

office into that of the director. he was glad he had come into the office so early and was able to be of service immediately, nobody could seriously have expected that of him. the deputy directors office was, of course, still as empty as the middle of the night, the servitor had probably been asked to summon him too but without success. as entered the reception room two men stood up from the deep armchairs where they had been sitting. the director gave him a friendly smile, he was clearly very glad that was there, he immediately introduced him to the italian who shook his hand vigorously and joked that somebody was an early riser. did not quite understand whom he had in mind, it was moreover an odd expression to use and it took a little while to guess its meaning. he replied with a few bland phrases which the italian received once more with a laugh, passing his hand nervously and repeatedly over his blue grey, bushy moustache. this moustache was obviously perfumed, it was almost tempting to come close to it and sniff. when they had all sat down and begun a light preliminary conversation, was disconcerted to notice that he understood no more than fragments of what the italian said. when he spoke very calmly he understood almost everything, but that was very infrequent, mostly the words gushed from his mouth and he seemed to be enjoying himself so much his head shook. when he was talking in this way his speech was usually wrapped up in some kind of dialect which seemed to have nothing to do with italian but which the director not only understood but also spoke, although ought to have foreseen this as the italian came from the south of his country where the director had also spent several years. whatever the cause, realised that the possibility of communicating with the italian new medicine from the senator. sirona was sitting at the open window of her bedroom, having her hair arranged by a black woman that her husband had bought in rome. she sighed, while the slave lightly touched the shining tresses here and there with perfumed oil which she had poured into the palm of her hand; then she firmly grasped the long thick waving mass of golden hair and was parting it to make a plait, when sirona stopped her, saying, give me the mirror. for some minutes she looked with a melancholy gaze at the image in the polished metal, then she sighed again; she picked up the little greyhound that lay at her feet, and placing it in her lap, showed the animal its image in the mirror. there, poor iambe, she said, if we two, inside these four walls, want to see anything like a pleasing sight we must look at ourselves. then she went on, turning to the slave. how the poor little beast trembles i believe it longs to be back again at arelas, and is afraid we shall linger too long under this burning sky. give me my sandals. the black woman reached her mistress two little slippers with gilt ornaments on the slight straps, but sirona flung her hair off her face with the back of her hand, exclaiming, the old ones, not these. wooden shoes even would do here. and with these words she pointed to the court yard under the window, which was in fact as ill contrived, as though gilt sandals had never yet trodden it. it was surrounded by buildings; on one side was a wall with a gateway, and on the others buildings which formed a sharply bent horseshoe. opposite the wing in which sirona and her husband had found a home stood the much higher house of petrus, and both had attached to them, in the background of the court yard, sheds constructed of rough reddish brown stones, and covered with a thatch of palm branches; in these the agricultural implements were stored, and the senators slaves lived. in front lay a heap of black charcoal, which was made on the spot by burning the wood of the you to do this. it is not for myself; i never asked a penny for myself in my life, and never will, till i go to the workhouse. dont answer at once, if you dont see your way. think it over. take time to think it over; but do try, westray, to help in the matter, if you can. it would be a sad pity to let the picture go out of the house just now. the eagerness with which he spoke surprised westray. could it be that mr sharnall had motives other than mere kindness could it be that the picture was valuable after all he walked across the room to look closer at the laundry flowers and the caterpillar. no, it could not be that; the painting was absolutely worthless. mr sharnall had followed him, and they stood side by side looking out of the window. westray was passing through a very brief interval of indecision. his emotional and perhaps better feelings told him that he ought to accede to mr sharnalls request; caution