You Never Can Tell - Act II

di George Bernard Shaw (1897)

ACT II

On the terrace at the Marine Hotel. It is a square flagged platform, with a parapet of heavy oil jar pilasters supporting a broad stone coping on the outer edge, which stands up over the sea like a cliff. The head waiter of the establishment, busy laying napkins on a luncheon table with his back to the sea, has the hotel on his right, and on his left, in the corner nearest the sea, the flight of steps leading down to the beach.

When he looks down the terrace in front of him he sees a little to his left a solitary guest, a middle-aged gentleman sitting on a chair of iron laths at a little iron table with a bowl of lump sugar and three wasps on it, reading the Standard, with his umbrella up to defend him from the sun, which, in August and at less than an hour after noon, is toasting his protended insteps. Just opposite him, at the hotel side of the terrace, there is a garden seat of the ordinary esplanade pattern. Access to the hotel for visitors is by an entrance in the middle of its facade, reached by a couple of steps on a broad square of raised pavement. Nearer the parapet there lurks a way to the kitchen, masked by a little trellis porch. The table at which the waiter is occupied is a long one, set across the terrace with covers and chairs for five, two at each side and one at the end next the hotel. Against the parapet another table is prepared as a buffet to serve from.

The waiter is a remarkable person in his way. A silky old man, white-haired and delicate looking, but so cheerful and contented that in his encouraging presence ambition stands rebuked as vulgarity, and imagination as treason to the abounding sufficiency and interest of the actual. He has a certain expression peculiar to men who have been extraordinarily successful in their calling, and who, whilst aware of the vanity of success, are untouched by envy.

The gentleman at the iron table is not dressed for the seaside. He wears his London frock coat and gloves; and his tall silk hat is on the table beside the sugar bowl. The excellent condition and quality of these garments, the gold-rimmed folding spectacles through which he is reading the Standard, and the Times at his elbow overlaying the local paper, all testify to his respectability. He is about fifty, clean shaven, and close-cropped, with the corners of his mouth turned down purposely, as if he suspected them of wanting to turn up, and was determined not to let them have their way. He has large expansive ears, cod colored eyes, and a brow kept resolutely wide open, as if, again, he had resolved in his youth to be truthful, magnanimous, and incorruptible, but had never succeeded in making that habit of mind automatic and unconscious. Still, he is by no means to be laughed at. There is no sign of stupidity or infirmity of will about him: on the contrary, he would pass anywhere at sight as a man of more than average professional capacity and responsibility. Just at present he is enjoying the weather and the sea too much to be out of patience; but he has exhausted all the news in his papers and is at present reduced to the advertisements, which are not sufficiently succulent to induce him to persevere with them.

THE GENTLEMAN: *yawning and giving up the paper as a bad job.* Waiter!

WAITER: Sir? *coming to him*

THE GENTLEMAN: Are you quite sure Mrs Clandon is coming back before lunch?

WAITER: Quite sure, sir. She expects you at a quarter to one, sir. *(The gentleman, soothed at once by the waiter's voice, looks at him with a lazy smile. It is a quiet voice, with a gentle melody in it that gives sympathetic interest to his most commonplace remark; and he speaks with the sweetest propriety, neither dropping his aitches nor misplacing them, nor committing any other vulgarism. He looks at his watch as he continues)* Not that yet, sir, is it? 12:43, sir. Only two minutes more to wait, sir. Nice morning, sir?

THE GENTLEMAN: Yes: very fresh after London.

WAITER: Yes, sir: so all our visitors say, sir. Very nice family, Mrs Clandon's, sir.

THE GENTLEMAN: You like them, do you?

WAITER: Yes, sir. They have a free way with them that is very taking, sir, very taking indeed, sir: especially the young lady and gentleman.

THE GENTLEMAN: Miss Dorothea and Mr Philip, I suppose.

WAITER: Yes, sir. The young lady, in giving an order, or the like of that, will say, "Remember, William, we came to this hotel on your account, having heard what a perfect waiter you are." The young gentleman will tell me that I remind him strongly of his father *the gentleman starts at this* and that he expects me to act by him as such. *Soothing, sunny cadence.* Oh, very pleasant, sir, very affable and pleasant indeed!

