

# **THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA**

By Frank J. Morlock Based on a novel by Henry James



## Table of Contents

<b><u>THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA</u></b> .....	<b>1</b>
<u>By Frank J. Morlock Based on a novel by Henry James</u> .....	2
<u>ACT I</u> .....	4
<u>Scene I. Pinnie's Millinery shop</u> .....	5
<u>Scene II. Rosy's bedroom</u> .....	13
<u>ACT II</u> .....	19
<u>Scene I. Pinnie's shop</u> .....	20
<u>Scene II. The lobby of a theatre</u> .....	24
<u>Scene III. A room in Paul Muniment's house</u> .....	29
<u>ACT III</u> .....	34
<u>Scene I. A room in the mansion of the Princess Casamassima</u> .....	35
<u>Scene II. The same, a few days later</u> .....	45
<u>ACT IV</u> .....	57
<u>Scene I. Rosy's bedroom</u> .....	58
<u>Scene II. Millicent's shabby but genteel apartment</u> .....	62
<u>Scene III. Hyacinth's work room</u> .....	65
<u>ACT V</u> .....	67
<u>Scene I. The Princess's house</u> .....	68
<u>Scene II. The same, a few days later</u> .....	71
<u>Scene III. The same, a few days later</u> .....	74

# THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**By Frank J. Morlock Based on a novel by Henry James**

- ACT I
- Scene I. Pinnie's Millinery shop.
- Scene II. Rosy's bedroom.
- ACT II
  - Scene I. Pinnie's shop.
  - Scene II. The lobby of a theatre.
  - Scene III. A room in Paul Muniment's house.
- ACT III
  - Scene I. A room in the mansion of the Princess Casamassima.
  - Scene II. The same, a few days later.
- ACT IV
  - Scene I. Rosy's bedroom.
  - Scene II. Millicent's shabby but genteel apartment.
  - Scene III. Hyacinth's work room.
- ACT V
  - Scene I. The Princess's house.
  - Scene II. The same, a few days later.
  - Scene III. The same, a few days later.

This Etext is for private use only. No republication for profit in print or other media may be made without the express consent of the Copyright Holder. The Copyright Holder is especially concerned about performance rights in any media on stage, cinema, or television, or audio or any other media, including readings for which an entrance fee or the like is charge. Permissions should be addressed to: Frank Morlock, 6006 Greenbelt Rd, #312, Greenbelt, MD 20770, USA or frankmorlock@msn.com. Other works by this author may be found at <http://www.cadytech.com/dumas/personnage.asp?key=130>

Etext by Dagny

Characters:

Pinnie  
Hyacinth Robinson  
Mr. Vetch  
Mr. Poupin  
Madame Poupin  
Captain Sholto  
Millicent Henning  
Paul Muniment  
Rosy Muniment  
The Princess Casamassima  
The Prince  
Lady Aurora  
Madame Grandoni

# THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

Seven women, six men.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**ACT I**

**Scene I. Pinnie's Millinery shop.**

It is a poor seamstress's shop in a London slum about 1885. Pinnie is a middle-aged woman, very thin, and possessed of a wiry, puritanical energy. Pinnie is puzzled by the appearance of the fashionably dressed, blowsy Millicent Henning. Indeed old Pinnie is in a state of partial shock, not knowing whether to admit the girl or not, or what she can possibly want of her.

**Milly**

Well, you'll have to guess my name before I tell you. Won't you let me in? I don't want to order anything, I only came to inquire after your 'ealth. Now, tell me, how's old Hyacinth? I should like so much to see him.

**Pinnie**

Old Hyacinth?

**Milly**

Perhaps you call him Mr. Robinson today—you always wanted him to hold himself so high. But to his face I'll call him the way I always did, you wait and see.

**Pinnie**

Bless my soul, you must be that awful little 'Enning girl!

**Milly** (indignant)

Well! I'm glad you finally recognized me. I suppose I was awful. (brightly) But, I ain't so bad now, hey? I has a call to make in these parts, and it came into my 'ead to look you up. I don't forget old friends.

**Pinnie**

You've improved as I couldn't have believed.

**Milly**

Well—you haven't changed. You were always calling me something 'orrid.

**Pinnie**

I daresay it doesn't matter to you now, does it?

**Milly**

Oh, I'm all right now.

**Pinnie**

You were a pretty child— I never said contrary to that. But I had no idea you'd turn out like this. You're too tall for a woman.

**Milly**

Well, I enjoy beautiful 'ealth. Everyone thinks I'm at least twenty– two.

**Pinnie**

But how did you get so splendid?

**Milly**

Laws! Just luck. I got work as a shop girl in a fashionable store and now they use me as a model. We have to be beautifully dressed— I love to look nice.

**Pinnie**

And how are your parents?

**Milly**

Gone to 'Ell, I'm afraid. They drifted off years ago, and I'm on my own.

**Pinnie** (suspiciously)

You haven't come here to see me.

**Milly**

I'm glad to see you. I told you I came to ask after my sweetheart. Wot's become of him?

**Pinnie**

He's an apprentice bookbinder.

**Milly**

In bookbinding? Laws! Do you mean he works? Well, I always knew he would have something to do with books. But, I didn't think he would ever follow a trade.

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Pinnie**

A trade? Mr. Robinson considers it one of the fine arts.

**Milly**

Very likely it's good work. Better than this, no doubt.

**Pinnie** (crossly)

I haven't so much work as I used to have, if that's what you mean. My eyes aren't so good and neither is my health these days.

**Milly**

You need some new ideas about fashion. You need someone to help you. I can see you're using the same old styles as ever.

**Pinnie**

I've had helpers in the past. None of them turned out any good.

**Milly**

Maybe I can get you some business—you always did excellent sewing— but, you ain't got no sense of fashion. I'll bring the patterns.

**Pinnie** (some sense of Pinnie's poverty can be gained from the fact that she would like to reject such help out of hand but swallows her pride and says quietly)

That would be very kind.

**Milly**

Mind you give my love to Hyacinth. I don't care if you know that the only reason I stopped was in hope of seeing him again. There's no shame in wanting to see my childhood sweetheart. Do give him my best love, and tell him I hope he'll come and see me. I can see you won't tell him anything. What are you afraid of? I won't hurt your precious Hyacinth. I'll leave my card for him all the same. (extracting a visiting card from her purse)

**Pinnie** (amazed at the little Henning girl's social standing without being in any way delighted by it)

My word!

**Millie** What do you think I want to do with him? I could swallow him in one bite.

**Pinnie**

You needn't think I shall put myself out to keep him in the dark. I shall certainly tell him you've been here, and exactly how you strike me.

**Milly**

Of course, you'll say something nasty like you used to when I was a child. You used to let me 'ave it then, you know.

**Pinnie**

Ah, well, you're very different now, when I think what you've come from.

**Milly**

What I've come from? Just because you're stuck in this slum, don't expect me to stay 'ere! You've had to stay in it yourself, so you might speak civilly of it! And pray, what have you come from yourself, and what has he come from? The mysterious Mr. Hyacinth Robinson, whose father was 'Lord Fredrick and whose mother was—

**Pinnie** (jumping up)

I've nothing to tell you. Leave my shop!

(Hyacinth Robinson, a finely built, young man of about twenty enters unseen by Pinnie, but visible to Millicent.)

**Milly**

Gracious, Hyacinth Robinson—is that you?

(Pinnie turns around, then immediately, crestfallen, goes to her sewing desk.)

**Hyacinth**

Were you talking about me just now?

**Milly**

Scene I. Pinnie's Millinery shop.

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

When I asked where you 'ad come from? (innocently) That was because we heard you in the 'all. I suppose you've come from your work.

**Hyacinth**

You used to live in the Place—you were the girl that always wanted to kiss me. Didn't she live in Lomax Place, Pinnie?

**Milly**

Do you know what you look like—you look for all the world like a plastered up Frenchman! Don't he look like a funny little Frenchie, Mrs. Pysnet?

**Hyacinth**

Have you come back to live in the Place?

**Milly**

Heaven forbid, that I should ever do that! I must live near the establishment in which I am employed.

**Hyacinth**

And what establishment is that now? Is it the Cock and Bull, or the Elephant and Castle?

**Milly**

A pub? Well, you haven't got the manners of a Frenchie.

**Pinnie** (under her breath)

Whorehouse more likely!

**Milly**

I don't care what a man looks like so long as he knows a lot. That's the look I like.

**Pinnie**

Miss 'Enning wouldn't live in Lomax Place for the world. She thinks it too low.

**Hyacinth**

So it is, it's a beastly hole.

**Milly**

Right you are!

**Hyacinth**

Don't you think I know something?

**Milly**

You? Oh, I don't care a straw what you know!

**Pinnie**

I think you had better shut the door.

**Hyacinth**

Did you come here on purpose to see us?

**Milly**

I thought I'd just give it a look. I had an engagement not far off. But I wouldn't have believed anyone who said I'd find you just where I left you.

**Pinnie** (sourly)

We needed you to look after us!

**Hyacinth**

Oh, you're such a success.

**Milly**

None of your rattling impudence. I'm as good a girl as there is in London. If you were to offer to see me home, I'd tell you I don't knock about that way with gentlemen.

**Hyacinth**

I'll go with you as far as you like.

**Milly**

Well—all right—but it's only because I knew you as a baby.

**Hyacinth**

Pinnie, let's have some tea.

(Pinnie, mortified, obeys and goes out to get the tea.)

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Milly**

What a way to treat your mother. Oh—I forgot she ain't your mother. How stupid I am! I keep forgetting.

**Hyacinth**

My mother died many years ago; she was an invalid. But Pinnie has been very good to me.

**Milly**

My mother's dead, too. She died very suddenly. I daresay you remember her in the Place. But I've had no Pinnie.

**Hyacinth**

You look as if you can take care of yourself.

**Milly**

Well, I'm very healthy. What became of Mr. Vetch? We used to say that if Miss Pysnet was your mama, Mr. Vetch was your papa. We used to call him Miss Pysnet's young man.

**Hyacinth**

He's her young man still. He's our best friend. He lives by his fiddle—as he used to. In fact, he got me the place I'm now in.

**Milly**

I should have thought he would get you a place at his theatre.

**Hyacinth**

At his theatre? But, I'd be no use in the theatre. I don't play any instrument.

**Milly**

I don't mean in the orchestra, you baby. You'd look ver nice in a fancy costume. Is Miss Pysnet some relation? What gave her any rights over you?

**Hyacinth** (uneasily)

Miss Pysnet's an old friend of the family. My mother was very fond of her and she was fond of my mother. Mr. Vetch has changed his lodgings: he moved out of Seventeen three years ago. He couldn't stand the other people in the house. There was a man who played the accordion.

**Milly** (reproachfully)

He might have put you into something better than a bookbinder's.

**Hyacinth**

He wasn't obliged to put me into anything. After all, he's not even a relation of Pinnie's. And he has trouble enough supporting himself. I think he never married Pinnie—assuming he could persuade her—because he has no money.

(Pinnie returns with the teapot and servings. After placing everything on the table, she stalks out.)

**Milly**

Friendly, ain't she?

**Hyacinth**

She's very protective of me. She's always afraid I'll marry beneath me.

**Milly**

All the same, I didn't expect to find you in a bookbinder's.

**Hyacinth**

Where would you have looked to find me? Pity you couldn't have told me in advance, I'd have endeavoured to meet your expectations.

**Milly**

Do you know what they used to say in the Place? They say your father was a Lord. A real English Lord.

**Hyacinth**

Very likely. That's the kind of gossip they spread in that precious hole.

**Milly**

Well, perhaps he was.

**Hyacinth**

He might have been Prime Minister for all the good it has done me.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Milly**

Fancy, your talking as if you didn't know!

**Hyacinth** (politely, but savagely)

Finish your tea. Don't mind how I talk.

**Milly**

Well, you 'ave got a temper. I should've thought you'd be a clerk to a lawyer, or at a bank.

**Hyacinth**

Do they select them for their tempers?

**Milly**

You know what I mean. You used to be so clever. I never thought you'd follow a trade.

**Hyacinth**

I'm not clever enough to live on air.

**Milly**

You might be, really, for all the tea you drink! Why didn't you go in for some profession?

**Hyacinth** (bitterly)

How was I to go in? Who the devil was to help me?

**Milly**

Haven't you got an connection?

**Hyacinth**

Are you trying to trick me into boasting of my aristocratic connections? Sorry, I don't have any.

**Milly**

Well, I'm sorry you're only a journeyman.

**Hyacinth**

So am I! But the art of bookbinding is an exquisite art, I'll say that. Even if it doesn't pay well.

**Milly**

So Pinnie told me! Have you got some samples? I'd like to look at some.

**Hyacinth** (condescendingly)

You wouldn't know how good they are.

**Milly** (irritated)

That's just the way you used to talk to me years ago in the Place.

**Hyacinth**

I don't care about that. I hate all that time.

**Milly**

If you come to that, so do I! You always used to have your nose in a book. I never thought you'd work with your hands.

**Hyacinth**

Depend upon it, I won't do it an hour longer than I have to.

**Milly**

What will you do then?

**Hyacinth**

You'll see someday. I had to do something. I couldn't go on living off Pinnie. I took what I could get. Thank God I help her a little now.

**Milly**

You talk like a reg'lar gentleman.

**Hyacinth**

I'm not. I'm just an obscure little beggar born of a French woman to a supposed English Lord—living in a squalid little corner of London. And so, I'm a bookbinder.

**Milly**

I didn't think I could ever fancy anyone in that line.

**Hyacinth**

Allow me to see you out.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Milly**

I should be delighted. (aside) A reg'lar gentleman.

(Exit Milly and Hyacinth out the street door. After a moment, enter Mr. Vetch with Poupin, Madame Poupin, and Paul Muniment.)

**Vetch**

Pinnie was good enough to let us meet here.

(They close the shutters. Poupin coughs terribly, and is helped by his wife.)

**Vetch**

Are you all right, my dear Poupin?

**Poupin**

I'm suffering extremely, but we must all suffer so long as the social question is so abominably, iniquitously neglected.

**Madame**

Ah yes, the politicians never think of the poor. There are times when I ask myself ho long it will go on.

**Poupin** (passionately)

It will go on till the measure of their infamy is full. Till the day of justice! Till the day the disinherited shake the globe!

**Madame**

Oh, we always see things continue; we never see them change.

**Poupin**

We may not see it, but They will see it.

**Paul**

What do you mean, shake the globe?

**Poupin**

I mean that force will make the bourgeoisie go down to their cellars and hide—behind their barrels of wine and their heaps of gold.

(Hyacinth quietly reenters; he is expected and the discussion continues without interruption. Someone says "You're late.")

**Madame**

And, in this country, I hope in their coal bins. La, la, we shall find them even there.

**Poupin**

Eighty-nine was an irresistible force.

**Paul**

Yes, I know, I know you fought them. But everything is yet to be tried.

**Poupin**

Oh, the trial will be on a grand scale. Soyez tranquille.

