introduced her to all her rich friends. She also started to look for a **suitable** husband for her niece. Kate enjoyed the parties and dinners, but she had different ideas from her aunt about suitable men.

At last, the door opened, and Lionel Croy came in. He was still interested in his younger daughter and he was pleased to see her. He felt no interest in his other daughter at all.

"You're looking well, Father," said Kate. "I'm glad you're feeling better."

"I'm not," replied Mr Croy. "That's why I sent for you. In fact, I'm very ill. I've just been to the chemist to buy some medicine."

"I'm glad you wrote to me, Father," Kate said, "because I've got something to tell you. If you would like it, I could come and live with you here. I'm ready to leave Aunt Maud and take care of you."

Mr Croy was shocked. "Oh no, Kate, I could never agree to that," he said. "I'm fine, living here by myself."

"Aunt Maud wants me to keep living with her," said Kate, "but she's made a **condition**. She's said that I must never see you, or speak or write to you again."

"And what has Aunt Maud promised to do for you in return?" asked her father.

"She's already given me lots of things," said Kate. "And she'll help me more in the future. But I don't want to stay with her."

"But it's your **duty** to stay with Aunt Maud," said Mr Croy. "That's the best way you can help me. Aunt Maud will do everything for you, and she'll find you a rich husband, too. When you get married, you can give me lots of money." He looked crossly at his daughter. "Are you sharing the money your mother gave you with Marian?"

"Yes," said Kate. "I give her half of it."

"You should give that money to me, not to Marian," Mr Croy said angrily.

Kate said nothing for a moment. She knew that her father always thought about himself, but she was still **disappointed**. She did not want to stay with Aunt Maud.

"If I live with you, Father, you could help me, too," she said.

Mr Croy looked at her. "I know what your problem is," he said. "You're in love with a poor man, and your aunt doesn't approve of him. That's why you want to live with me. But if he isn't rich, I won't approve of him either. If you make a mistake, I'm not going to help you. Stay with Aunt Maud."

"Then you can't do anything for me?" said Kate. She felt angry and **upset**.

"No," said Lionel. "And I think you should leave now."

He opened the door and Kate walked out.

The next day, Kate went to visit Marian. Marian lived in a small house in another part of London. When they were young girls, Kate had **admired** Marian very much. She had thought that her older sister was the most beautiful and charming girl in the world. Now Marian was quite fat with a red face, and she had become hard and selfish. But Kate knew that Marian's life was **very** difficult. She loved her sister and wanted to help her as much as possible.

When Kate arrived, Marian and her four children had just finished lunch, and the whole house smelled of boiled fish. Marian sent the children out of the room, then she and Kate started talking about their aunt.

"Aunt Maud has given you a wonderful **opportunity**, Kate," said Marian. "Please think about my **situation**, and the hard life I have here. Don't **throw** yourself **away** – please."

"But I'm always thinking about you, Marian," said Kate. "And what do you mean 'throw myself away'?"

"I know that you're in love with that young man, Merton Densher," replied her sister. "But let me give you some advice. He isn't a suitable husband for you. If you marry him, it will be the worst thing you can do."

"Because he doesn't have any money?" asked Kate.

"That's right," said Marian. "He doesn't have any money, and he'll never have any money. You must have money, Kate. You *need* money."

"Why?" asked Kate. "So that I can give it to you?"

"Yes," Marian replied, calmly, "but first you have to get the money. So you must do what Aunt Maud wants and marry a rich husband."

"Father gave me the same advice as you," said Kate. "That's very interesting! I visited him yesterday. I told him that I was ready to leave Aunt Maud and live with him. But he didn't want me to."

"Good," said Marian. "That was a very foolish idea! You mustn't leave Aunt Maud. And I've heard that she's found a suitable man for you."



CHAPTER TWO

Kate and Densher

Merton Densher was a journalist. In the evenings, he worked at the offices of his newspaper in Fleet Street. But during the day, he had a lot of free time. So most afternoons at about four o'clock, he went to Kensington Gardens and met Kate Croy.

Densher was a tall, slim young man with blond hair. He was handsome and pleasant, and he enjoyed his job, but money was not important to him. Kate and Densher had first met at a party a few months before Kate's mother died. Kate did not go to many parties, but a friend of Mrs Croy's had invited her to this one. There were lots of artists, musicians and writers there. When Kate and Densher were introduced, they enjoyed talking to each other. Kate did not often have the opportunity to meet young men, and she thought that Densher was very interesting.

Six months later, Kate and Densher met again by chance. Kate was travelling back to her aunt's house on the Underground **Railway**. It was a busy time of day, and the train was crowded with people. Suddenly, Kate looked up and saw Densher among the passengers. He saw her, too, and smiled. When Kate got out of the train, Densher followed her. He walked with her to Mrs Lowder's house at Lancaster Gate. Before he said goodbye, he asked, "May I come and visit you here?"

"Oh, really?" Kate said in surprise. She was not pleased.

"Who is he?"

"**Lord Mark**, of course," said Marian.

"What!" said Kate. She felt shocked. "Don't be silly. I'm not going to marry Lord Mark."

"Lord Mark himself doesn't matter," said Marian. "If you don't marry him, you'll marry another rich man."

Kate did not stay at her sister's any longer. She said goodbye and travelled back to Aunt Maud's. All the way home, she thought about Merton Densher.