THE GENTLEMAN: You like his father! *He laughs at the notion.*

WAITER: Oh, we must not take what they say too seriously, sir. Of course, sir, if it were true, the young lady would have seen the resemblance, too, sir.

THE GENTLEMAN: Did she?

WAITER: No, sir. She thought me like the bust of Shakespear in Stratford Church, sir. That is why she calls me William, sir. My real name is Walter, sir. *He turns to go back to the table, and sees Mrs Clandon coming up to the terrace from the beach by the steps.* Here is Mrs Clandon, sir. *To Mrs Clandon, in an unobtrusively confidential tone* Gentleman for you, ma'am.

MRS. CLANDON: We shall have two more gentlemen at lunch, William.

WAITER: Right, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am. *He withdraws into the hotel. Mrs Clandon comes forward looking round for her visitor, but passes over the gentleman without any sign of recognition.*

THE GENTLEMAN: *peering at her quaintly from under the umbrella.* Don't you know me?

MRS. CLANDON: *incredulously, looking hard at him* Are you Finch McComas?

MRS. CLANDON: McCOMAS. Can't you guess? *He shuts the umbrella; puts it aside; and jocularly plants himself with his hands on his hips to be inspected.*

MRS. CLANDON: I believe you are. *She gives him her hand. The shake that ensues is that of old friends after a long separation.* Where's your beard?

MRS. CLANDON: McCOMAS. *with humorous solemnity.* Would you employ a solicitor with a beard?

MRS. CLANDON: *pointing to the silk hat on the table.* Is that your hat?

MRS. CLANDON: McCOMAS. Would you employ a solicitor with a sombrero?

MRS. CLANDON: I have thought of you all these eighteen years with the beard and the sombrero. *She sits down on the garden seat. McComas takes his chair again.* Do you go to the meetings of the Dialectical Society still?

MRS. CLANDON: McCOMAS *gravely.* I do not frequent meetings now.

MRS. CLANDON: Finch: I see what has happened. You have become respectable.

MRS. CLANDON: McCOMAS. Haven't you?

MRS. CLANDON: Not a bit.

MRS. CLANDON: McCOMAS. You hold to your old opinions still?

MRS. CLANDON: As firmly as ever.

MRS. CLANDON: McCOMAS. Bless me! And you are still ready to make speeches in public, in spite of your sex *Mrs Clandon nods;* to insist on a married woman's right to her own separate property *she nods again;* to champion Darwin's view of the origin of species and John Stuart Mill's essay on Liberty *nod;* to read Huxley, Tyndall and George Eliot *three nods;* and to demand University degrees, the opening of the professions, and the parliamentary franchise for women as well as men?

MRS. CLANDON: *resolutely.* Yes: I have not gone back one inch; and I have educated Gloria to take up my work where I left it. That is what has brought me back to England: I felt that I had no right to bury her alive in Madeira—my St. Helena, Finch. I suppose she will be howled at as I was; but she is prepared for that.

MRS. CLANDON: McCOMAS. Howled at! My dear good lady: there is nothing in any of those views now-a-days to prevent her from marrying a bishop. You reproached me just now for having become respectable. You were wrong: I hold to our old opinions as strongly as ever. I don't go to church; and I don't pretend I do. I call myself what I am: a Philosophic Radical, standing for liberty and the rights of the individual, as I learnt to do from my master Herbert Spencer. Am I howled at? No: I'm indulged as an old fogey. I'm out of everything, because I've refused to bow the knee to Socialism.

MRS. CLANDON: *shocked.* Socialism.

MRS. CLANDON: McCOMAS. Yes, Socialism. That's what Miss Gloria will be up to her ears in before the end of the month if you let her loose here.

MRS. CLANDON: *emphatically.* But I can prove to her that Socialism is a fallacy.

MRS. CLANDON: McCOMAS *touchingly.* It is by proving that, Mrs Clandon, that I have lost all my young disciples. Be careful what you do: let her go her own way. *With some bitterness.* We're old-fashioned: the world thinks it has left us behind. There is only one place in all England where your opinions would still pass as advanced.