**Madame** (indicating Hyacinth and Paul)

You ought to present these gentlemen.

**Poupin**

Monsieur Hyacinth is a gifted child—a child in whom I take a tender interest—a child who has an account to settle. Oh, a thumping big one! Isn't that so, mon petit?

**Hyacinth**

Oh, I only want them to leave me alone.

**Poupin**

He's very young.

**Madame**

He's the person we have seen in this country that we like the best.

**Paul**

Scene I. Pinnie's Millinery shop.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

Perhaps he's French.

**Hyacinth**

Oh, I'm nothing.

**Madame**

Do you mean to say you're not as good as anyone else in this world? I should like to see—!

**Paul**

We all have an account to settle, don't you know?

**Madame**

It is a shame not to take Monsieur Hyacinth in.

**Poupin**

All in good time, all in good time. Monsieur Hyacinth knows that I count on him, whether I make him an intern today or tomorrow.

**Hyacinth**

What do you mean "intern"?

**Poupin**

Do not trifle with state secrets. You are too young.

**Madame**

One is never too young to do one's bit.

**Paul**

Can you keep a secret?

**Hyacinth**

Is it a plot? A conspiracy?

**Poupin**

He asks as if he were asking for plum pudding. It's terribly serious, my child.

**Paul**

It's a group of workers to which he (indicating Poupin) and I, and a good many others belong. (Poupin scowls)  
There's no harm in telling him that.

**Madame**

I advise you not to tell it to Miz Pinnie; she's quite in the old ideas.

**Vetch**

I quite agree. Pinnie thinks we are merely having a social gathering.

**Hyacinth**

If you've got some plan, something to which one can give one's self,— I think you might tell me.

**Poupin**

It's an accident you haven't met Paul here before.

**Madame**

How could they have met, when Mr. Paul never comes? He doesn't spoil us!

**Paul** (seriously)

Well, you see, I have my little sister at home to take care of. This afternoon, luckily, a lady came to sit with her.

**Madame**

A lady—a real lady?

**Paul**

Oh yes, every inch a lady.

**Madame**

Why do you permit them to thrust themselves in on you, simply because you have the misfortune to be poor? It seems to be the custom in this country—but it wouldn't suit me, or any other person from France at all. I should like to see one of ces dames, one of the real ones, coming to sit with me.

**Paul**

Oh, you're not a cripple. You've got the use of your legs, whereas Rosy—

**Madame**

Yes, and my tongue!

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Paul**

This lady looks after several others in our tenement—and reads to my sister.

**Madame**

It would enrage me! You are too patient, you English.

**Paul**

We need patience. We shall never do anything without that.

**Poupin**

You're perfectly right about that. You cannot say it too often. It will be a tremendous job. Only the strong will prevail.

**Paul** (to Hyacinth)

Madame says we ought to know each other—

**Hyacinth**

Will you tell me all about your plot?

**Paul** (warily)

It's not a plot. I don't care much for plots. It's just taking a stand on two or three points.

**Poupin**

A stand, that's what we must make—a stand! (he begins coughing terribly)

**Madame**

Between us, we've thrown him into a fever. We'd better go.

**Paul** (to Hyacinth as the Poupins prepare to leave with Vetch)

My name is Paul Muniment.

**Hyacinth**

And what's your trade?

**Paul**

I work for a firm of wholesale chemists at Lambeth.

**Hyacinth**

And where do you live?

**Paul**

On the far side of London. The south actually.

**Hyacinth**

Are you going home now?

**Paul**

Yes, I'm going to toddle.

**Hyacinth**

And may I toddle with you?

**Paul**

If you like, but you won't learn about any plots. Still coming?

**Hyacinth**

Yes.

**Paul**

Come along. You can meet my sister,—her name's Rosy. You've never met anyone like her.

BLACKOUT

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Scene II. Rosy's bedroom.**

The room is dark.

**Paul** (from outside)

Hallo, have you gone to roost?

**Rosy**

Oh dear, no: we're sitting in the dark. Lady Aurora's so kind. She's still here.

(Lady Aurora lights a lamp. Rosy is revealed in bed.)

**Paul** (entering with Hyacinth)

Well now, that's beautiful. You'll have a party then, for I've brought someone else. We're poor, you know, but honest, and not afraid of showing up. We can manage a candle.

**Aurora**

Oh, I brought some candles; we could have a light if you wished.

**Paul**

Rosy, girl, I've brought you a visitor. This young man has walked all the way from Lisson Grove to make your acquaintance. (to Hyacinth) You mustn't mind her being in bed—she's always in bed. Just the way a slippery little trout's in the water.

**Rosy**

Dear me, if I didn't receive company because I was in bed, there wouldn't be much use, would there, Lady Aurora?

**Aurora**

Oh, mercy, no; it seems quite the natural place! And it's such a lovely bed, such a comfortable bed.

**Rosy**

Indeed it is, when your Ladyship makes it up.

**Paul** (to Lady Aurora)

You haven't been dong that again?

**Aurora**

Who would if I didn't? It only takes a minute if someone knows how.

**Paul**

I can do it well enough.

**Aurora**

Oh, I've no doubt whatever.

**Paul**

This is Mr. Hyacinth Robinson. That won't tell you much, but you'll like him; he's all right. I was introduced by the Poupins.

**Rosy**

Your name, like mine, represents a flower. Mine is Rose Muniment, and her Ladyship is Aurora Lanhish. That means the morning or the dawn; it's the most beautiful of all, don't you think? Isn't it right she should be called dawn when she brings light wherever she goes? The Poupins are the charming foreigners I've told you about. (this last to Lady Aurora)

**Aurora**

Oh, it's so pleasant knowing a few foreigners. They're often so fresh.

**Paul**

Mr. Robinson's a sort of foreigner—and he's definitely fresh. Speaks French very well.

**Aurora**

Oh, there are so many good books in French.

**Hyacinth**

Rather a torment when you have no way of getting at them.

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Aurora**

Well, I have a good deal of my own, and I should be glad to give you some.

**Hyacinth**, Well, thank you very much.

**Rosy**

Isn't that just like her ladyship—wanting to make up to people for being less lucky than herself. She'd take the shoes off her feet for anyone that might take a fancy to them.

**Aurora**

I'll stop coming to see you, if you're going to take me up like this for everything. It's the least I can do—to give what I have.

**Rosy**

Lady Aurora is ashamed of being rich. She's a tremendous socialist. Worse even than Paul.

**Hyacinth**

I wonder if she's worse than me?

**Paul**

Hullo, I didn't know you were so advanced. Have we been entertaining an angel unawares?

**Hyacinth**

You didn't know I was so advanced? Why, I thought that was the principal thing about me.

**Paul**

I thought the principal thing about you was that you knew French.

**Aurora**

I should like so very much to know—it would be interesting—how far exactly you do go?

**Hyacinth**

I think I go about as far as anybody. I think I see my way to conclusions from which even the Poupins would shrink. Poupin, at any rate—I'm not so sure about his wife.

**Aurora**

I should like so much to know her.

**Paul**

The principal conclusion Mr. Robinson sees his way to is that your father ought to have his head chopped off and carried on a pike.

**Aurora**

Ah, yes. The French Revolution.

**Hyacinth**

I don't know anything about your father.

**Rosy**

Didn't you ever hear of Lord Inglefield?

**Aurora**

He's one of the best.

**Paul**

Very likely, but he's a landlord with a park of five thousand acres all to himself, while we're bundled together in a sort of kennel.

**Rosy**

I've told you often enough that I don't go along with you at all.

**Paul**

Everything points to great changes in the country, but if once our Rosy's against them—how can we be sure?

**Rosy**

Her Ladyship may think I'm as good as her—but she can't make me believe it.

**Aurora**

I think you're much better than I—and I know very few people as good as you. Apropos of revolution—if there were to be a—disturbance—I believe the upper classes would behave quite differently. I don't think they'd all go abroad.

**Hyacinth**

Scene II. Rosy's bedroom.

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

Go abroad?

**Aurora**

I mean they'd stay and resist. They'd fight very hard.

**Rosy**

I'm sure they'd win, too.

**Aurora**

They'd struggle until they were beaten.

**Hyacinth**

And you think they'd be beaten in the end?

**Aurora**

Oh, yes. But I hope it won't come to that.

**Paul**

I infer you all talk it over amongst yourselves—to settle the line you'll take.

**Rosy**

But I detect something in her tone which I think is a great mistake. If her Ladyship thinks to be let off easily for the concession she's made in advance—she can save herself the trouble. The people won't be bit wiser. They won't know or care. So don't waste your time or good nature. When you're up so high as that you've got to stay there. The best thing you can do is hold up your head! I can promise your Ladyship I would.

**Paul**

Rosy's right, my Lady. It's no use trying to buy yourself off. You can't do enough. Eat your pudding while you have it—you may not have it long.

**Aurora**

You're the most delightful people. I wish everyone could know you. But I must really be going.

**Rosy**

Paul will see you as far as you like.

**Aurora**

Well, you may see me down stairs.

**Rosy**

You must call a cab.

**Aurora**

Oh, I don't go in cabs. I walk.

**Paul**

Well, you may go on top of a bus if you like. You can't help being superb.

**Aurora**

Superb? Oh, mercy!

**Paul** (following Lady Aurora out)

Wait for me a little.

(Exit Aurora, followed by Paul.)

**Rosy** (to Hyacinth)

She lives in Belgrave Square; she had ever so many brothers and sisters; one of her sisters is married to Lord Warmington— She's dedicated her life to the poor. And she's so natural. She's not the least it condescending.

**Hyacinth**

No, she's not. (pause) You and your brother strike me as being very curious people.

**Rosy**

Really! If you had known my father and mother—

**Hyacinth**

Were they curious, too?

**Rosy**

Rather. They came from the mines. My father was working in a pit when he was a child of ten. He never had a day's schooling in his life, but he invented a machine. My father was as black as the coal he worked. But he was

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

intelligent, my mother, too. But, what's the use of brains if you haven't got a backbone? He invented a new kind of beam fixing device—whatever that is. And he sold it for fifteen pounds. No royalties! Nothing. He used to get drunk. He fell into a gravel pit. That's the reason my brother won't touch a drop. My mother kept us decent somehow. She was terribly handsome. And it was from her we got our education. She did it somehow. Then she was taken by typhoid. Our parents had good brains to give us.

**Hyacinth**

Are you very fond of your brother?

**Rosy**

If you ever quarrel with him, you'll see whose side I shall take.

**Hyacinth**

Before that, I'll take care to make you like me.

**Rosy**

I already do. But, see how fast I'll fling you over.

**Hyacinth**

Then, why are you so opposed to his ideas?

**Rosy**

He'll get over them.

**Hyacinth**

Never! I've only known him for a day—but I can tell!

**Rosy**

Is that the way you're going to make me like you—by contradicting me so?

**Hyacinth**

You don't believe in human equality?

**Rosy**

I haven't the least objection to seeing the people improved—but I don't want to see the aristocracy lowered even an inch.

**Hyacinth**

Positively feudal. You ought to know my aunt Pinnie. She's another idolater of the aristocracy.

**Rosy**

Oh, you're making me like you very fast! And pray, who's your aunt Pinnie?

**Hyacinth**

She's a dressmaker. I'll bring her someday. Don't you want a better place to live in?

**Rosy**

A better place than this? How could there be a better place than this? If you think I'm not perfectly content, you're very much mistaken.

**Hyacinth**

Don't you sometimes make your brother very cross?

**Rosy**

Cross? Never with me.

**Hyacinth**

Isn't he deep in——

**Rosy**

Deep in what?

**Hyacinth**

Doesn't he belong to important things?

**Rosy**

You must ask him. I don't know.

(Paul reenters.)

**Rosy** (to Paul)

You must have crossed the Channel with her Ladyship. I wonder which of you enjoyed the walk most?

Scene II. Rosy's bedroom.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Paul**

She's a handy old girl, and has a goodish stride.

**Rosy**

I think she's in love with you.

**Paul**

Really, my dear, for an admirer of the aristocracy, you allow yourself a license.

**Hyacinth**

Perhaps she is—why not?

**Paul**

She's daft enough for anything.

**Hyacinth**

But, is she only playing, or is she in earnest?

**Paul** (changing the subject)

How are you two getting on?

**Rosy** (ironically)

Oh, he's made himself most agreeable.

**Hyacinth**

She won't tell me about your revolutionary clubs.

**Paul**

You mustn't ask her that sort of thing.

**Hyacinth**

What can I do if you won't tell me anything definite yourself?

**Rosy**

It will be definite enough when you get hanged for it.

**Paul**

Why do you want to poke your head into ugly black holes?

**Hyacinth**

Don't you belong to the party of action?

**Paul**

Where did you pick up that catchword? In the newspapers? Is that the party you want to belong to?

**Hyacinth**

Yes. Show me the thing.

**Paul**

What thing do you mean, infatuated, deluded youth?

**Rosy**

Well, you do go places you had far better keep out of. I wonder, sometimes, when they are going to make a search for your papers.

**Paul**

The day they find my papers, my dear, will be the day you get up and dance.

**Hyacinth**

What did you ask me to come here for?

**Paul**

To see if you'd be afraid.

**Hyacinth**

Try me.

**Rosy**

I'm sure if you introduce him to some of your low, wicked friends, he'll be delighted.

**Hyacinth**

Just the sort I want to know.

**Paul**

Meet me sometime.

Scene II. Rosy's bedroom.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Hyacinth**

Where?

**Paul**

Oh, I'll tell you when we get away from her.

BLACKOUT

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**ACT II**

**Scene I. Pinnie's shop.**

Hyacinth and Pinnie are talking.

**Pinnie**

There's only one thing I want to know. Does she expect you to marry her, dearest?

**Hyacinth**

Does who expect me?

**Pinnie**

Of course you know who I mean. The one that came after you from the other end of London—and picked you right up. Aren't there plenty of low fellows in that vulgar part where she lives—without her ravaging over here? Why can't she stick to her own beat, I should like to know? Just promise me this, my precious child—if you get into any sort of mess with that piece, you'll immediately confide it to your poor old Pinnie.

**Hyacinth**

My poor old Pinnie sometimes makes my quite sick. What sort of mess do you expect me to get into?

**Pinnie**

Suppose she pretends you promised to marry her?

**Hyacinth**

You don't know what you're talking about. She doesn't want to marry anyone.

**Pinnie** (unconvinced)

Then, what does she want?

**Hyacinth**

Oh, my protection.

**Pinnie**

Protection! Stuff. And pray, who's to protect you?

**Hyacinth**

In any event, it isn't from Milly that any harm will come to me.

**Pinnie**

I can't think why you like her.

**Hyacinth**

You're a good person and yet you're ready——

**Pinnie**

Well, what am I ready to do? I'm not ready to see you gobbled up before my eyes.

**Hyacinth**

You needn't be afraid of her dragging me to the altar.

**Pinnie**

Doesn't she think you're good enough for a 'Enning?

**Hyacinth**

You just don't understand. One of these days, she'll marry a very rich, very respectable alderman.

