

VERA &
EMILY

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VERA. (Low.) I'm worried about the General. He really is ill, I think.

(EMILY looks to MACKENZIE, then goes out onto the balcony and stands behind him. She speaks in a loud, cheerful voice, as though talking to an idiot child.)

EMILY. Looking out for the boat, General?

(MACKENZIE does not answer. EMILY waits a minute, then comes slowly in.)

His sin has found him out.

VERA. (Angrily.) Oh, don't.

EMILY. One must face facts.

VERA. Can any of us afford to throw stones?

EMILY. Even if his wife was no better than she should be - and she must have been a depraved woman - he had no right to take judgment into his own hands.

(VERA looks at her challengingly.)

VERA. What about - Beatrice Taylor?

EMILY. Who?

VERA. That was the name, wasn't it?

EMILY. You are referring to that absurd accusation about myself?

VERA. Yes.

EMILY. Now that we are alone, I have no objection to telling you the facts of the case - Indeed I should like you to hear them. It was not a fit subject to discuss before gentlemen - so naturally I refused to say anything last night. That girl, Beatrice Taylor, was in my service. I was very much deceived in her. She had nice manners and was clean and willing. I was very pleased with her. Of course, all that was sheerest hypocrisy. She was a loose girl with no morals. Disgusting! It was some time before I found out that she was what they call "in trouble." (Pause.) It was a great shock to me. Her parents were decent folks too, who had brought

her up strictly. I'm glad to say they didn't condone her behaviour.

VERA. What happened?

EMILY. (Self-righteously) Naturally, I refused to keep her an hour under my roof. No one shall ever say I condoned immorality.

VERA. Did she drown herself?

EMILY. Yes.

VERA. How old was she?

EMILY. Seventeen.

VERA. Only seventeen.

EMILY. Quite old enough to know how to behave. I told her what a low depraved thing she was. I told her that she was beyond the pale and that no decent person would take her into their house. I told her that her child would be the child of sin and would be branded all its life - and that the man would naturally not dream of marrying her. I told her that I felt soiled by ever having her under my roof -

VERA. (Shuddering.) You told a girl of seventeen all that?

EMILY. Yes. I'm glad to say I broke her down utterly.

VERA. Poor little devil.

EMILY. I've no patience with this indulgence toward sin.

VERA. And then, I suppose, you turned her out of the house?

EMILY. Of course.

VERA. And she didn't dare go home - What did you feel like when you found she'd drowned herself?

EMILY. (Puzzled.) Feel like?

VERA. Yes. Didn't you blame yourself?

EMILY. Certainly not. I had nothing with which to reproach myself.

VERA. I believe - I believe you really feel like that. That makes it even more horrible.

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