MRS. CLANDON: *scornfully unconvinced.* The Church, perhaps?

MRS. CLANDON: McCOMAS. No, the theatre. And now to business! Why have you made me come down here?

MRS. CLANDON: Well, partly because I wanted to see you—

MRS. CLANDON: McCOMAS *with good-humored irony.* Thanks.

MRS. CLANDON: —and partly because I want you to explain everything to the children. They know nothing; and now that we have come back to England, it is impossible to leave them in ignorance any longer. *Agitated.* Finch: I cannot bring myself to tell them. I—*(She is interrupted by the twins and Gloria. Dolly comes tearing up the steps, racing Philip, who combines a terrific speed with unhurried propriety of bearing which, however, costs him the race, as Dolly reaches her mother first and almost upsets the garden seat by the precipitancy of her arrival.)*

DOLLY: *breathless.* It's all right, mamma. The dentist is coming; and he's bringing his old man.

MRS. CLANDON: Dolly, dear: don't you see Mr McComas? *Mr McComas rises, smilingly.*

DOLLY: *her face falling with the most disparagingly obvious disappointment.* This! Where are the flowing locks?

PHILIP: *seconding her warmly.* Where the beard? —the cloak? —the poetic exterior?

DOLLY: Oh, Mr McComas, you've gone and spoiled yourself. Why didn't you wait till we'd seen you?

DOLLY: McCOMAS *taken aback, but rallying his humor to meet the emergency.* Because eighteen

years is too long for a solicitor to go without having his hair cut.

GLORIA: *at the other side of McComas.* How do you do, Mr McComas? *He turns; and she takes his hand and presses it, with a frank straight look into his eyes.* We are glad to meet you at last.

GLORIA: McCOMAS. Miss Gloria, I presume? *Gloria smiles assent, and releases his hand after a final pressure. She then retires behind the garden seat, leaning over the back beside Mrs Clandon.* And this young gentleman?

PHILIP: I was christened in a comparatively prosaic mood. My name is—

DOLLY: *completing his sentence for him declamatorily.* "Norval. On the Grampian hills"—

PHILIP: *declaiming gravely.* "My father feeds his flock, a frugal swain"—

MRS. CLANDON: *remonstrating.* Dear, dear children: don't be silly. Everything is so new to them here, Finch, that they are in the wildest spirits. They think every Englishman they meet is a joke.

DOLLY: Well, so he is: it's not our fault.

PHILIP: My knowledge of human nature is fairly extensive, Mr McComas; but I find it impossible to take the inhabitants of this island seriously.

PHILIP: McCOMAS. I presume, sir, you are Master Philip *offering his hand?*

PHILIP: *taking McComas's hand and looking solemnly at him.* I was Master Philip—wasso for many years; just as you were once Master Finch. *He gives his hand a single shake and drops it; then turns away, exclaiming meditatively* How strange it is to look back on our boyhood! *McComas stares after him, not at all pleased.*

DOLLY: *to Mrs Clandon.* Has Finch had a drink?

MRS. CLANDON: *remonstrating.* Dearest: Mr McComas will lunch with us.

DOLLY: Have you ordered for seven? Don't forget the old gentleman.

MRS. CLANDON: I have not forgotten him, dear. What is his name?

DOLLY: Chalkstones. He'll be here at half past one. *To McComas.* Are we like what you expected?

MRS. CLANDON: *changing her tone to a more earnest one.* Dolly: Mr McComas has something more serious than that to tell you. Children: I have asked my old friend to answer the question you asked this morning. He is your father's friend as well as mine: and he will tell you the story more fairly than I could. *Turning her head from them to Gloria.* Gloria: are you satisfied?

GLORIA: *gravely attentive.* Mr McComas is very kind.

GLORIA: McCOMAS *nervously.* Not at all, my dear young lady: not at all. At the same time, this is rather sudden. I was hardly prepared—er—

DOLLY: *suspiciously.* Oh, we don't want anything prepared.

PHILIP: *exhorting him.* Tell us the truth.

DOLLY: *emphatically.* Bald headed.