**Pinnie**

That creature?

**Hyacinth**

Or a banker, or a bishop. She doesn't want to end her career—she wants to begin it.

**Pinnie**

Well, I wish she'd leave you alone.

**Hyacinth**

What are you afraid of? Look, we'd better clear this up, once and for all. Are you afraid of my marrying a shop girl?

**Pinnie** (horrified)

Oh, you wouldn't, would you?

**Hyacinth**

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

The kind of girl who'd look at me is the kind of girl I'd never look at.

**Pinnie**

I'm sure a Princess might look at you, and be none the worse.

**Hyacinth**

Well, it's always nice to have your support.

**Pinnie**

You must be aware how lacking she is. Doesn't she bore you?

**Hyacinth**

She does—to extinction.

**Pinnie**

Then why do you spend every evening with her?

**Hyacinth**

What else should I do? Go to a gin palace?

**Pinnie**

Oh well, if you see her as she is, I don't care what you do, but try not to get her pregnant!  
(Hyacinth is stunned. Enter Mr. Vetch.)

**Vetch**

Hallo, Pinnie.

**Pinnie**

Oh, Mr. Vetch, please talk some sense into him. I cannot.  
(Exit Pinnie.)

**Hyacinth**

I haven't seen you in a long time.

**Vetch**

What's bothering Pinnie?

**Hyacinth**

I want to take a young lady to the theatre.

**Vetch**

I'm afraid you'll find your young lady expensive.

**Hyacinth**

I find everything expensive.

**Vetch**

Especially, I suppose, your secret societies?

**Hyacinth**

What do you mean by that?

**Vetch**

Why, you told me a while back you were about to join a few.

**Hyacinth**

A few? How many do you suppose? Do you think if I'd been serious, I'd tell?

**Vetch**

Oh dear, oh dear. (as to Milly) You want to take her to my place, I suppose?

**Hyacinth**

She won't go there. She wants to see something in the Strand. The Pear of Paraguay. I don't wish to pay anything if I can avoid it. I'm sorry to say I haven't a penny. But it occurred to me you might be able to get me a seat as a favor.

**Vetch**

Do you want a box?

**Hyacinth**

Something more modest.

Scene I. Pinnie's shop.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Vetch**

Why not a box?

**Hyacinth**

Because I haven't the clothes people wear in that sort of place.

**Vetch**

Your young lady has the clothes?

**Hyacinth**

She has everything.

**Vetch**

Where does she get 'em?

**Hyacinth**

Oh, she's a model in a high fashion shop.

**Vetch** (pulling out some tobacco)

Won't you have a pipe? What will she do with you?

**Hyacinth**

What do you mean?

**Vetch**

Your big amazon—Miss Henning. I know all about her from Pinnie.

**Hyacinth**

Then, you know my terrible fate.

**Vetch**

But it doesn't matter much.

**Hyacinth**

I don't know what you're talking about.

**Vetch**

Well now—the other thing. You're very deep into that.

**Hyacinth**

Did Pinnie tell you all about that?

**Vetch**

No, our friend Poupin had told me a good deal. Besides, I see it.

**Hyacinth**

How do you see it, pray?

**Vetch**

Anyone can tell to look at you, you've taken a blood oath to some cutthroat crew.

**Hyacinth**

You won't get me the tickets, then?

**Vetch**

My dear boy, I offer you a box.

**Hyacinth**

It has nothing to do with—

**Vetch**

Is it a more deadly secret?

**Hyacinth**

I thought you pretended to be a radical?

**Vetch**

Well—so I do—of the old fashioned constitutional sort. I'm not an exterminator.

**Hyacinth**

We don't know what we may be when the time comes.

**Vetch**

Is the time coming, then, my dear young friend?

**Hyacinth**

Scene I. Pinnie's shop.

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

I don't think I can give you any more of a warning than that.

**Vetch**

It's very kind of you to do so much, I'm sure. Meanwhile, in the little time that is left, you wish to crowd in all possible enjoyment with the young ladies—a very natural inclination. Do you see many foreigners?

**Hyacinth**

Yes. A good many.

**Vetch**

And what do you think of them?

**Hyacinth**

I rather like the English best.

**Vetch**

Paul Muniment, for example?

**Hyacinth**

What do you know about him?

**Vetch**

I see him at the Poupins. I know you and he are thick as thieves.

**Hyacinth**

He'll distinguish himself very much someday.

**Vetch**

Very likely, very likely. And what will he do with you?

**Hyacinth**

Try to get me two good places in the second balcony.

**Vetch** (uneasily)

You had better put in all the fun you can, you know.

BLACKOUT

**Scene II. The lobby of a theatre.**

There are several couples talking. Hyacinth and Milly enter, followed at a distance by Sholto.

**Milly**

Who is that man watching you?

**Hyacinth**

Watching me? You more likely.

**Milly**

Of course, he's noticed me. But you're the one he wants to get hold of.

**Hyacinth**

To get hold of?

**Milly**

Yes, you ninny, don't hang back. He may make your fortune.

**Hyacinth**

Well, if you'd like to meet him, I'll go and take a walk in the Strand.

**Milly** (after Sholto has smiled at Hyacinth) Now, do you say it's only me he's after?

**Hyacinth**

I'm only the pretext.

**Milly**

Well, if he knows us, he might give us some sign—and if he doesn't, he might leave us alone. Is he one of your grand relations? Well, I can stare as well as him. Is he one of those Lords your aunt Pinnie was talking about at the Place? No, he's too young to be your grandfather.

**Hyacinth**

I have no idea whether he was one of that lot.

**Milly**

You might at least tell me his name, so that I shall know what to call him if he comes round to speak to us.

**Hyacinth**

He won't do that.

**Milly**

He couldn't grin more if he was your own brother. He may want to make my acquaintance—after all, he wouldn't be the first.

**Hyacinth**

I don't know that I'm at liberty to disclose his name. I met him at a place he may not like to have it known he goes.

**Milly**

Do you go to places that people are ashamed of? One of your filthy political clubs, no doubt. My Lord! He is coming——

**Sholto** (coming over, beaming at Hyacinth)

My dear fellow, I really had to come round to speak to you. The trouble is I'm with a pair of ladies, and one of them has a great desire to make your acquaintance.

**Hyacinth**

To make my acquaintance?

**Milly**

Is that so?

**Sholto**

She has a tremendous desire to meet someone who looks at the whole business from your standpoint, don't you see? And in her position she scarcely has a chance. She's really the most remarkable woman in Europe.

**Milly**

That's all very well, but who's to look after me?

**Sholto**

My dear young lady, can you think I've been unmindful of that?

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Milly** (somewhat shocked)

I'm much obliged to you! Mr. Robinson, is it your intention to leave me? Who is the lady?

**Sholto**

The Princess Casamassima.

**Milly**

Laws! And what's she want with him?

**Sholto**

To discuss the lower orders.

**Milly** (infuriated)

And does she think we belong to them? (to Hyacinth) I don't care if you go. I should like to know about this Princess.

**Sholto**

Oh, I'll tell you all about her.

(Sholto escorts them off. After a slight pause, followed by a slight dimming of the lights. Hyacinth returns with the Princess Casamassima and Madame Grandoni, a very old lady of impeccable manners.)

**Princess**

I like to know all sorts of people.

**Hyacinth**

I shouldn't think you'd have any difficulty in that.

**Princess**

Everyone isn't so obliging as you.

**Grandoni**

She makes everyone do everything.

**Princess**

Her name is Madame Grandoni.

**Grandoni**

But I'm not Italian—any more than she is. She's an American, I'm actually a German. Nobody with an Italian name is Italian these days. That is a very charming person you were with.

**Princess**

Yes, she's very charming. We take a great interest in the things you care for. We take a great interest in the people.

**Grandoni**

Speak for yourself. I take none. I don't understand the people and I know nothing about them. I always respect decent people of any class, but I don't pretend any passion for the ignorant masses—because I don't have such a passion.

**Princess**

She lives with me; she's everything to me. She's the best woman in the world. But she has a disturbing habit of speaking her mind. What do you think of Captain Sholto?

**Hyacinth**

I hardly know him.

**Princess**

Isn't he a very curious type?

**Hyacinth**

Possibly. I can't make him out.

**Princess**

Neither can I. He's what they call a cosmopolitan. He told me he's had some interesting talks with you about the social question. That's why I asked him to introduce me.

**Hyacinth**

He managed to slip off with Milly very neatly.

**Princess**

Scene II. The lobby of a theatre.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

Do you ever admit women?

**Hyacinth**

I'm afraid I don't understand?

**Princess**

Into your meetings. I should like so much to be present. Why not?

**Hyacinth**

I haven't seen any ladies.— You know I'm not sure he should go about reporting our meetings.

**Princess**

I see. Perhaps you think he's a police spy or agent provocateur?

**Hyacinth**

No. Spies are more discreet. But, after all, he's heard very little.

**Princess**

You mean he hasn't really been behind the scenes? But you needn't have the least fear of Captain Sholto. He's incapable of betraying anyone. Actually, he's gone into this sort of thing merely to please me. You see, for a woman it's so difficult. So, I commissioned the Captain, ha, ha. What I wanted him to do was to make friends with the leading spirit.

**Hyacinth**

Surely, Captain Sholto doesn't take me for a leading spirit?

**Princess**

He said you were very original.

**Hyacinth** (laughing ironically)

I'm one of thousands in my class—there's nothing original about me at all. I am a mere particle in the grey immensity of the people.

**Princess**

Much more than that, I think.

**Hyacinth**

I have a friend who's remarkable.

**Princess**

Who's your friend?

**Grandoni**

Ah, Christina, Christina!

**Hyacinth**

A young man who lives in Camberwell.

**Princess**

Can you bring him to see me?

**Hyacinth**

I don't know if he would come. He might think you a little too avid for his company.

**Princess**

That makes me want to see him all the more. But you'll come yourself?

**Hyacinth**

You want me to come and see you? An unexpected honor.

**Grandoni**

Go and see her—go and see her once or twice. She'll treat you like an angel.

**Princess**

You must think I'm very strange.

**Hyacinth**

Oh, no. I know another lady who does this sort of thing.

**Princess**

I wish I could make you trust me—I see you don't. You'd find I go pretty far—

**Grandoni**

She goes too far.

Scene II. The lobby of a theatre.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Princess**

I'm not just some rich bitch amusing myself. I'm concerned—I'm convinced people of my class are living in a fool's paradise.

**Grandoni**

She wants to be part of the revolution—to guide it, to enlighten it.

**Hyacinth**

I'm sure she could manage it perfectly.

**Princess**

I've no such pretensions. Please don't laugh at me. What can be more absurd than for a woman with a title and great wealth to throw in her lot with the masses? You've a right to demand that I give all that up.

**Hyacinth**

—But—

**Princess**

That I give all that up before you believe me. Well, I'm ready! That's the least difficulty. I'm here to learn, not to teach.

**Hyacinth**

I'm not asking you to give anything up. Why give it up? It might come in handy.

**Princess**

What's your occupation?

**Hyacinth**

I'm a bookbinder.

**Princess**

And your mysterious friend?

**Hyacinth**

A chemist

**Princess** (as if seeing visions of a bomb maker)

Ah! And what do you call home?

**Hyacinth**

Lomax Place in the north of London.

**Princess**

No—I don't think I've heard of it.

**Hyacinth**

It isn't much. I live with a dressmaker.

**Princess**

Do you mean——?

**Grandoni**

Is she your wife?

**Hyacinth**

No, no. She brought me up.

**Princess**

And your family?

**Hyacinth**

I have no family.

**Princess**

None at all?

**Hyacinth** (emphatically)

None at all!

**Princess** (seeing his annoyance)

Perhaps that's best.— Do you think anything will occur soon?

**Hyacinth**

Pardon?

Scene II. The lobby of a theatre.

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Princess**

That there'll be a great crisis— That you'll make yourselves felt?

**Grandoni**

Please don't do anything for another hour or two. I want to enjoy the play.

**Princess**

You cannot answer, of course. But remember what I just said. I'll give up everything—everything.  
(Sholto returns with Milly. The conversation continues for a few minutes in mime.)

**Sholto**

My dear fellow, you were born under a lucky star.

**Hyacinth**

I never suspected it!

**Sholto**

Why, what in the world do you want? You have the faculty, the precious faculty to inspire women with an interest—but an interest! Don't be afraid, you'll go far.

(The conversation lapses back into mime. Sholto leads off the Princess and Grandoni.)

**Milly**

She's a tidy lot, your Princess, by what I can learn.

**Hyacinth**

What do you know about her?

**Milly**

What that fellow told me.

**Hyacinth**

And, what was that?

**Milly**

Well, she's a bad 'un as ever was. Her own husband had to turn her out of the house.

**Hyacinth**

I could care less about that.

**Milly**

Don't you? Well, in that case, I do!

BLACKOUT

**Scene III. A room in Paul Muniment's house.**

Paul and Hyacinth are talking.

**Hyacinth**

She wants to see you; she asked me to bring you. She was very serious.

**Paul**

To bring me—bring me where? You talk as if I were a sample from your shop or a little dog you had for sale.

**Hyacinth**

Well, you're a friend of mine. That's enough for her.

**Paul**

You mean, I suppose, that it ought to be enough for me that she's a friend of yours?

**Hyacinth**

Certainly. I vouch for her.

**Paul**

Are you sure she isn't making game of you?

**Hyacinth**

I don't think so. What good would it do her?

**Paul**

That, I don't know. But she's one of them—and they're capable of anything.

**Hyacinth**

Be realistic. They're not all evil. People can't help it because they're born rich.

**Paul**

Undoubtedly, she's an idle, perhaps a profligate female.

**Hyacinth**

If you'd seen her, you wouldn't talk that way.

**Paul**

God forbid, I should see her then, if she's so charming. I don't need to be corrupted.

**Hyacinth**

And you think I'm in danger?

**Paul** (good-naturedly)

No—you're immune. You're already such a little mass of corruption.

**Hyacinth**

Leave off fooling. There are unselfish people—

**Paul**

I'm not in the least surprised that the aristocracy is curious to know what we're up to, and wants very much to look into it.

**Hyacinth**

Are you afraid I'll blab secrets to her?

**Paul**

What secrets could you tell her, my pretty lad?

**Hyacinth** (upset)

You don't trust me—you never have.

**Paul**

We will someday. Don't be afraid. And when we do, you'll be very disappointed.— Now tell me about this fellow Sholto—I haven't actually met him, though I've seen him at one of our meetings.

**Hyacinth**

Captain Sholto isn't the same sort as the Princess. Quite different.

**Paul**

Different, of course. She's a handsome woman, and he's an ugly man. But, neither of them will save us or spoil us. Their curiosity is natural, but I've other things to do than to show them around,—or to be shown around by them.

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

You can tell her Serene Highness that I'm much obliged.

**Hyacinth**

You show Lady Aurora around—what's the difference? If it's right for her to take an interest, why isn't it right for the Princess?

