

Scene 5

*Anabella. She walks in just in time to see Ada sink into a chair, deflated from disappointment.*

*Shockingly...instead of scolding her daughter, or straightening her posture...Anabella understands everything in a glance. She sits next to Ada, holds her. Ada bursts into tears.*

ANABELLA. Darling. It's always harder for us than them. The freedom I know you want is not handed to women, even lucky ones. We must earn it, we hoard it and use it to save ourselves when the time comes. That's what I did. I used every bit of it I had to break away from your father. Now you must store it up and save it so you can save yourself if you ever need to.

ADA. That's what I'm trying to do. Love saves you. Doesn't it?

ANABELLA. No. Especially if you're in love with the wrong man. Please trust me that *this* is not a mistake of mine I will let you repeat.

*In another corner of the house Lovelace runs into Babbage.*

LOVELACE. Mr. Babbage.

CHARLES. Oh. Yes. Mr.—*Lord* Lovelace. So Sorry. Good day, sir.

LOVELACE. It was, yes.

CHARLES. Excuse me?

LOVELACE. You are a man of good standing, Mr. Babbage, highly regarded in circles I respect, so I trust that I may speak openly. My intended is a sensitive woman, prone to fits of the fantastic and the... demonstrative. Her unfortunate inheritance. Too much stimulation and I fear for her well-being.

CHARLES. You have nothing to fear from me, sir. I want only the very best of this world for her.

Start



LOVELACE. Then leave her be.

CHARLES. Sir.

LOVELACE. Either you will. Or I will. I don't think her constitution or reputation is strong enough for the both of us. And I have neither the time nor mind to...compete. I'll thank you to excuse yourself tomorrow morning, and perhaps contain your friendship to the epistolary. For the near future. Until she gets settled in the ways of a wife. You understand. Good day.

End

*Lovelace exits, leaving Babbage to steam a bit.*

*Back to Ada and Anabella.*

ANABELLA. I know you think me harsh. I am. I will not let you suffer as I have. Now you must play along, marry well, and earn the freedom you so want.

ADA. Why don't the men have to earn it?

ANABELLA. Because they take what they like. For women, freedom comes with legitimacy. Marry well and then you're free. From your past, from me. Lovelace will be good to you. And we'll find him a tutor so he can carry on a conversation with you.

*Ada laughs a touch at this.*

He's rather good-looking.

ADA. That's true.

ANABELLA. Focus on that.

*Babbage alone—perhaps he looks across the space to Ada.*

And don't believe the poets. Love is either something learned or something lost. Make your choice while you have one.

*Ada sits up. Breathes. Feels better.*

*Babbage sits down. Breathes. Feels worse.*

*Transition to...*