DOLLY: McCOMAS *nettled.* I hope you intend to take what I have to say seriously.

PHILIP: *with profound mock gravity.* I hope it will deserve it, Mr McComas. My knowledge of human nature teaches me not to expect too much.

MRS. CLANDON: *remonstrating.* Phil—

PHILIP: Yes, mother, all right. I beg your pardon, Mr McComas: don't mind us.

DOLLY: *in conciliation.* We mean well.

PHILIP: Shut up, both.

Dolly holds her lips. McComas takes a chair from the luncheon table; places it between the little table and the garden seat with Dolly on his right and Philip on his left; and settles himself in it with the air of a man about to begin a long communication. The Clandons match him expectantly.

PHILIP: McCOMAS. Ahem! Your father—

DOLLY: *interrupting.* How old is he?

PHILIP: Sh!

MRS. CLANDON: *softly.* Dear Dolly: don't let us interrupt Mr McComas.

MRS. CLANDON: McCOMAS *emphatically.* Thank you, Mrs Clandon. Thank you. *To Dolly.* Your father is fifty-seven.

DOLLY: *with a bound, startled and excited.* Fifty-seven! Where does he live?

MRS. CLANDON: *remonstrating.* Dolly, Dolly!

MRS. CLANDON: McCOMAS *stopping her.* Let me answer that, Mrs Clandon. The answer will surprise you considerably. He lives in this town. *Mrs Clandon rises. She and Gloria look at one another in the greatest consternation.*

DOLLY: *with conviction.* I knew it! Phil: Chalkstones is our father.

DOLLY: McCOMAS. Chalkstones!

DOLLY: Oh, Crampstones, or whatever it is. He said I was like his mother. I knew he must mean his daughter.

PHILIP: *very seriously.* Mr McComas: I desire to consider your feelings in every possible way: but I warn you that if you stretch the long arm of coincidence to the length of telling me that Mr Crampton of this town is my father, I shall decline to entertain the information for a moment.

PHILIP: McCOMAS. And pray why?

PHILIP: Because I have seen the gentleman; and he is entirely unfit to be my father, or Dolly's father, or Gloria's father, or my mother's husband.

PHILIP: McCOMAS. Oh, indeed! Well, sir, let me tell you that whether you like it or not, he is your father, and your sister' father, and Mrs Clandon's husband. Now! What have you to say to that!

DOLLY: *whimpering.* You needn't be so cross. Crampton isn't your father.

PHILIP: Mr McComas: your conduct is heartless. Here you find a family enjoying the unspeakable peace and freedom of being orphans. We have never seen the face of a relative—never known a claim except the claim of freely chosen friendship. And now you wish to thrust into the most intimate relationship with us a man whom we don't know—

DOLLY: *vehemently.* An awful old man! *reproachfully* And you began as if you had quite a nice father for us.

DOLLY: McCOMAS *angrily.* How do you know that he is not nice? And what right have you to choose your own father? *raising his voice.* Let me tell you, Miss Clandon, that you are too young to—

DOLLY: *interrupting him suddenly and eagerly.* Stop, I forgot! Has he any money?

DOLLY: McCOMAS. He has a great deal of money.

DOLLY: *delighted.* Oh, what did I always say, Phil?

PHILIP: Dolly: we have perhaps been condemning the old man too hastily. Proceed, Mr McComas.

PHILIP: McCOMAS. I shall not proceed, sir. I am too hurt, too shocked, to proceed.

MRS. CLANDON: *urgently.* Finch: do you realize what is happening? Do you understand that my children have invited that man to lunch, and that he will be here in a few moments?

MRS. CLANDON: McCOMAS *completely upset.* What! do you mean—am I to understand- —is it—

PHILIP: *impressively.* Steady, Finch. Think it out slowly and carefully. He's coming—coming to lunch.

GLORIA: Which of us is to tell him the truth? Have you thought of that?

MRS. CLANDON: Finch: you must tell him.

DOLLY: Oh, Finch is no good at telling things. Look at the mess he has made of telling us.

DOLLY: McCOMAS. I have not been allowed to speak. I protest against this.

DOLLY: *taking his arm coaxingly.* Dear Finch: don't be cross.