**Paul**

All I know of Lady Aurora is that she comes to sit with my sister. If the Princess will do as much, I'll see what I can do. But apart from that, I shall never take a grain of interest in her feelings for the masses.

**Hyacinth**

Do you think she can hurt me?

**Paul**

Yes, very likely. But you must hit her back, and really give it to her. That's your line, you know. I'm an ugly brute, but you're one of those taking little beggars that the women like.— Only, you know, if she really hurt you, she'd have to deal with me.

**Hyacinth**

That's very kind of you to say, Paul.

**Paul**

We are friends, you know, for whatever that's worth. (going upstairs) Now, I've got to get Rosy ready before Lady Aurora comes or she'll be doing everything for her, and Rosy won't have that.

(Exit Paul. After a moment, enter Lady Aurora from the street door.)

**Aurora**

You never came to get the books!

**Hyacinth**

I didn't know we had an understanding I would.

**Aurora**

I've picked them out.

**Hyacinth**

That's awfully kind of you.

**Aurora**

Rosy will tell you where I live. She never forgets anything.

**Hyacinth**

She's a wonderful little witch. She terrifies me.

**Aurora**

Which do you think is the cleverer? Rosy or her brother?

**Hyacinth**

Oh, Paul will be Prime minister of England someday.

**Aurora** (pleased)

Do you believe that? I'm so glad.

**Hyacinth**

Why? You spend most of your time among the poor—and I'm sure you carry blessings with you— But for what? Wretched company we must be.

**Aurora**

I like it very much—you don't understand.

**Hyacinth**

Precisely. I don't understand. How can you surround yourself with squalor and disgusting company?

**Aurora**

Oh, I wish I could make you understand—

**Hyacinth**

Perhaps I do understand! Charity exists in your nature as a kind of passion.

**Aurora**

Yes, yes, it is a kind of passion. Whatever it is, it's my life. It's all I care for. When I was fifteen, I wanted to sell

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

all I had to give to the poor. And ever since—I've wanted with all my heart to do something. It seemed as if my heart would break if I couldn't!

**Hyacinth**

I suppose you're very religious?

**Aurora**

I don't know. One has one's ideas. I think a great many clergymen do good, but there are others I don't like at all. I don't like society, and I don't think you would either if you saw much of it. At least the kind there is in London. But I've got out of it. I like Camberwell better. I'm a proper lunatic, you see. Well, I must go see Rosy.

(Aurora exits to Rosy's room.)

**Hyacinth**

I'll be in presently.

(There is a knock at the street door. Hyacinth goes to it and admits Madame Grandoni.)

**Hyacinth**

Madame Grandoni! What are you doing here?

**Grandoni**

I have come to see you. I went to your milliner's and she told me you were here.

**Hyacinth**

I'm honored. But, why have you come?

**Grandoni**

My dear young man, may I take the liberty of asking your age?

**Hyacinth**

Certainly; I'm twenty-four.

**Grandoni**

And, I hope you're industrious—and—what do they call it in England— steady?

**Hyacinth**

I don't think I'm very wild.

**Grandoni**

I don't know how one speaks in this country to young men like you. You are evidently intelligent and clever—and if you're disappointed, it will be a pity.

**Hyacinth**

Why should I be disappointed?

**Grandoni**

I dare say you expected great things from the Princess— You have been to her house. A mansion— You must tell me if I upset you. I'm very old fashioned.—I speak my mind.

**Hyacinth**

But, what is on it? I'm not easily upset. I only went to see her because she was kind enough to send for me.

**Grandoni**

You're not like the young men I have in mind. All the more reason. I came to warn you a little and I don't know how. If you were an Italian it would be different.

**Hyacinth**

How so? What do you want to warn me of?

**Grandoni**

Well—only to advise you a little. Don't give up anything.

**Hyacinth** (laughing)

What do I have to give up?

**Grandoni**

Don't give up yourself. There are things better even than being liked by a Princess, even a beautiful Princess. Hold fast to them.

**Hyacinth**

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

I think I understand you.

**Grandoni**

Before you go any farther, please think a little whether you are right.

**Hyacinth**

I'm not sure—

**Grandoni**

There are many people, these days, who think it useful to throw bombs into innocent crowds, and assassinate their own rulers—

**Hyacinth**

If I were to limit myself only to those means you approve of—?

**Grandoni** (very emphatically)

I don't approve of any means! I wish you well, young man. She wants you to come again. you will, I see that.

Don't say I didn't warn you.

(Exit Madame Grandoni.)

**Hyacinth**

I—I'll remember.

(After a moment, Paul comes in.)

**Paul**

Rosy is making it pretty hot for me in there. So, I thought I'd escape.

(A knock at the street door. Paul goes and admits Poupin.)

**Poupin**

Forty thousand men are unemployed.

**Paul**

They say it's a bad year.

**Poupin**

They say that on purpose—to convey the impression that there are such things as good years. The good years are yet to come.

**Paul**

Hoffendahl's in London.

**Poupin**

Hoffendahl! That surprises me.— Are you sure?

**Paul**

Quite sure.

**Poupin**

You have seen him?

**Paul**

Yes.

**Hyacinth**

What has he done?

**Poupin**

He's spent twelve years in a Prussian prison.

**Hyacinth**

What of that?

**Paul**

A man's foremost duty is not to get collared. If you want to prove you're capable, that's the way.

**Poupin**

Someone always gets caught.

**Paul** (to Hyacinth)

Scene III. A room in Paul Muniment's house.

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

If they succeed in catching you, do as Hoffendahl has done. Suffer silently without betraying your friends. But, if they don't—make it your supreme duty—make it your religion to lie close—to keep yourself for another go.

**Poupin**

That's fearfully English.

**Paul**

No doubt, no doubt. You shall never share my fate—if I have a fate, and I can prevent your sharing it.

**Hyacinth**

What I want to know is, what's this Hoffendahl going to do for us?

**Paul**

That I don't know yet.

**Poupin**

What we need is a compact body in marching order.

**Paul**

I quite agree that the present state of things is infamous and hellish.

**Hyacinth**

I'm ready for anything.

**Paul**

Upon my life, I believe you're game. Would you like to see him—the real thing?

**Hyacinth**

The real thing?

**Paul**

A real revolutionary. You've never seen it, you only think you have.

**Hyacinth**

Why haven't you shown me before?

**Poupin**

You weren't ready.

BLACKOUT

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**ACT III**

**Scene I. A room in the mansion of the Princess Casamassima.**

The Prince, an Italian nobleman is talking to Madame Grandoni.

**Prince** (upset)

Never?

**Grandoni**

Surely, you know your wife as well as I do?

**Prince**

How can one know a woman like that? I hoped she'd see me five little minutes.

**Grandoni**

For what purpose?

**Prince**

To rest my eyes on her beautiful face.

**Grandoni**

Did you come to England for that?

**Prince**

For what else should I have come? She is killing me inch by inch.

**Grandoni**

She'd be much more likely to kill you if you were living with her.

**Prince**

She hasn't killed you.

**Grandoni**

Oh, me? I'm past killing. I'm hard as stone. Our troubles don't kill us—it's we who must kill them. I've buried not a few.

**Prince** (uninterested in her philosophy)

How does she look today?

**Grandoni**

As always. Like an angel.— I'm very sorry for you, Prince.

**Prince**

I wanted to see myself how she's living.

**Grandoni**

That's very natural.

**Prince**

I've been hearing things, lots of things.

**Grandoni**

Lots of rubbish, no doubt.

**Prince**

She spends a great deal of money.

**Grandoni**

Indeed, she does. She thinks she's a model of thrift. If there's a virtue she prides herself on, it's her economy.

**Prince**

I wonder if she knows that I spend almost nothing at all? I'd rather live on bread and water than that she should fail to make a great appearance.

**Grandoni**

Her appearance is all that you could wish.

**Prince**

Why does this dreary country please her?

**Grandoni**

It's the common people.

**Prince**

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

That's what I've been hearing. Who was that man I met before?

**Grandoni**

The Princess's bookbinder.

**Prince**

Her bookbinder? You mean one of her lovers!

**Grandoni**

Prince, how can you ever dream she'll live with you again?

**Prince**

Why does she have him in her drawing room? Where were his books? His bindings?

**Grandoni**

I told you—she's making a study of the people. The young man you saw is a study—or part of it.

**Prince**

The more I know, the less I understand. Is it your idea that she's quite crazy? I don't care if she is.

**Grandoni**

We are all quite crazy, I think. But the Princess no more than the rest of us. She must try everything. At present she's trying democracy.

**Prince**

And what do people say?

**Grandoni**

Oh, a lady can do anything in this country.

**Prince**

There are things it's better to conceal.

**Grandoni**

I may as well give you the key to your wife's conduct: she's ashamed of having married you.

**Prince**

Ashamed! Ashamed to be a Princess of the House of Casamassima?

**Grandoni**

She considers that as the darkest hour of her life, she sold herself to you for a title and a fortune. No matter that she wanted it at the time. She will spend the rest of her life doing penance for that sin.

**Prince**

I know she pretends to have been forced.— Well, if not the bookbinder, what about this English Captain?

**Grandoni**

This English Captain?

**Prince**

Godfred Gerald Sholto.

**Grandoni**

He's the last one you need worry about. He doesn't count the least bit.

**Prince** (dumbfounded)

Why doesn't he count?

**Grandoni**

Some people don't, you know. He knows better than to even think he does.

**Grandoni**

Why not, when she receives him always—lets him go wherever she goes?

**Grandoni**

He's a convenience—he works without wages.

**Prince**

Isn't he in love with her?

**Grandoni**

Of course. But he has no more hope than you do.

**Prince**

Ah, poor fellow.

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Grandoni**

He accepts the situation better than you do.

**Prince**

Because he is allowed to see her.

**Grandoni**

But she takes no notice of him.

**Prince**

I will go. But tell her I may come back.

**Grandoni**

It's utterly useless.

(The Prince bows to her very courteously and goes out. Grandoni walks around uneasily, then sinks into a chair. Enter Hyacinth with some books.)

**Hyacinth**

I'm afraid the books are very dusty.

**Grandoni**

The Princess will probably see you in a few hours.

**Hyacinth**

I really hope so.

**Grandoni**

People sometimes come and leave without seeing her. It all depends on her mood.

**Hyacinth**

Even after she has sent for them?

**Grandoni**

Who can tell whether she has sent for them or not?

**Hyacinth**

But, she sent for me.

**Grandoni**

Oh yes, she sent for you, poor young man. Sholto has come like that more than once, and gone away no better off.

**Hyacinth**

Captain Sholto?

**Grandoni**

She is a capriciosa.

**Hyacinth**

I don't understand the way you speak of her. You seem her friend, yet you say things that are not very favorable to her.

**Grandoni**

I say much worse to her than I ever permit myself to say to you. I'm rude, but I'm not treacherous. At any rate, you are here.

**Hyacinth**

Decidedly, I am here.

**Grandoni**

And, how long shall you stay? Pardon me if I ask. That's part of my rudeness.

**Hyacinth**

Till tomorrow morning. I must be at my work by noon.

**Grandoni**

That will do very well. You remember I told you to remain faithful?

**Hyacinth**

That was very good advice. But, I think you exaggerate my danger.

**Grandoni**

Impossible, I think. You're one of those types that ladies like. I can be sure of that, I like you myself. At my age, a

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

hundred and twenty!— Be happy, make yourself comfortable; but go home tomorrow! Perhaps I shall go tomorrow.

**Hyacinth**

I have to work. That's reason enough for me.

**Grandoni**

Do you admire everything here? Does it give you pleasure?

**Hyacinth**

So much! I cannot tell you how much!

**Grandoni**

Poor boy.

(Enter the Princess.)

**Princess** (addressing herself immediately to Hyacinth)

Is it true that you've never seen a park or any of the beauties of nature?

**Hyacinth**

Perfectly true.

**Princess**

I'm so glad, I'm so glad. I've never been able to show anything new to anyone, especially to a fine, sensitive mind.— This place is tumbling to pieces. I don't want you to think I'm sunk in luxury and throw money away. Never! Never!

**Hyacinth**

You live according to your means. I would live like this if I could.

**Princess**

Would you? But, you must learn for yourself what it really is before we blow it up. You and I are the barbarians, you know.

**Hyacinth**

You certainly don't look that part.

**Princess**

Oh, I am whether I look it or not.

**Hyacinth**

The aristocracy isn't all that bad.

**Princess**

If we believe in the coming democracy—why not try to put its spirit in our lives? I try to do it in my relations with you—but you hang ridiculously back. You're really not a bit democratic.

**Hyacinth**

I've been cautioned against you.

**Princess**

I can very easily understand that.— I've given no proofs as yet. Who was it that warned you against me?

**Hyacinth**

A friend of mine in London—Paul Muniment.

**Princess**

Paul Muniment?

**Hyacinth**

I mentioned him to you the first time we met. He's awfully wise.

**Princess**

What does he know about me?

**Hyacinth**

Nothing except what I've told him.

**Princess**

Well, you mustn't have given me a very good character.— I like his name, perhaps I should like him.

**Hyacinth**

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

You'd like him much better than you do me.

**Princess**

How do you know how much I like you or how little?— Never mind that, I like you a good deal. Now tell me what's going on among your friends. Is anything going to be done?— You think I'm a police spy, don't you?

**Hyacinth**

The idea never occurred to me.

**Princess**

It should—if you're going to be a conspirator.

**Hyacinth**

If you were in with the police, you wouldn't waste your time with me.

**Princess**

It would be my first care to make you think that. So much the better if you've no troublesome suspicions.

**Hyacinth**

There isn't much to tell. I've taken an oath to sacrifice myself, that's all.

**Princess**

To what?

**Hyacinth**

To whatever is asked. I gave my life away.

**Princess**

Be so good as to explain what you're talking about?

**Hyacinth**

I really do trust you, but I'll give you no names. There's no special reason to go into details. They wanted an obliging man— Well, the place was vacant, and I offered my services.

**Princess** (abstractedly)

I suppose you're right, we must pay for all we do. (after a moment) I think I know the person into whose power you've placed yourself.

**Hyacinth**

Possibly, but I doubt it.

**Princess**

You don't think I've gone that far? Why not?

**Hyacinth**

If you've gone that far, you've gone very far indeed.

**Princess**

Does he, by any chance, want an obliging young woman?

**Hyacinth**

I don't think he cares much for women.

**Princess** (lightly)

You've very nearly betrayed him to me. Have a care.

**Hyacinth**

I've seen the holy of holies. People go about thinking everything's fine and all's well with the world. But, there's an immense underground. The upper classes know nothing about it. A vast trap is being prepared.

**Princess**

And so you've put your head in a noose. (pause) YOUR MAN'S DIEDRICH HOFFENDAHL!

**Hyacinth**

—Well, you really have gone further than I thought.

**Princess**

So! You've taken a vow of blind obedience.

**Hyacinth**

Yes.

**Princess**

To kill if necessary?

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Hyacinth**

Yes.

**Princess**

It's very serious, isn't it? Very serious, indeed.

