

CASTE

T W Robertson

Enter MARCHIONESS, door R. She surveys the place with aggressive astonishment.

MARCHIONESS: What a hole! And to think that my grandson should breathe such an atmosphere, and be contaminated by such associations! Which is the young woman who married my son?

ESTHER: I am Mrs. George D'Alroy, widow of George D'Alroy. Who are you?

MARCHIONESS: I am his mother, the Marquise de Saint Maur.

ESTHER: (*with the grand air*) Be seated, I beg.

MARCHIONESS: You remember me, do you not?

ESTHER: Perfectly, though I only saw you once. May I ask what has procured me the honour of the visit?

MARCHIONESS: I was informed that you were in want, and I came to offer you assistance.

ESTHER: I thank you for your offer, and the delicate consideration for my feelings which it is made. I need no assistance.

MARCHIONESS: A letter I received last night informed me that you did.

ESTHER: May I ask if that letter came from Captain Hawtree?

MARCHIONESS: No- from this person - your father, I think.

ESTHER: How dare you interfere in my affairs?

MARCHIONESS: Then you will not accept assistance from me?

ESTHER: No.

MARCHIONESS: But you have a child- a son - my grandson. (*with emotion*)

ESTHER: Master D'Alroy wants for nothing.

MARCHIONESS: I came here to propose that my grandson should go back with me.

ESTHER: (*rising definitely*). What! Part with my boy! I'd sooner die!

MARCHIONESS: You can see him when you wish. As for money, I -

ESTHER: Not for ten thousand million worlds- not for ten thousand million marchionesses!

MARCHIONESS: Surely you cannot intend to bring up my son's son in a place like this?

ESTHER: I do.

ESTHER: Master George D'Alroy will remain with his mother. The offer to take him from her is an insult to his dead father and to him.

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- MARCHIONESS: But you have no money-how can you rear him? - how can you educate him? - how can you live?
- ESTHER: Turn columbine - go on stage again and dance!
- MARCHIONESS: (*rising*). You are insolent- you forget that I am a lady.
- ESTHER: You forget that I am a mother. Do you dare to offer to buy my child- his breathing image, his living memory- with money. There is the door- go!
- MARCHIONESS: Mrs. D'Alroy, if anything could have increased my sorrow for the wretched marriage my poor son was decoyed into, it would be your conduct this day to his mother.