

Excerpt from *'Cobwebs of Youth'*

Lara woke slowly and turned languidly in the bed, stretching out her arms. He was not there and she struggled up with a confused start. The lemon-coloured light of an early Spring morning streamed in the room as she looked around her. There was no sign of him and the door was closed. Oh God, she thought. What have I done?

She noticed that her clothes had been tidied and neatly folded onto one of the chairs and the wine, beer and glasses had been cleared. She swallowed thickly. Where was he? Then she heard his voice come floating up from downstairs, another man replied and he laughed. She flew out of the bed and over to her handbag, taking out her mirror. Her hair was tangled and make-up was smudged under her eyes. She sorted herself out as best she could and darted back under the covers, the sight of her own nakedness reminding her of the events of the previous evening. She felt her cheeks glow and her body throb with the recollection. How on earth could she face him? But despite her fear, she gave a deep sigh and closed her eyes, letting her mind wander over the night's activity in luxurious reverie. So consuming was the memory that she nearly missed hearing his tread on the stairs. He entered the room slowly and she kept her eyes closed, feigning sleep, part of her wishing fervently that she could remain like this forever and not face him.

She heard him put some bits down on the table and then he came and sat by the bed and she felt him rest his feet on the side. She couldn't remain like this much longer and she felt her breath constrict in her throat as she knew she must open her eyes to him. Turning her face, she gradually opened them and gave him a lazy, contented smile. He had been watching her like a cat at a mousehole and returned her smile, bending to kiss her before returning to his chair.