**Hyacinth**

The serious part is yet to come. For now, I simply wait.

**Princess**

Perhaps nothing will happen.

**Hyacinth**

That would be very disappointing. But I have decided to live each day, each hour—as if it might be my last.

**Princess**

There will probably be a great many good days left.

**Hyacinth**

The more the better. Only, I no longer care for the things you care for.

**Princess**

What are you talking about? We both believe in the same thing.

**Hyacinth**

Do we? From the moment I pledged my life to the people, I ceased to give a damn about them!

**Princess**

You not longer care for the revolution?

**Hyacinth**

Not a damn!

**Princess**

You're very remarkable. You're splendid.

**Hyacinth**

I'd like to be.

**Princess**

Yes—I see that. You want to be one of them. Fancy the strange, the bitter fate: to be a perfect gentleman in gesture and feeling, and yet to look at the good things of life only through the glass of a pastry cook's window.

**Hyacinth**

Every class has its humble pleasures.

**Princess**

So your act is purely disinterested?

**Hyacinth**

I think it is correct to describe it that way.

**Princess**

That's wonderful, really. Only no one will believe it, you know.

**Hyacinth**

That doesn't matter to me. I'm glad YOU know. You're the only one I've spoken to.

**Princess**

I'm flattered. You must trust me a good deal.

**Hyacinth**

I told you I do.

**Princess** (suddenly)

I am going to introduce you to Lady Marchmont! Will you let me?

**Hyacinth**

Yes, of course, but—

**Princess**

Then come along. She's going to be here now.

**Hyacinth**

But, who is—

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Princess**

You'll see.

(Exit Princess and Hyacinth. After a moment Grandoni stirs in her chair where she has been dozing. Sholto enters.)

**Grandoni**

I'm glad to see you! What good wind has brought you here?

**Sholto**

Didn't you know I was coming?

**Grandoni**

I know nothing of the affairs of this house. I've given them up at last. I remain in my room, mostly. From the moment you come in it's a little better. But, it's very bad.

**Sholto**

What's bad?

**Grandoni**

Perhaps you'll be able to tell me where Christina is heading? I've always been faithful to her. I've always been loyal. But today, I've lost my patience.

**Sholto**

I'm not sure what you're talking about, but if I understand you—I think it's magnificent.

**Grandoni**

You're worse than she is: you delight in all her antics because you're cynical. It passes all bounds. The scandal's too great.

**Sholto**

Dear Madame Grandoni, you cannot make it worse and you cannot make it better. Actually, no scandal can possibly attach itself to our friend.

**Grandoni**

What do you mean, when a lady has a bookbinder come live with her?

**Sholto**

It all depends who the lady is, and what she is.

**Grandoni**

She had better take care of one thing first—that she shall not have been separated from her husband—with a hundred stories!

**Sholto**

The Princess can carry off even that.

**Grandoni**

Who's to know he's her bookbinder? It's the last thing you'd take him for.

**Sholto**

She has chosen him carefully.

**Grandoni**

Carefully!

**Sholto**

It was I who chose him, dear lady.

**Grandoni**

It was a fine turn you did him, poor young man.

**Sholto**

Certainly, he'll be sacrificed. But haven't I been sacrificed?

**Grandoni**

I hope he bears it as well as you! It's too bad to spoil him for his station in life. How can he ever go back?

**Sholto**

Too bad! He's an abominable little conspirator with I don't know what bloody ideas. He gets what he deserves.

**Grandoni**

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

And, what does Christina deserve?

**Sholto**

Oh, lots of punishment. But it won't be the loss of reputation. She's too distinguished.

**Grandoni**

Why not?

**Sholto**

Because she has no regard for public opinion. Because she can do without it, it will never be taken from her.

**Grandoni**

At least you make another person in the house. So long as you are here, I won't go off.

**Sholto**

Depend upon it, I shall hang on tight, till I am turned off.

**Grandoni**

How can you stand it?

**Sholto**

I want to watch what becomes of the little beggar.

**Grandoni**

He's much too good for his fate. You're horrible.

**Sholto**

And pray, wasn't I too good for mine?

**Grandoni** (dryly)

By no means!

(Hyacinth enters and Grandoni retires to her chair.)

**Sholto**

Good morning, my dear fellow, I thought I should find you here.

**Hyacinth**

Who told you I was here?

**Sholto**

Why, I knew the Princess was capable of asking you, so—when I learned you were out of town, I concluded you must be here.

**Hyacinth**

I see. You're sure Millicent didn't tell you?

**Sholto**

Have you still got your back up a little?

**Hyacinth**

Not at all.

**Sholto**

You have no reason at all to be jealous.

**Hyacinth**

No.

**Sholto**

Just because you met her in the street after you met me in the same neighborhood is no reason to think she was coming to meet me.

**Hyacinth**

I agree perfectly.

(Pause.)

**Sholto**

How are you coming on? With the Princess, I mean.

**Hyacinth**

Very well, thank you.

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Sholto**

You understand my interest in you: I'm your sponsor. I put you forward.

**Hyacinth**

There are a great many things in the world I don't understand—but the thing I understand least is your interest in me. If I were you, I wouldn't give a damn for the sort of person I happen to be!

**Sholto**

That proves how different my nature is from yours! But, I don't believe it, my dear boy, you're too generous for that.— It's very grand, her having brought you down here. I wanted to see it with my own eyes.

**Hyacinth**

Hardly surprising, considering I was put forward by you.

**Sholto**

It doesn't make any difference to her. It never signifies a lot to her what I may think. Look here, one good turn deserves another—get her to—put me forward, will you?

**Hyacinth**

I don't understand you. Surely you don't mean with Millicent?

**Sholto** (laughing amiably)

It isn't possible you're jealous? I don't mean Miss Henning.— The courage of it, the insolence of it, there isn't another woman in England who could carry it off.

**Hyacinth**

That's nothing. Just now she introduced me to Lady Marchmont.

**Sholto**

God, did she dare do that? I'd have given ten pounds just to see it. There's no one like her. Did you enjoy meeting the wife of our noble prime minister?

**Hyacinth**

Too much. Such excesses are dangerous. Well, I shall ask the Princess to keep you.

**Sholto**

Lucky little beggar, with your fireside talks! Where does she sit now in the evening? Never mind! I told you she's the cleverest woman in Europe. But there are some mysteries you can't see into unless you have a heart. Our Princess isn't troubled by that sort of thing. My only motive is to watch her, adore her, to see her lead her life, and act out her extraordinary nature. The rest's mere gabble.

**Hyacinth**

You don't care for the social question, then?

**Sholto**

I only took it up because she did. My dear Robinson, for me there's only one thing in life: to look at that woman when I can. Get her to keep me here.

**Hyacinth**

I'll use what influence I have, but—

**Sholto**

It would be an act of common humanity.

**Hyacinth**

You took up the social question because she did? But why did she take it up?

**Sholto**

You'll have to worm that out of her yourself.

**Hyacinth**

Do you mean the way she treats you proves she has no heart? What you said just now—

**Sholto**

I mean the way she treats you!

**Hyacinth**

You think I'm heading for a fall?

**Sholto**

Don't say I didn't warn you. The day I saw she was turning her attention to the rising democracy, I began to

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

collect little democrats. That's how I collected you.

BLACKOUT

**Scene II. The same, a few days later.**

Mr. Vetch has come to see Hyacinth on a matter of business.

**Vetch**

Dear Mr. Robinson, I'm so sorry for you. I wanted to write, but I promised Pinnie I wouldn't. It wouldn't have killed her if she had been like you or me. The doctor says she was impoverished—so weak and low she had nothing to go on.

**Hyacinth**

I don't know what to say to you. I can never blame you when you're so kind, but I wish to God I had known. Don't you think you might have written me a word?

**Vetch**

No responsibility in my life has ever distressed me more. There were obvious reasons for calling you back, but Pinnie insisted that you must finish your visit. It was very difficult.

**Hyacinth**

I can imagine nothing more simple. When your nearest and dearest are dying, you're usually sent for.

**Vetch**

My dear boy, this case was exceptional. Your visit to the Princess Casamassima had an aura of importance.

**Hyacinth**

It's not important at all.

**Vetch**

Pinnie made a tremendous point of your not being disturbed. If she had been dying in a corner like a starved cat, she would have faced her fate alone, rather than cut short your visit by a single hour.

**Hyacinth**

She spun her ideas—she always did,—out of nothing.

**Vetch**

She had made up her mind that you had formed a connection by means of which someday, by some means, you will eventually come into your own. — We had to leave her that idea.

**Hyacinth**

Yes, of course. I'm glad I furnished Pinnie such entertaining ideas.

**Vetch**

Is she really a Princess?

**Hyacinth** (absently)

What? Yes, of course.

**Vetch**

If I can help you in any way, you must lean on me.

**Hyacinth**

That's just what I was going to say to you.

**Vetch**

Have you been making love to this Princess?

**Hyacinth**

It's not that way.

**Vetch**

Has she been making love to you then?

**Hyacinth**

If you saw her, you wouldn't think that—

**Vetch**

How shall I ever see her?

**Hyacinth**

It's not impossible. If you like, I shall introduce you now. (Vetch shakes his head sadly) She wants to meet all my friends in the Place. She'd be very interested in you because of your opinions.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Vetch**

Ah, I've no opinions now. I only had them to frighten Pinnie.

**Hyacinth** (wryly)

She was easily frightened.

**Vetch**

And easily reassured. But, take care this great lady doesn't lead you too far.

**Hyacinth**

How do you mean?

**Vetch**

Isn't she a conspirator? A dabbler in plots and treasons?

**Hyacinth**

You should see this place. You should see what she wears—

**Vetch**

You mean she's inconsistent? My dear boy, she'd be a strange woman if she wasn't. Pinnie left you some money. She had insurance, would you believe it? Twenty pounds.

**Hyacinth**

Well, for me that's a small fortune. Too bad she didn't have the use of it.

**Vetch**

She had hoped you'd go abroad and see the world. She had a particular wish you'd go to Paris.

**Hyacinth**

Ah, Paris!

**Vetch**

She would have liked you to take a little run down to Italy.

**Hyacinth**

Doubtless that would be very jolly. But there's a limit to what twenty pounds can buy.

**Vetch**

I propose to add my savings.

**Hyacinth**

That's very kind, but you're getting along and may need it.

**Vetch**

My dear boy, I shall look to you to be the support of my old age.

**Hyacinth**

You may do so with perfect confidence, so far as it lies within my power. But there is the danger you mentioned earlier. The trifling problem of my being imprisoned or hanged.

**Vetch**

It's precisely because I think the danger will be less if you go abroad, that I urge you most passionately to take the chance.

**Hyacinth**

It is certainly a temptation. Something I should very much like to do.

**Vetch**

I believe it was Pinnie's dearest wish. Do it for her.

**Hyacinth**

I will give it careful consideration. But I have obligations—

**Vetch**

I am sure, I am sure.

(Hyacinth and Vetch embrace, and Hyacinth exits. Vetch shakes his head sadly and is about to leave when Madame Grandoni appears.)

**Grandoni**

Mr. Vetch! Please do not go away, the Princess Casamassima has learned you are here and wishes to speak to you. She had received your note.

Scene II. The same, a few days later.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

(Exit Grandoni and enter Princess.)

**Princess**

I know who you are, I know who you are.

**Vetch**

I wonder if you also know what I would like to speak to you about?

**Princess**

No, but it doesn't matter, I am very glad. You must know how much interest I take in your nephew.

**Vetch**

It's for his sake I ventured—

**Princess**

I hope you won't ask me to give him up?

**Vetch**

On the contrary, on the contrary—

**Princess**

Surely he doesn't think I shall cease to be his friend?

**Vetch** (very excited)

I don't know what he thinks, I don't know what he hopes. Properly speaking, it's no business of mine. I'm not really a blood relation. I thank you for your great kindness to him.

**Princess** (considering)

All the same, I don't think you like it.

**Vetch**

He has told me very little about you. He doesn't know I have taken this step.

**Princess**

Step? That's what people say when they're doing something disagreeable.

**Vetch**

I seldom call on ladies. Now that I see you, now that I hear you, I begin to understand. Is there any chance that Hyacinth will return while I am here?

**Princess**

I have given Madame Grandoni instructions to occupy him until you are safely away.

**Vetch**

Please don't tell him we have met.

**Princess**

I won't, but he'll guess it. He's incredibly intuitive.

**Vetch**

How well you know him.

**Princess**

I'm extremely curious as to what you have to say to me. I remember about you now. You were a great democrat in the old days, but of late, you've ceased to care about the people.

**Vetch**

I see you think I'm a renegade. (excitedly) What I want is this—that you'll—that you'll—

**Princess**

That I will——?

**Vetch**

Princess, I'd give my own life for that boy— You've taken possession of his life.

**Princess**

Yes. But as I understand you, you don't complain of it! I know the terrible story of his mother.

**Vetch**

It was my fault he ever heard of it. I thought it would do him good. I don't know what was in my head. I wanted him to quarrel with society. Now I want him reconciled to it.

**Princess**

Scene II. The same, a few days later.

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

Ah, but he is! He's a perfect little aristocrat.

**Vetch**

Those are not the opinions he expresses to me. He said only the other day that he would regard himself as the most contemptible of human beings if he did nothing.

**Princess**

I assure you the misery of the people is by no means always on his mind. He thinks civilization will be sacrificed utterly if the ignorant masses get the upper hand.

**Vetch**

He needn't be afraid. That will never happen.

**Princess**

We can at least try.

**Vetch** (passionately)

Try what you like, Madame, but for God's sake, get the boy out of this! The world's very sad and hideous, and I am happy to say that I shall soon have done with it. But before I go, I want to save the child! If he doesn't believe in it, what's he in it for, Madame? What devilish folly has he undertaken?

**Princess** (after a pause)

He's a strange mixture of contradictory impulses. How can I go into his affairs with you? How can I tell you his secrets. I don't know them, and if I did—well, fancy me!

**Vetch**

Why do you take such a line? Why do you believe such things?

**Princess**

My dear sir, how do you know what I believe? You think me affected, but I'm only trying to be natural. And you? Are you not yourself a little contradictory? You don't want our young friend to pry into the misery of the people—because it excites his sense of justice—

**Vetch**

I don't care a fig for his sense of justice—or the misery of the people. I only want to help him, to get him free.

**Princess**

Don't misrepresent him. He's one of the most civilized men in the world.

**Vetch**

I don't understand you. If you like him because he's one of the lower orders, how can you like him because he's a civilized little aristocrat?

**Princess**

Dear Mr. Vetch, I'm not bound to explain myself to you. Nothing is more annoying than to have one's sincerity questioned. Let us say, he has his charms.— Come, pull yourself together. We both take an interest in him, and I can't see why we should quarrel about him.

**Vetch**

God knows, I don't want to quarrel. I only want to get Hyacinth free.

**Princess**

Free from what?

**Vetch**

From some abominable secret brotherhood, some league of assassins that he belongs to—the thought of which keeps me awake at night. He's just the sort of impressionable youngster to be made a catspaw.

