

Vera
Emily

ROGERS. Now, now, stop your nagging. You get back to the kitchen or your dinner will be spoilt.

MRS. ROGERS. It'll be spoilt anyway, I expect. Everybody's going to be late. Wasted on them, anyway. Thank goodness, I didn't make a soufflé.

(VERA enters from the hall.)

Oh, dinner won't be a minute, Miss. Just a question of dishing up.

(MRS. ROGERS exits to the dining room.)

VERA. Is everything all right, Rogers? Can you manage between the two of you?

ROGERS. Yes, thank you, Miss. The Missus talks a lot, but she gets it done.

(ROGERS exits to the dining room as EMILY enters from the hall, having changed.)

VERA. What a lovely evening!

EMILY. Yes, indeed. The weather seems very settled.

VERA. How plainly one can hear the sea.

EMILY. A pleasant sound.

VERA. Hardly a breath of wind – and deliciously warm. Not like England at all.

EMILY. I should have thought you might feel a little uncomfortable in that dress.

(VERA doesn't take the point.)

VERA. Oh, no.

EMILY. *(Nastily.)* It's rather tight, isn't it?

VERA. *(Innocently.)* Oh, I don't think so.

(EMILY sits and takes out her knitting.)

EMILY. You'll excuse me, my dear, but you're a young girl and you've got your living to earn.

VERA. Yes?

EMILY. A well-bred woman doesn't like her secretary to appear flashy. It looks, you know, as though you were trying to attract the attention of the opposite sex.

VERA. And would you say I do attract them?

EMILY. That's beside the point. A girl who deliberately sets out to get the attention of men won't be likely to keep her job long.

VERA. (*Laughing.*) Ah! Surely that depends on who she's working for?

EMILY. Really, Miss Claythorne!

VERA. Aren't you being a little unkind?

EMILY. (*Spitefully.*) Young people nowadays behave in the most disgusting fashion.

VERA. Disgusting?

EMILY. (*Fanatically.*) Yes. Low-backed evening dresses. Lying half naked on beaches. All this so-called sunbathing. An excuse for immodest conduct, nothing more. Familiarity! Christian names – drinking cocktails! And look at the young men nowadays. Decadent! Look at that young Marston. What good is he? And that Captain Lombard!

VERA. What do you object to in Captain Lombard? I should say he was a man who'd led a very varied and interesting life.

EMILY. The man's an adventurer. All this younger generation is no good – no good at all.

VERA. You don't like youth – I see.

EMILY. (*Sharply.*) What do you mean?

VERA. I was just remarking that you don't like young people.

EMILY. And is there any reason why I should, pray?

VERA. Oh, no – (*Pauses.*) but it seems to me that you must miss an awful lot.

EMILY. You're very impertinent.

VERA. I'm sorry, but that's just what I think.

EMILY. The world will never improve until we stamp out immodesty.

VERA. *(Quietly.)* Quite pathological.

EMILY. *(Sharply.)* What did you say?

VERA. Nothing.

(ARMSTRONG and LOMBARD enter from the hall.)

LOMBARD. What about the old boy -

ARMSTRONG. He looks rather like a tortoise, don't you think so?

LOMBARD. All judges look like tortoises. They have that venomous way of darting their heads in and out. Mr. Justice Wargrave is no exception.

ARMSTRONG. I hadn't realised he was a judge.

LOMBARD. Oh, yes. *(Cheerfully.)* He's probably been responsible for sending more innocent people to their death than anyone in England.

(WARGRAVE enters and looks at him. LOMBARD turns to VERA.)

Hello, you. Do you two know each other? Mr. Armstrong - Miss Claythorne. Armstrong and I have just decided that the old boy -

VERA. Yes, I heard you and so did he, I think.

(WARGRAVE moves over to EMILY who rises as he approaches.)

EMILY. Oh, Sir Lawrence.

WARGRAVE. Miss Brent, isn't it?

EMILY. There's something I want to ask you. Will you come out here?

(She indicates she wants to talk on the balcony. WARGRAVE nods his assent.)

WARGRAVE. A remarkably fine night!

(MARSTON enters from the hall with BLORE. They are in conversation.)