MRS. CLANDON: Gloria: let us go in. He may arrive at any moment.

GLORIA: *proudly.* Do not stir, mother. I shall not stir. We must not run away.

MRS. CLANDON: *delicately rebuking her.* My dear: we cannot sit down to lunch just as we are. We shall come back again. We must have no bravado. *Gloria winces, and goes into the hotel without a word.* Come, Dolly. *As she goes into the hotel door, the waiter comes out with plates, etc., for two additional covers on a tray.*

WAITER: Gentlemen come yet, ma'am?

MRS. CLANDON: Two more to come yet, thank you. They will be here, immediately. *She goes into the hotel. The waiter takes his tray to the service table.*

PHILIP: I have an idea. Mr McComas: this communication should be made, should it not, by a man of infinite tact?

PHILIP: McCOMAS. It will require tact, certainly.

PHILIP: Good! Dolly: whose tact were you noticing only this morning?

DOLLY: *seizing the idea with rapture.* Oh, yes, I declare! William!

PHILIP: The very man! *Calling* William!

WAITER: Coming, sir.

WAITER: McCOMAS *horrified.* The waiter! Stop, stop! I will not permit this. I—

WAITER: *presenting himself between Philip and McComas.* Yes, sir. *McComas's complexion fades into stone grey; and all movement and expression desert his eyes. He sits down stupefied.*

PHILIP: William: you remember my request to you to regard me as your son?

WAITER: *with respectful indulgence.* Yes, sir. Anything you please, sir.

PHILIP: William: at the very outset of your career as my father, a rival has appeared on the scene.

WAITER: Your real father, sir? Well, that was to be expected, sooner or later, sir, wasn't it? *Turning with a happy smile to McComas.* Is it you, sir?

WAITER: McCOMAS *renerved by indignation.* Certainly not. My children know how to behave themselves.

PHILIP: No, William: this gentleman was very nearly my father: he wooed my mother, but wooed her in

vain.

PHILIP: McCOMAS *outraged.* Well, of all the—

PHILIP: Sh! Consequently, he is only our solicitor. Do you know one Crampton, of this town?

WAITER: Cock-eyed Crampton, sir, of the Crooked Billet, is it?

PHILIP: I don't know. Finch: does he keep a public house?

PHILIP: McCOMAS *rising scandalized.* No, no, no. Your father, sir, is a well-known yacht builder, an eminent man here.

WAITER: *impressed.* Oh, beg pardon, sir, I'm sure. A son of Mr Crampton's! Dear me!

PHILIP: Mr Crampton is coming to lunch with us.

WAITER: *puzzled.* Yes, sir. *Diplomatically.* Don't usually lunch with his family, perhaps, sir?

PHILIP: *impressively.* William: he does not know that we are his family. He has not seen us for eighteen years. He won't know us. *To emphasize the communication he seats himself on the iron table with a spring, and looks at the waiter with his lips compressed and his legs swinging.*

DOLLY: We want you to break the news to him, William.

WAITER: But I should think he'd guess when he sees your mother, miss. *Philip's legs become motionless at this elucidation. He contemplates the waiter raptly.*

DOLLY: *dazzled.* I never thought of that.

PHILIP: Nor I. *Coming off the table and turning reproachfully on McComas.* Nor you.

DOLLY: And you a solicitor!

PHILIP: Finch: Your professional incompetence is appalling. William: your sagacity puts us all to shame.

DOLLY: You really are like Shakespear, William.

WAITER: Not at all, sir. Don't mention it, miss. Most happy, I'm sure, sir. *Goes back modestly to the luncheon table and lays the two additional covers, one at the end next the steps, and the other so as to make a third on the side furthest from the balustrade.*

PHILIP: *abruptly.* Finch: come and wash your hands. *Seizes his arm and leads him toward the hotel.*

PHILIP: McCOMAS. I am thoroughly vexed and hurt, Mr Clandon—

PHILIP: *interrupting him.* You will get used to us. Come, Dolly. *McComas shakes him off and marches into the hotel. Philip follows with unruffled composure.*

DOLLY: *turning for a moment on the steps as she follows them.* Keep your wits about you, William. There will be fire-works.