**Princess**

What grounds have you for believing this?

**Vetch** (a little more calmly)

Well, a great many; none of them very definite. His appearance, his manner— Dear lady, one feels those things, one guesses. I've appealed to the Poupins, and they assure me that he's as dear to them as their own child. That doesn't comfort me much for the simple reason that the old woman would be delighted to see her own son a martyr of the revolution. It may all be rubbish—but it's dangerous rubbish.

**Princess**

Don't speak to me of the French; I've never cared for them.

Scene II. The same, a few days later.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Vetch**

That's awkward if you're a social revolutionary. You're likely to meet them.

**Princess**

Why do you call me a socialist? I hate cheap labels. What is it you suspect—for you must suspect something?

**Vetch**

Well, that he may have drawn some accursed lot to do some idiotic thing—something in which he doesn't believe.

**Princess**

If he doesn't believe in it, he can easily let it alone.

**Vetch**

Do you think he's a type to back out of his word?

**Princess**

One can never judge people in that way until they're tested. Haven't you ever taken the trouble to ask him?

**Vetch**

What would be the use? He'd tell me nothing.

**Princess**

I still don't see exactly how I am to help you.

**Vetch**

Do you want him to commit some atrocity?

**Princess**

Certainly not. Trust me and trust him, too. He's a gentleman and will behave as a gentleman.

**Vetch**

That's exactly what I'm afraid of.

**Princess**

Leave him to me—

**Vetch**

I've supposed for a long time that it was you or his chemist friend who got him into this scrape. It was you I suspected most—but if it isn't you, then—

**Princess**

I begin to lose patience with you! You had better go to him then!

**Vetch**

Of course, I'll go to him. I scarcely know him, but I'll speak my mind.

**Princess**

Better not! Leave him quiet. Leave him to me.

**Vetch**

Why not, why not? Doesn't he know?

**Princess**

No, he doesn't know; he has nothing to do with it. You'll spoil everything. Leave Paul Muniment to me. Leave him to me.

**Vetch** (going)

I beg you, I beg you.

**Princess**

Rest assured, I will not let our friend come to any harm if I can help it.

**Vetch**

Thank you,—thank you very much. (bowing, he goes out)

(The Princess stands lost in thought for a few moments. Grandoni comes in.)

**Grandoni**

Mr. Muniment.

(Exit Grandoni. Enter Paul.)

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Princess**

So, you've come! I didn't have to repeat my invitation.

**Paul**

It wouldn't have done you any good if you had.

**Princess**

My silence wasn't accidental.

**Paul**

I've only come now because my sister has hammered it at me that I ought to. I've been under the lash! If she had left me alone, I shouldn't have come.

**Princess**

You practice a racy sort of frankness. I'm not used to failing when it comes to men.

**Paul**

Naturally, the awkward things I say amuse you.

**Princess**

Not at all! You simply are different—although I expected you to be like this. I know you a good deal already.

**Paul**

From Robinson, I suppose.

**Princess**

More particularly from Lady Aurora.

**Paul**

Oh, she doesn't know much about me.

**Princess**

More than you think I fancy. She likes you.

**Paul**

Yes, she likes me.

**Princess**

And, I hope you like her.

**Paul**

Aye, she's a dear old girl.

**Princess**

I don't know that there's anyone I envy so much. She's got out of herself better than anyone I've ever known. She's submerged herself in the passion of helping others. That's why I envy her.

**Paul** (dryly)

It's an amusement like any other.

**Princess**

Don't belittle her. She has made a great many people less wretched!

**Paul**

How many, eh?

**Princess**

Well, one who's very near and dear to you.

**Paul**

Rosy makes Lady Aurora considerably less wretched!

**Princess**

Very likely, of course, as she does me.

**Paul**

What are you wretched about?

**Princess**

Why nothing at all, and everything! Still, I've been able to do some good.

**Paul**

For the poor, you mean?

**Princess**

Scene II. The same, a few days later.

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

Not yet. It's the convictions I've come to.

**Paul**

Convictions are a sort of innocent pleasure.

**Princess**

Having convictions is nothing. It's acting on them.

**Paul**

Doubtless.

**Princess**

It's far better, of course, when one's a man.

**Paul**

Women do pretty well what they like. My sister and you have managed between you to bring me to this.

**Princess**

More your sister than I. But why are you so reluctant to come?

**Paul**

Because I don't know what to make of you.

**Princess**

Most people don't. But why not come see for yourself?

**Paul**

And, being a prudent man, I hesitate to venture—

**Princess**

You consider very carefully what you attempt?

**Paul**

That I do—I do.

**Princess**

To do anything in association with you would be very safe—it would be sure to succeed.

**Paul**

That's what Robinson thinks. Poor fellow.

**Princess**

I care for him very much.

**Paul**

He's a sweet little lad, and putting Lady Aurora aside, he's quite the light of our little home.

**Princess**

Wouldn't someone else do his work quite as well?

**Paul**

I'm told he's a master hand.

**Princess**

I don't mean his bookbinding.

**Paul**

Ah, that work.

**Princess**

Let me do it. I want to do something for the cause you represent. Try me, try me. I'm not trifling. No, I'm not trifling.

**Paul**

I was afraid you'd be like this.

**Princess**

Like what?

**Paul**

Very persuasive. Very convincing. I've always had a fear of clever women.

**Princess**

You're the sort of man who ought to know how to use them.

**Paul**

Scene II. The same, a few days later.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

I ought to—you're right.

**Princess**

I should like to do it in his place—that's what I should like.

**Paul**

You've got a lovely home.

**Princess**

Lovely? My dear, it's hideous.

**Paul**

Well, I like it.

**Princess**

You should have seen me before.

**Paul**

I wish I had. I like solid wealth.

**Princess**

You're as bad as Hyacinth. I'm the only consistent one.

**Paul**

I'd give my nose for such a place as this. You're not reduced to poverty.

**Princess**

I've a little left.

**Paul**

I'd lay a wager you've a great deal.

**Princess**

I could get money—I could get money.

**Paul** (going)

I don't trust women—I don't trust clever women.

**Princess**

Will you come back?

**Paul**

Yes, I'll come back.

(Exit Paul. After a moment, enter Grandoni.)

**Grandoni**

And, who may that be? Isn't that a new face?

**Princess**

He's a brother of the little person I took you to see— The chattering cripple with the wonderful manners.

**Grandoni**

Ah, she had a brother! So that was why you went.

**Princess**

There could have been no question of our seeing him. He was at his work.

**Grandoni**

And, is he to be the successor?

**Princess**

The successor?

**Grandoni**

To the little bookbinder?

**Princess**

What an absurd question!

(The Princess goes out angrily. Grandoni sinks into a chair and begins to knit. The Prince enters.)

**Prince**

What a black little hole it is. My wife should live here.

Scene II. The same, a few days later.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Grandoni**

My dear friend, for all she's your wife—

**Prince**

It's true—it's true! She has lovers! I've seen it with my own eyes and I've come here to know!

**Grandoni**

Coming here won't help you much. If you're seen, you know for yourself.

**Prince**

You're afraid! You're afraid!

**Grandoni**

Sit down and be quiet, very quiet. I've ceased to pay attention.

**Prince**

Do you know she's gone to a house in a horrible quarter?

**Grandoni**

I think it highly probably, dear Prince.

**Prince**

And who is he? What does she want there? That's what I want to discover.

**Grandoni**

I haven't seen him—how can I tell you?

**Prince**

Is that kind to me—when I've counted on you?

**Grandoni**

I'm not kind any more, I'm angry.

**Prince**

Then, why don't you watch her, eh?

**Grandoni**

It's not her I'm angry with, it's myself.

**Prince** (puzzled)

For what?

**Grandoni**

For staying in this house.

**Prince**

What a house for a Princess! She might at least live in a manner befitting her.

**Grandoni**

The last time you thought it too expensive.

**Prince**

Is it because things are so bad you must go? He was in the house for over an hour. I saw him come. I saw him go.

Who is he? This new one?

**Grandoni**

Was it for this you came to London? You had better go back to Rome.

**Prince**

Of course, I'll go back. But only if you tell me who this one is! How can you be so ignorant, dear friend, when he comes freely in and out of this place?

**Grandoni**

I sit in my room almost always now. I only come down to eat.

**Prince**

Better if you sat here. You could at least answer my questions.

**Grandoni**

I haven't the least desire to answer them. You must remember that I'm not here as your spy.— He's a chemist's assistant.

**Prince**

A chemist's assistant. And the other one is a bookbinder.

Scene II. The same, a few days later.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Grandoni**

Oh, him.— You must wait till I'm free.

**Prince**

Free?

**Grandoni**

I must choose. I must hold my tongue if I stay. If I go away, I can tell you what I've seen—and plenty there is I've seen—more than I ever expected to.

**Prince**

Dearest friend, tell me this. Where does she go? For the love of God, what is that house?

**Grandoni**

I know nothing of their houses.

**Prince**

Then, there are others? There are many?

**Grandoni**

There's a conspiracy.

**Prince**

You mean she's joined a secret society? Anarchists? But, perhaps, they only pretend?

**Grandoni**

Pretend? That's not Christina's way! She has gone to those houses to break up society. She's very much entangled. She has relations with people who are watched by the police.

**Prince**

And, is she watched by the police?

**Grandoni**

It's very possible.

**Prince**

Will she bring us to that scandal?

**Grandoni**

There's a chance she may get tired of it. Only the scandal may come before that.

**Prince**

She shall not break up society!

**Grandoni**

No, she'll bore herself to death before the coup is ripe. Give her time—give her time.

**Prince**

Give her time to muddy my name—

**Grandoni**

You can say nothing that I haven't said to her.

**Prince**

And how does she defend herself?

**Grandoni**

Defend herself? Did Christina ever do that! The only thing she says to me is: Don't be afraid. I promise you, by all that's sacred, you personally shan't suffer.— She speaks as if she had the power. That's all very well. No doubt I'm a selfish old pig, but after all one has a heart for others, too—

**Prince**

And so have I. Give her time—it's certain she'll take it whether I give it or no. But I can, at least, stop giving her money.

**Grandoni**

She says you don't give her much.

**Prince**

It's enough to make all these scoundrels flock around her.

**Grandoni**

They're not scoundrels. That's the tiresome part of it.

Scene II. The same, a few days later.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Prince**

Does this chemist take her money?

**Grandoni**

Perhaps—

**Prince**

Gigolo of revolution! And the famous Captain Sholto?

**Grandoni**

I haven't seen him for some time.

**Prince**

He doesn't like chemists and bookbinders?

**Grandoni**

It was he who first brought the bookbinder here—to please your wife.

**Prince**

And they've turned him out. Now, if only someone could turn them out.

**Grandoni**

Very true.

**Prince**

And the bookbinder. Is he still proposed for our admiration, or has he paid the penalties of his crimes?

**Grandoni**

His star is on the wane.

**Prince**

Poor fellow! Is the chemist his successor?

**Grandoni**

In some manner, I think so—

(Enter Hyacinth.)

**Hyacinth**

Excuse me, I wasn't aware you had company.

**Grandoni**

My visitor's going—but, I'm going, too. I'm all upset, therefore, kindly excuse me.

**Prince**

One moment, one moment. Please introduce me to the gentleman.

**Grandoni** (indicating the Prince to Hyacinth)

Prince Casamassima. He knows who you are.— If you talk long, she may come back.

(Exit Grandoni.)

**Prince**

Will you permit me to keep you one little minute? With Madame Grandoni I spoke of you. She told me you've changed your opinions. You desire no more the assassination of the rich?

**Hyacinth**

I've never desired any such thing!

**Prince**

Ah, no doubt I was mistaken. But today, you think we must have patience? That's also my view.

**Hyacinth**

Oh yes, we must have patience.

**Prince**

If I'm not mistaken, you know very well the Princess.

**Hyacinth**

She's been very kind to me.

**Prince**

She's my wife—perhaps you know—

Scene II. The same, a few days later.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Hyacinth**

Yes.

**Prince**

Of course, you think it strange, my conversation. I want you—I want you to tell me something. To what house has she gone? Will you tell me that? She has gone to a house where they conspire—where they prepare horrible acts. Does she go only for the revolution—or does she go to be alone with him?

**Hyacinth**

With him?

**Prince**

With this chemist friend of yours?

**Hyacinth**

With him? I know nothing of the matter. (hastily) And, I don't care.

**Prince**

Then it's not true that you hate those abominations?

**Hyacinth**

Oh yes, I hate those abominations.

**Prince**

I hoped you would help me.

**Hyacinth**

When we're in trouble, we can't help each other much.

BLACKOUT

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**ACT IV**

**Scene I. Rosy's bedroom.**

The Princess has paid a visit and is about to leave. Paul is present. Hyacinth enters and is seen by the Princess.

**Princess** (noticing Hyacinth)

I'm very glad of your return.

**Hyacinth** (a little taken aback)

Well, how did you come here?

**Princess**

Oh, I get about. Captain Sholto brought me a week ago. I took the liberty of coming again, by myself today—because I wanted to see the whole family. (to Paul, with a hard note) When I come to see gentlemen, I like to find them.

**Hyacinth**

I was disappointed when I called at your house in South Street.

**Princess**

Oh, I've given up that house, and taken a quite different one.

(If Hyacinth expects to learn where the house is, he's to be disappointed, for the Princess does not tell him.)

**Hyacinth**

Is Madame Grandoni still at her post? You ought to bring her to see Rosy.

**Rosy**

I'm sure I'd be most happy to receive any friend of the Princess Casamassima.

**Princess**

I'd be happy to bring her—but she left.

**Hyacinth**

She left?

**Princess**

Yes, two days ago.

**Hyacinth**

It's too bad. I should like to have said goodbye to her.

**Princess**

You may imagine how I feel it.

**Hyacinth**

You mean the eyes of the world—

**Princess**

She couldn't put up with me any more. I'm too much of a scandal.

**Hyacinth**

What will she do?

**Princess**

I suppose she'll go and live with my husband. Funny, isn't it, that it should always be one of us—and that it matters so little which?

**Hyacinth**

She kept threatening a long time.

**Princess**

Oh, yes.

**Paul** (trying to break the tension)

You ought to tell us about foreign parts and the grand things you've seen. Except that our distinguished visitor must know all about them. (to Princess) Surely, you've seen nothing more worthy of your respect than Camberwell?

**Princess**

Is this the worst part?

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Paul**

The worst, Madame? What grand ideas you must have! We admire Camberwell immensely.

**Rosy**

It's my brother's ideas that are grand. He wants everything changed. As if dirty people won't always make everything dirty. If everyone were clean, where would be the merit? You'd get no merit for keeping yourself tidy. Still, if it's a question of soap, everyone can begin with himself. My brother thinks the whole world ought to be as handsome as Brompton.

**Princess**

That's where all the artists and literary people live, isn't it?

**Paul**

Oh, I like Camberwell better than that.

**Princess**

I don't care about the artists.

