

Start

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.

Stop