WAITER: Right, miss. You may depend on me, miss. *She goes into the hotel.*

Valentine comes lightly up the steps from the beach, followed doggedly by Crampton. Valentine carries a walking stick. Crampton, either because he is old and chilly, or with some idea of extenuating the unfashionableness of his reefer jacket, wears a light overcoat. He stops at the chair left by McComas in the middle of the terrace, and steadies himself for a moment by placing his hand on the back of it.

CRAMPTON: Those steps make me giddy. *He passes his hand over his forehead.* I have not got over that infernal gas yet.

He goes to the iron chair, so that he can lean his elbows on the little table to prop his head as he sits. He soon recovers, and begins to unbutton his overcoat. Meanwhile Valentine interviews the waiter.

VALENTINE: Waiter!

WAITER: *coming forward between them.* Yes, sir.

VALENTINE: Mrs Lanfrey Clandon.

WAITER: *with a sweet smile of welcome.* Yes, sir. We're expecting you, sir. That is your table, sir. Mrs Clandon will be down presently, sir. The young lady and young gentleman were just talking about your friend, sir.

VALENTINE: Indeed!

WAITER: *smoothly melodious.* Yes, sire. Great flow of spirits, sir. A vein of pleasantry, as you might say, sir. *Quickly, to Crampton, who has risen to get the overcoat off.* Beg pardon, sir, but if you'll allow me *helping him to get the overcoat off and taking it from him.* Thank you, sir. *Crampton sits down again; and the waiter resumes the broken melody.* The young gentleman's latest is that you're his father, sir.

CRAMPTON: What!

WAITER: Only his joke, sir, his favourite joke. Yesterday, I was to be his father. To-day, as soon as he knew you were coming, sir, he tried to put it up on me that you were his father, his long lost father—not seen you for eighteen years, he said.

CRAMPTON: *startled.* Eighteen years!

WAITER: Yes, sir. *With gentle archness.* But I was up to his tricks, sir. I saw the idea coming into his head as he stood there, thinking what new joke he'd have with me. Yes, sir: that's the sort he is: very pleasant, ve–ry off hand and affable indeed, sir. *Again changing his tempo to say to Valentine, who is putting his stick down against the corner of the garden seat* If you'll allow me, sir? *Taking Valentine's stick.* Thank you, sir. *Valentine strolls up to the luncheon table and looks at the menu. The waiter turns to Crampton and resumes his lay.* Even the solicitor took up the joke, although he was in a manner of speaking in my confidence about the young gentleman, sir. Yes, sir, I assure you, sir. You would never imagine what respectable professional gentlemen from London will do on an outing, when the sea air takes them, sir.

CRAMPTON: Oh, there's a solicitor with them, is there?

WAITER: The family solicitor, sir—yes, sir. Name of McComas, sir. *He goes towards hotel entrance with coat and stick, happily unconscious of the bomblike effect the name has produced on Crampton.*

CRAMPTON: *rising in angry alarm.* McComas! *Calls to Valentine.* Valentine! *Again, fiercely.* Valentine!! *Valentine turns.* This is a plant, a conspiracy. This is my family—my children—my infernal wife.

VALENTINE: *coolly.* On, indeed! Interesting meeting! *He resumes his study of the menu.*

CRAMPTON: Meeting! Not for me. Let me out of this. *Calling to the waiter.* Give me that coat.

WAITER: Yes, sir. *He comes back, puts Valentine's stick carefully down against the luncheon table; and delicately shakes the coat out and holds it for Crampton to put on.* I seem to have done the young gentleman an injustice, sir, haven't I, sir.

CRAMPTON: Rrrh! *He stops on the point of putting his arms into the sleeves, and turns to Valentine with sudden suspicion.* Valentine: you are in this. You made this plot. You—

VALENTINE: *decisively.* Bosh! *He throws the menu down and goes round the table to look out unconcernedly over the parapet.*

CRAMPTON: *angrily.* What d'ye—*McComas, followed by Philip and Dolly, comes out. He vacillates for a moment on seeing Crampton.*

WAITER: *softly—interrupting Crampton.* Steady, sir. Here they come, sir. *(He takes up the stick and makes for the hotel, throwing the coat across his arm. McComas turns the corners of his mouth resolutely down and crosses to Crampton, who draws back and glares, with his hands behind him. McComas, with his brow opener than ever, confronts him in the majesty of a spotless conscience.)*

WAITER: *aside, as he passes Philip on his way out.* I've broke it to him, sir.