**Paul**

Not when they've painted you such beautiful pictures? We know all about them—Mr. Robinson has told us all about your precious possessions.

**Rosy**

Was it all make-believe?

**Princess**

I've nothing in the world but the clothes on my back!

**Hyacinth**

I meant the things in the house.

**Princess**

There are no things in my house now.

**Rosy**

I shouldn't like that. Everything here belongs to me.

**Princess**

That's nice, of course, but—

**Rosy**

Do you think it's not right to have a lot of things about?

**Princess**

One must settle that for oneself. I don't like to be surrounded by things I don't care for. When thousands have no bread to put in their mouths, I can dispense with tapestry and old china.

**Rosy**

But, don't you think we ought to make the world more beautiful?

**Princess**

The world can wait to become beautiful until it becomes good enough. Is there anything so ugly as unjust privileges? When we want to beautify, we must begin at the right end.

**Rosy**

Surely, there are none of us, but what have our privileges. What do you say to mine: entertaining a Princess. If everyone was equal, where would be the gratification I feel in getting a visit from a grandee? No, no—no equality while I'm about.

(Enter Lady Aurora.)

**Aurora** (to Princess)

I'm so glad you waited. I was late.

**Princess**

Lady Aurora has graciously offered to take me to some of the other families she visits.

**Aurora**

Can you go now? We'll be late.

**Princess**

Scene I. Rosy's bedroom.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

Yes, of course.

(The Princess and Lady Aurora exit.)

**Rosy**

Lady Aurora and the Princess seem to have become good friends.

**Paul**

What in the mischief does she want of her?

**Hyacinth**

What do you mean?

**Paul**

What does the beauty of beauties want of our poor plain lady? She has a totally different stamp. I don't know much about women, but I can see that.

**Rosy**

They both have the stamp of their rank.

**Hyacinth**

Who can tell what women want at any time?

**Paul**

Trouble with Millicent? Well, my boy, if you don't know more than that, you disappoint me. Perhaps, if we wait long enough she'll tell us.

**Hyacinth**

About Lady Aurora?

**Paul**

I don't mind about Lady Aurora so much; but what in the name of long journeys does she want with her?

**Rosy**

Don't you think you're worth a long journey? I'd go from one end of England to the other to make your acquaintance. He's in love with the Princess and he asks those senseless questions to cover it up.

**Hyacinth**

Are you sweet on her?

**Paul**

Sweet on her, sweet on her, my boy! I might just as well be sweet on the Dome of Saint Paul's.

**Rosy**

The Dome on Saint Paul's doesn't come to see you, and ask you to return the visit.

**Paul**

I don't return visits. I don't put myself out for the Princess. Isn't that sufficient answer to your accusations?

**Hyacinth**

I'm not sure. Your hanging off is more suspicious. It may mean you don't trust yourself, that you're afraid.

**Paul**

I should think my making up to her would suit your book.

**Hyacinth**

Do you suppose I'm afraid of you? Besides, why should I care now?

**Rosy**

What do you mean by that?

**Paul** (quickly)

He's just being mysterious. Pay no attention to him.

(Paul and Hyacinth come forward away from Rosy and talk low.)

**Hyacinth**

I didn't want to make a scene—but how will you like it when I'm strung up on the gallows?

**Paul**

You mean Hoffendahl's job?

**Hyacinth**

Scene I. Rosy's bedroom.

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

I didn't mean to speak of it, especially in front of Rosy, but it naturally came to my mind. I've been thinking about it a good deal.

**Paul**

What good does that do? You don't like it. Do you want to give it up?

**Hyacinth**

Not in the least. But, did you suppose I liked it?

**Paul**

My dear fellow, how could I tell? You like a lot of things I don't. You like excitement and emotions—whereas I go in for holy calm—for sweet repose.

**Hyacinth**

If you prefer calm, why do you associate yourself with a terrorist organization?

**Paul** (chuckling)

Isn't our movement as quiet as the grave?

**Hyacinth**

I see. You take only the quiet parts.

**Paul**

I'm as likely to be beside you on the gallows for all that. Look, there's one thing to remember—Hoffendahl may choose never to call on you.

**Hyacinth**

Somehow, I don't fancy either you or he get mixed up in things that don't come off.

**Paul**

There are three or four definite chances in your favor.

**Hyacinth**

I don't want second rate comfort.

**Paul**

What the devil do you want?

**Hyacinth**

Oh, to know how you feel about it—exactly what good you think it will do?

**Paul**

The execution, eh? Well, putting it at its worst, possibly none at all. It's intended as a warning, an admonishment.

**Hyacinth**

An admonishment!

**Paul**

They must learn they can't get away with it without paying a price.

**Hyacinth**

But, why strike at individuals?

**Paul**

Because we cannot effectively strike at the whole system—much as we would prefer to. There's no Bastille to storm—and if there were, we haven't the wherewithal to storm it. So we must be content with small, symbolic acts.

**Hyacinth**

I should rather storm the Bastille.

**Paul**

Amen. But that was in the days before machine guns were invented.

**Rosy**

Will you two stop conspiring and pay some attention to me? I really am getting annoyed.

BLACKOUT

**Scene II. Millicent's shabby but genteel apartment.**

Millicent is putting on her gloves preparatory to going out. She goes to the door and steps back startled, admitting Hyacinth.

**Milly**

Whatever are you prowling about here for? You're up to no good, I'll be bound.

**Hyacinth**

Sorry if I frightened you. I was about to knock.

**Milly**

That's all right. Gave me a start.

**Hyacinth**

Where were you going so fast? What are you doing?

**Milly**

Well, I never did see such a manner—from one that knocks about like you! I'm going to see a friend. Have you anything to say to that?

**Hyacinth** (archly)

On what errand of mercy, on what secret mission?

**Milly**

Secret yourself! Why aren't you with your Princess instead of spying on me?

**Hyacinth**

Are you playing me false, Miss Henning?

**Milly**

False, false! You're a pretty one to talk of falsity when a woman has only to leer at you from an opera box—

**Hyacinth**

Don't say anything about her!

**Milly**

And pray, why not about her, I should like to know? You don't pretend she's a decent woman, I suppose.

**Hyacinth**

You're not really jealous of anyone. You pretend that only to throw dust in my eyes.

**Milly**

If you've come to see me, only to make low jokes at my expense, you had better have stayed away altogether. In the first place, it's rude, in the second place, it's silly, and in the third place, I see through you.

**Hyacinth**

My dear Milly, the motions you go through, the resentment you profess, are all a kicking up of dust which I blow away with a breath. (gesturing as puffing away a cloud of smoke) But go on, say anything you like.

**Milly**

The first thing I require of any friend is that he should respect me. You had a bad life, I know what to think about that.

**Hyacinth**

It's good to be with you. You understand everything.

**Milly**

I understand everything you like. You little rascal—has your Princess given you the sack?

**Hyacinth**

It may well be.

**Milly**

I'm glad you admit that!

**Hyacinth**

I'm a bigger Philistine than you, Miss Henning.

**Milly**

I don't believe you know, with all your thinking, what you do think.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Hyacinth**

It's astonishing how you sometimes put your finger on things. I intend to think no more. I mean to give it up. Let us live in the present hour.

**Milly**

I don't care how I live, nor where I live, so long as I can do as I like. You were never satisfactory to me as a friend—and I consider myself remarkably good natured to have kept you so little up to the mark. You never tell me anything!

**Hyacinth**

What is it you want me to tell you, dear child? I'll tell you anything in life you like.

**Milly**

You'll tell me no end of rot. Certainly, I tried kindness on you.

**Hyacinth** (good naturedly)

Try it again. Don't give up.

**Milly**

Well then, has she chucked you?

(Hyacinth turns away.)

**Milly**

THE BITCH!

**Hyacinth**

Milly, you're a sweetheart!

**Milly**

Why didn't you say so right away? I wouldn't have been so rough with you.

**Hyacinth**

This isn't rough.

**Milly** (holding him)

You're trembling.

**Hyacinth**

Very likely. I'm a nervous wreck, you know.

**Milly**

You need sympathy.

**Hyacinth**

A tablespoon twice a day.

**Milly**

I like you now.

**Hyacinth**

It's a pity I've always been so terribly under the influence of women. The sex in general has been very nice to me.

**Milly**

Does she know—your trumpery Princess?

**Hyacinth**

About my vow? Yes—but she doesn't mind.

**Milly**

That's most uncommonly kind of her.

**Hyacinth**

You know nothing about her.

**Milly**

How do you know what I know, please? Hasn't she treated you most shamelessly—and you a reg'lar dear?

**Hyacinth**

Not in the least. My opinions have changed and hers haven't—that's all.

**Milly**

And your grand lady still goes in for costermongers?

Scene II. Millicent's shabby but genteel apartment.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Hyacinth**

Something has to be done and she wants to do it. I have too many scruples.

**Milly**

If she hasn't kicked you out, why do you say she has?

**Hyacinth**

I don't know; I can't make it out. Something has happened, but I don't know what it is.

**Milly**

Well, I can make it out! You silly baby, has Paul been making up to her Serene Highness? Is that his game? Do you mean to say she'd look at the likes of him?

**Hyacinth**

Paul! He's as fine a man as any born. They've the same views. They're doing the same work.

**Milly**

And probably sleeping in the same bed! It makes WORK easier.

**Hyacinth** (protesting)

That's enough, Milly, I won't have you—

**Milly**

So, he hasn't changed his opinions, then—not like you?

**Hyacinth**

No, he knows what he wants, he knows what he thinks.

**Milly**

Oh, I dare say. Don't be a saint, they're a precious pain.

**Hyacinth**

A man shouldn't turn on his friends.

**Milly**

Or betray him with his woman. You need someone to fight for you!

**Hyacinth**

My dear girl, you're a comfort.

(There is a knock at the door. Milly looks uncomfortable, but straightening her shoulders, goes to the door.)

**Hyacinth**

You know, you still haven't told me where you were going?

(Milly opens the door and admits Captain Sholto who is armed with a large bouquet of flowers.)

**Sholto**

My dear Miss Henning, when you were late—ah, my dear Robinson, I haven't seen you in some time, delighted.

**Hyacinth** (perceiving the situation immediately, turns on his heel and walks out)

I was just leaving.

**Sholto**

But, do stay, my dear fellow. Has there been some quarrel? Allow me to be the peacemaker.

BLACKOUT

**Scene III. Hyacinth's work room.**

Late at night. Vetch is dozing in his chair, his violin at his side. Hyacinth enters.)

**Vetch**

Oh, I didn't hear you. You're very quiet.

**Hyacinth**

You've been asleep.

**Vetch**

No, I've not been asleep. I don't sleep much these days.

**Hyacinth**

Then, you're meditating.

**Vetch**

Yes, I've been thinking. I'm glad to see you. I've been looking at your books. You do find work—you're a master. With such a hand you'll make a fortune and become famous.

**Hyacinth**

How many bookbinders have ever become famous?

**Vetch**

Well—

**Hyacinth**

My dear old friend, you've something on your mind.

**Vetch**

You read my thoughts. I've forced myself to let you alone.

**Hyacinth**

You had better let me come live with you as I suggested after Pinnie's death.

**Vetch**

Will you, my boy? Will you come tonight?

**Hyacinth**

Tonight?

**Vetch**

Tonight has worried me more than any other. I got to thinking of Pinnie. If I believed in ghosts, I should believe I had seen her. Then, I could bear it no longer, and I came here.

**Hyacinth**

Why don't you spend the night on my bed? I'll sleep on the floor.

**Vetch**

No, no.

**Hyacinth**

It won't be any different in your room.

**Vetch**

I'll get another room.

**Hyacinth**

At this time of night? Your reason totters on its throne.

**Vetch**

Very good. We'll get a room tomorrow.

**Hyacinth**

But, I have to give a month's notice here.

**Vetch**

Ah, you're backing out!

**Hyacinth**

Pinnie wouldn't have said that. She'd have believed me.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Vetch**

If you'll make me a promise, I'll believe that.

**Hyacinth**

Any promise you like.

**Vetch**

Oh, that isn't what I want. Make me a promise that you'll never, under any circumstances, "do" anything.

**Hyacinth**

What do you mean?

**Vetch**

Anything those people expect of you.

**Hyacinth**

Those people?

**Vetch**

Don't torment me by pretending not to understand: you know the people I mean. I can't call them by their names, because I don't know who they are. But you do—and they know you.

**Hyacinth**

I suppose I know the people you've in mind. But, I don't grasp the need for these solemnities.

**Vetch**

Don't they want to make use of you?

**Hyacinth**

I see what you mean: you think they want me to blow up some train for them. Well, if that's what troubles you, you may sleep sound. I shall never do any of their work.

**Vetch**

Do you take your oath to that? Never anything?

**Hyacinth**

Never anything at all.

**Vetch**

Will you swear it on Pinnie's memory?

**Hyacinth**

Willingly.

**Vetch**

Then, you are saved!

**Hyacinth**

No, I'm damned.

BLACKOUT

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**ACT V**

**Scene I. The Princess's house.**

The Princess is pacing, dressed to go out. Paul enters.

**Princess**

You're braver than I gave you credit for.

**Paul**

I shall have to be brave if I associate a while longer with you.

**Princess**

I didn't expect you.

**Paul**

Well, here I am—that's the great thing.

**Princess**

It will be a still greater thing when you're there.

**Paul**

Where is it? I don't think you told me.

(The Princess gives him a letter which he reads, then crushes and throws in the fire.)

**Princess**

What are you afraid of? I take it the house is known to the police. If we go, I suppose we must admit that we go.

**Paul**

No writing—no writing.

**Princess**

You're terribly careful.

**Paul**

Careful of you—yes.

**Princess**

This give me a much less keen emotion than when I act by myself.

**Paul** (hesitating)

Is that what you go in for—keen emotion?

**Princess**

Surely, don't you?

**Paul**

God forbid! I hope to have as little of any sort as possible.

**Princess**

It would be hard if one couldn't have a little pleasure on the way.

**Paul**

My pleasure is keeping very cool.

**Princess**

I like quietness—in the midst of tumult.

**Paul**

You've rare ideas.

**Princess**

I wonder if you're not too prudent. I wonder if you want to go at all.

**Paul**

Why else should I have come?

**Princess**

You don't take me seriously. I wonder if you can find it in your conscience to work with me?

**Paul**

It isn't in my conscience I find it.

**Princess**

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

Never mind, I think I have you in my power.

**Paul**

You've got everyone in your power.

**Princess**

That extraordinary little sister of yours—surely you take her seriously?

**Paul**

I'm fond of her—if that's what you mean.

**Princess**

She's a prodigious person.

**Paul**

That she is—I don't see what interest you can have—

**Princess**

Interest in what?

**Paul**

In getting in so deep.

**Princess** (wryly)

Am I so deep?

**Paul**

Up to your pretty little neck. If I was your husband, I'd come and take you away.

**Princess**

You might find that difficult to do. Please, don't speak of my husband, you know nothing about him.

**Paul**

I know what Hyacinth has told me.

