

are crossing to the other bank! . . .

THE UNCLE: They are afraid of my sister. I will go and see. [*He calls.*] Sister! sister! Is that you? . . . There is no one there.

THE DAUGHTER: I am sure that someone has come into the garden. You will see.

THE UNCLE: But she would answer me!

THE GRANDFATHER: Are not the nightingales beginning to sing again, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER: I cannot hear one anywhere.

THE GRANDFATHER: And yet there is no noise.

THE FATHER: There is a silence of the grave.

THE GRANDFATHER: It must be some stranger that scares them, for if it were one of the family they would not be silent.

THE UNCLE: How much longer are you going to discuss these nightingales?

THE GRANDFATHER: Are all the windows open, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER: The glass door is open, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER: It seems to me that the cold is penetrating into the room.

THE DAUGHTER: There is a little wind in the garden, grandfather, and the rose-leaves are falling.

THE FATHER: Well, shut the door. It is late.

THE DAUGHTER: Yes, father. . . . I cannot shut the door.

THE TWO OTHER DAUGHTERS: We cannot shut the door.

THE GRANDFATHER: Why, what is the matter with the door, my children?

THE UNCLE: You need not say that in such an extraordinary voice. I will go and help them.

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER: We cannot manage to shut it quite.

THE GRANDFATHER: *[to the UNCLE and FATHER]* And your sister has not come?

THE UNCLE: It is too late; she will not come now. It is not nice of her.

THE FATHER: I'm beginning to be anxious about her.

[A noise, as of someone coming into the house.]

THE UNCLE: She is here! Did you hear?

THE FATHER: Yes; someone has come in at the basement.

THE UNCLE: It must be our sister. I recognize her step.

THE GRANDFATHER: I heard slow footsteps.

THE FATHER: She came in very quietly.

THE UNCLE: She knows there is an invalid.

THE GRANDFATHER: I hear nothing now.

THE UNCLE: She will come up directly; they will tell her we are here.

THE FATHER: I am glad she has come.

THE UNCLE: I was sure she would come this evening.

THE GRANDFATHER: She is a very long time coming up.

THE UNCLE: However, it must be she.

THE FATHER: We are not expecting any other visitors.

THE GRANDFATHER: I cannot hear any noise in the basement.

THE FATHER: I will call the servant. We shall know how things stand. *[He pulls a bell-rope.]*

THE GRANDFATHER: I can hear a noise on the stairs already.

THE FATHER: It is the servant coming up.

THE GRANDFATHER: It sounds to me as if she were not alone.

cries continue, with gradations of horror, until the end of the scene.]

THE FATHER: Listen to the child!

THE UNCLE: He has never cried before!

THE FATHER: Let us go and see him!

THE UNCLE: The light! The light!

[At this moment, quick and heavy steps are heard in the room on the left.-- Then a deathly silence.--They listen in mute terror, until the door of the room opens slowly, the light from it cast into the room where they are sitting, and the Sister of Mercy appears on the threshold, in her black garments, and bows as she makes the sign of the cross, to announce the death of his wife. They understand, and, after a moment of hesitation and fright, silently enter the chamber of death, while THE UNCLE politely steps aside on the threshold to let the three girls pass. The blind man, left alone, gets up, agitated, and feels his way round the table in the darkness.]

THE GRANDFATHER: Where are you going?--Where are you going?--The girls have left me all alone!

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THE CURTAIN