**Princess**

Oh, Hyacinth!

**Paul**

I don't have his manners.

**Princess**

I don't know that pretty manners are exactly what we're working for here. He's very foolish. He's deplorably conventional.— Have you had a visit from Mr. Vetch?

**Paul**

The old gentleman who fiddles? No—he has never done me that honor.

**Princess**

You can thank me for that, I prevented him. He's in great distress about Hyacinth—about the danger he's in. You know what I mean.

**Paul**

Yes, I know. Well?

**Princess**

He was going to you—to beg you to interfere— But, I prevented him.

**Paul**

That was considerate of you beyond everything.

**Princess**

It was not meant as consideration for you. It was a piece of calculation on my part. Do you know why I asked you to come and see me? Do you know why I went to see your sister? It was all part of a plan.

**Paul**

We thought it was all just ordinary upper class slumming.

**Princess**

Joke if you like. I wanted to save Hyacinth.

**Paul**

That's a fine idea.

**Princess**

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

I've no patience with his opinions. But, after all, it's not our friends' opinions that we love them for. I wanted you to help me get him out of his scrape.

**Paul**

His scrape isn't important.

**Princess**

They must be persuaded not to call him.

**Paul**

Persuade them, then, dear Madame.

**Princess**

How can I persuade them? I've no influence. Besides, my motives are suspect.

**Paul**

Shall I tell them he lacks the nerve?

**Princess**

He doesn't—he doesn't. Tell them he has changed his opinions.

**Paul**

That would be unwise. I don't wish to denounce him as a traitor.

**Princess**

Tell them it's simply my wish.

**Paul**

You're very fond of him. But, you ought to remember that, in the line you've chosen, our affections, our natural ties, our timidities, our shrinkings—all those things are as nothing. They must never weigh a feather beside our service.

**Princess**

Why don't you do his job for him?

**Paul**

Better to do my own.

**Princess**

And, what is that?

**Paul**

Don't know, I wait to be instructed.

**Princess**

Have you taken an oath too?

**Paul**

Ah, Madame, the oaths I take, I don't tell.

**Princess**

Can you see your comrade destroyed like that?

**Paul**

You had better leave my comrade to me.

**Princess** (with irritation)

Well then, shall we go?

**Paul**

If all this was only a pretext?

**Princess** (scornfully)

I believe you are afraid!

BLACKOUT

**Scene II. The same, a few days letter.**

The Princess is seated at her table, writing. Enter Hyacinth.

**Hyacinth**

I saw Lady Aurora leaving.

**Princess**

It's a pity that you didn't come a little sooner. You'd have assisted at a scene.

**Hyacinth**

At a scene?

**Princess**

She made a scene of tears. Perfectly well meant. She thinks I go too far.

**Hyacinth**

I imagine you tell her things you don't tell me.

**Princess**

Oh, you, my dear fellow.

**Hyacinth**

You've been going to some queer holes lately.

**Princess**

With your sentiments, you've no right to enquire.

**Hyacinth**

Don't you think so?

**Princess**

You mean your famous pledge to "act"? That will never come to anything.

**Hyacinth**

Why not, if you please?

**Princess**

It's too absurd, it's too vague. You won't have to do it.

**Hyacinth** ( a little offended)

I think you mean I won't do it.

**Princess** (bluntly)

Well, then, you won't do it.

**Hyacinth**

You will—at the pace you're going.

**Princess**

What do you know about it? You're not worthy to know.

**Hyacinth**

You do go too far.

**Princess**

Of course, I do. How else does one know one's gone far enough? Lady Aurora's an angel, but she isn't the least in it, is she?

**Hyacinth**

Hardly.

**Princess** (troubled)

How can one go too far these days? That's the word of cowards.

**Hyacinth**

You think Lady Aurora's a coward?

**Princess**

Yes—in not having the courage of her opinions. The way the English can go half way to a thing, then stick in the middle!

**Hyacinth**

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

That's not your weakness, certainly! But the thing Lady Aurora's most afraid of is you!

**Princess**

There's one thing she's not afraid of. She'd marry your friend, Mr. Paul Muniment.

**Hyacinth**

Do you really think so?

**Princess**

She adores the ground he walks on.

**Hyacinth**

What would Belgrave Square and Inglefield say?

**Princess**

What they say already—that she's crazy. She'd do it in a minute. It would be fine to see it. It would be magnificent.

**Hyacinth**

She cannot marry him unless he asks her—she has not gone that far. And perhaps he won't.

**Princess** (wryly)

I don't think he will. Why haven't you been to see me lately?

**Hyacinth**

I knew you were deep in business.

**Princess**

And, you think it's all a mistake? Yes, I know that. If you were scared of me three or four months ago, I don't know what you'd think today. If you knew! I've risked everything.

**Hyacinth**

Fortunately, I don't know anything.

**Princess**

Why are you avoiding Paul and Rosy?

**Hyacinth**

It's no use keeping up pretenses. Our views are so different.

**Princess**

And, you are so grimly sincere! But, you could see Rosy—her views and yours coincide remarkably.

**Hyacinth**

I don't like Rosy.

**Princess**

Neither do I. Aren't you going to be in a fix when the hour strikes, and you're called upon to fulfill your vow?

**Hyacinth**

I'm in an awful fix. But, you just said it won't happen.

**Princess**

I pity you, my poor friend. I can imagine nothing more terrible than to find yourself face to face with your obligation—and the spirit that prompted you to undertake it dead within you.

**Hyacinth**

Terrible, indeed, Princess.

**Princess**

I pray to God it may never be your fate. You know, a short time ago, I had a visit from Mr. Vetch.

**Hyacinth**

It was kind of you to see him.

**Princess**

Any friend of yours.— But he's delightful, I assure you. Do you know he came to me to beg me to snatch you away?

**Hyacinth**

From the danger that hangs over me?

**Princess**

He was most touching.

Scene II. The same, a few days letter.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Hyacinth** (affectionately)

He's a good old man.

**Princess**

He has a rather flattering belief in my personal effect on you.

**Hyacinth**

And he thought you'd try to get me to back out? He does you an injustice: you won't.

**Princess**

Because I know you won't be called.

**Hyacinth**

How do you know that?

**Princess**

Paul keeps me informed. We've information, my poor, dear boy. You're so much out of it, that if I told you, I fear you wouldn't understand.

**Hyacinth**

Yes, I'm out of it—but I still take as much of an interest in the real business as I ever did.

**Princess**

Dear, infatuated little aristocrat—was that ever very much?

**Hyacinth**

It was—and still is enough. I abide by the decision of others. I don't have to agree.

**Princess**

But you must. The old ferocious selfishness of the upper classes must come down. They won't leave gracefully, so they must be ushered out.

**Hyacinth**

I wish to God I could see it the way you see it.

**Princess**

What we're doing is at least worth trying. If those in power lack the will or the brains to think out a peaceful solution—on their heads be the blood!

**Hyacinth**

Princess, dearest Princess, if anything should happen to you!

**Princess**

To me! And pray, why not to me? What title have in to an exemption? Why am I so sacrosanct and so precious?

**Hyacinth**

Because there's no one in the world, and never has been anyone in the world, like you.

**Princess**

Oh, thank you!

BLACKOUT

**Scene III. The same, a few days later.**

The Princess is in a negligee, smoking a cigarette. Paul, dressed only in pants and slippers, sits on the couch.

**Paul**

I've received a letter from your husband.

**Princess**

How in the world could he know your address?

**Paul**

Madame Grandoni, I think. He must have met her in Paris.

**Princess**

What an incorrigible cad.

**Paul**

I don't see that for writing to me. Would you like to see his letter?

**Princess**

Thank you, no. Nothing could induce me to touch anything he has touched.

**Paul**

You touch his money, my dear lady.

**Princess**

Because it makes him suffer.

**Paul**

I should think it would please him.

**Princess**

Why?

**Paul**

Because it shows you are dependent on him.

**Princess**

Not when he knows I don't use it for myself. He hates my politics almost as much as he hates me.

**Paul**

He doesn't hate you. His letter satisfies me of that.

**Princess** (facing him)

What are you leading up to? Are you suggesting I go back to my husband?

**Paul**

I don't know that I'd go so far as to advise it. But I believe you will before long.

**Princess** (really nettled)

And on what does that extraordinary prediction rest?

**Paul**

Because you'll soon have nothing to live on. He informs me that I need count on no more supplies from your hands.

**Princess**

He addresses you in very plain terms.

**Paul**

Yes.

**Princess**

And can you repeat such insults to me without the smallest apparent discomposure? You are indeed the most extraordinary man!

**Paul**

Why is it an insult? It's the simple truth—I take your money.

**Princess**

You take it for the cause—you don't take it for yourself.

**Paul**

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

Your husband isn't obliged to consider that.

**Princess** (bitingly)

I didn't know you were on his side!

**Paul**

You know whose side I'm on.

**Princess**

What does he know? What business has he to address you so?

**Paul**

Madame Grandoni has told him I have great influence with you.

**Princess**

She was welcome to tell him that!

**Paul**

He reasons that when I find you have nothing to give, I'll let you go.

**Princess**

Nothing more to give. Does he think I count for nothing?

**Paul**

Apparently he thinks I don't count you much.

**Princess** (bitterly)

Well, I've always known you care more for my money than for me. But that's as it should be for a revolutionary. It makes no difference to me.

**Paul** (enjoying irritating her)

Then, by your own calculation, the Prince is right.

**Princess**

My dear sir, my interest in you never depended on your interest in me.— So, he stops my allowance.

**Paul**

From the first of next month.

**Princess**

I'll fight him tooth and nail in court.

**Paul**

How? Your association with me and the Cause are not the sort of things that should come to light.

**Princess**

Why should it come to light? It's my money—separation money. What I do with it—

**Paul**

He can produce the fact that you had a little bookbinder living in your house.

**Princess**

What has that to do with it?

**Paul**

That would be for the court to appreciate. And, what about the fact that Madame Grandoni has withdrawn her protection?

**Princess**

Ah, but not for Hyacinth!

**Paul**

That's only a detail. In any case, I shouldn't in the least care to have you going to law.

**Princess**

Sometimes you seem afraid! That's terribly against your being a first rate man.

**Paul**

I haven't the smallest pretension of being a first rate man.

**Princess**

Oh, you're deep—and you're provoking!

**Paul**

Don't you remember how you accused me of being a coward and a traitor, of playing false, of wanting to back

Scene III. The same, a few days later.

## THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

out?

**Princess**

Most distinctly! How can I help feeling that you've got incalculable ulterior motives and are consummately using me—consummately using us all?— Well, I don't care!

**Paul**

The best reason in the world for not going to law with your husband is this: When you haven't a penny left, you'll be obliged to go back and live with him.

**Princess**

How can that be? Haven't I my own property?

**Paul**

The Prince assures me that you've almost nothing left.

**Princess**

You've the most extraordinary tone. You seem to be saying that from the moment I have no more money to give you, I'm of no more value than the washed out tea leaves in that pot?

**Paul**

I've no intention of saying anything so offensive—but since you bring it up, perhaps it's as well I should let you know that I believe in giving your money or rather your husband's money to our business, you gave the most valuable thing you had to contribute.

**Princess**

This is the day of plain truths! You don't count my devotion or my intelligence—even rating my faculties modestly?

**Paul**

I count your intelligence but not your devotion. You are not trusted— well, where it makes the difference.

**Princess**

Not trusted! Why, I could be hanged tomorrow.

**Paul**

They may let you hang—without fully trusting you. You are likely to weary of us, and I think, you're weary even now.

**Princess**

Ah, you must be a first rate man—you're such a brute.

**Paul**

I didn't say you were weary of me. But you can never live poor. You don't begin to know the meaning of it.

**Princess**

Oh, no. I'm not tired of you! In a moment you'll make me cry with rage—and no man has done that for years. I was very poor when I was a girl.

**Paul** (unconvinced)

You'll go back to your husband.

**Princess**

I don't see why they trust you more than they do me?

**Paul**

I'm not sure they do. I've heard something this evening that suggests that.

**Princess**

And, may one know what it is?

**Paul**

A communication that should have been made through me was made through someone else.

**Princess**

A communication?

**Paul**

To Hyacinth.

**Princess** (uneasily)

To Hyacinth—?

Scene III. The same, a few days later.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

**Paul**

He has his orders. But they didn't entrust it to me.

**Princess**

He was here this morning. Do you suppose he already had it?

**Paul**

Shinkel carried the order to him Sunday night.

**Princess**

But, he was here just now, and he told me nothing of it.

**Paul**

That was quite right of him.

**Princess**

What do they want him to do?

**Paul**

I think I'd better not tell you until it's over.

**Princess**

And when will it be over?

**Paul**

He has several days. He has considerable discretion as to seizing his chance. The thing's remarkably easy for him. I heard it all from Shinkel.

**Princess**

Shinkel trusts you, then?

**Paul**

Yes, but he won't trust you. Hyacinth has an invitation to a party at a country house. At a grand party, he'll fit right in—perfect gentleman.

**Princess** (tartly)

He'll like that.

**Paul**

If he doesn't like it, he needn't do it.

**Princess**

And the target?

**Paul**

A certain royal personage. Do you want to warn him?

**Princess**

By no means. But I prefer to do the business myself.

**Paul**

To fall by your beautiful hand would be too good for him.

**Princess**

However if he fails, it will be useful, valuable?

**Paul**

It's worth trying, even if it fails. He's a very bad institution, although as a private person, quite blameless.

**Princess**

And, you don't mean to go near Hyacinth?

**Paul**

I mean to leave him free.

(Pause.)

**Princess**

Paul Muniment, you are a truly first rate man! Why have you told me this?

**Paul**

So that you can't throw it up to me later that I didn't.

**Princess**

Scene III. The same, a few days later.

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

What will Hyacinth do?

**Paul**

I don't know. He'll either kill himself if he can't go through with it—or he'll kill The Grand Duke.

**Princess**

God! I must talk to him.

**Paul**

No. If Hyacinth fails or funks it, then it's your chance. There's a second party.

**Princess**

God—poor Hyacinth. What will he do? What will he do? Oh, it's my fault. It's through me that he's changed his ideas.

**Paul**

But, not because of you, really. You've always stood for the Cause.

**Princess**

Yes, but I showed him the other side—

**Paul**

That cannot be helped.

**Princess**

I wish I hadn't said some of the things I said to him this morning. I told him I didn't think he'd do it. He was talking to me, trying to tell me without actually telling me. It was his swan song. I should have known, but I was caught up in my own egotism, I was so smug.

**Paul**

There's nothing to do but wait and see.

**Princess**

He's only a child. A poor deluded child.

**Paul**

If he weren't a man, he'd have run away. He won't run. He'll either do it, or he'll destroy himself.

**Princess**

I don't think he can do it. I don't believe he can do it. (bursting into tears)

**Paul** (after a moment)

I don't mean to aggravate you, but you will go back to your husband.

(The Princess shakes her head at Paul, they stare at each other as the Curtain falls.)

CURTAIN