PHILIP: Invaluable William! *He passes on to the table.*

DOLLY: *aside to the waiter.* How did he take it?

WAITER: *aside to her.* Startled at first, miss; but resigned—very resigned, indeed, miss. *He takes the stick and coat into the hotel.*

WAITER: McCOMAS *having stared Crampton out of countenance.* So here you are, Mr Crampton.

CRAMPTON: Yes, here—caught in a trap—a mean trap. Are those my children?

PHILIP: *with deadly politeness.* Is this our father, Mr McComas?

PHILIP: McCOMAS. Yes—er—*He loses countenance himself and stops.*

DOLLY: *conventionally.* Pleased to meet you again. *She wanders idly round the table, exchanging a smile and a word of greeting with Valentine on the way.*

PHILIP: Allow me to discharge my first duty as host by ordering your wine. *(He takes the wine list from the table. His polite attention, and Dolly's unconcerned indifference, leave Crampton on the footing of the casual acquaintance picked up that morning at the dentist's. The consciousness of it goes through the father with so keen a pang that he trembles all over; his brow becomes wet; and he stares dumbly at his son, who, just conscious enough of his own callousness to intensely enjoy the humor and adroitness of it, proceeds pleasantly.)* Finch: some crusted old port for you, as a respectable family solicitor, eh?

PHILIP: McCOMAS *firmly.* Apollinaris only. I prefer to take nothing heating. *He walks away to the side of the terrace, like a man putting temptation behind him.*

PHILIP: Valentine—?

VALENTINE: Would Lager be considered vulgar?

PHILIP: Probably. We'll order some. Dolly takes it. *Turning to Crampton with cheerful politeness.* And now, Mr Crampton, what can we do for you?

CRAMPTON: What d'ye mean, boy?

PHILIP: Boy! *Very solemnly.* Whose fault is it that I am a boy?

Crampton snatches the wine list rudely from him and irresolutely pretends to read it. Philip abandons it to him with perfect politeness.

DOLLY: *looking over Crampton's right shoulder.* The whisky's on the last page but one.

CRAMPTON: Let me alone, child.

DOLLY: Child! No, no: you may call me Dolly if you like; but you mustn't call me child. *She slips her arm through Philip's; and the two stand looking at Crampton as if he were some eccentric stranger.*

CRAMPTON: *mopping his brow in rage and agony, and yet relieved even by their playing with him.* McComas: we are—ha!—going to have a pleasant meal.

CRAMPTON: McCOMAS *pusillanimously.* There is no reason why it should not be pleasant. *He looks abjectly gloomy.*

PHILIP: Finch's face is a feast in itself. *(Mrs Clandon and Gloria come from the hotel. Mrs Clandon advances with courageous self- possession and marked dignity of manner. She stops at the foot of the steps to address Valentine, who is in her path. Gloria also stops, looking at Crampton with a certain repulsion.)*

MRS. CLANDON: Glad to see you again, Mr Valentine. *He smiles. She passes on and confronts Crampton, intending to address him with perfect composure; but his aspect shakes her. She stops suddenly and says anxiously, with a touch of remorse.* Fergus: you are greatly changed.

CRAMPTON: *grimly.* I daresay. A man does change in eighteen years.

MRS. CLANDON: *troubled.* I—I did not mean that. I hope your health is good.

CRAMPTON: Thank you. No: it's not my health. It's my happiness: that's the change you meant, I think. *Breaking out suddenly.* Look at her, McComas! Look at her; and look at me! *He utters a half laugh, half sob.*

PHILIP: Sh! *Pointing to the hotel entrance, where the waiter has just appeared.* Order before William!

DOLLY: *touching Crampton's arm warningly with her finger.* Ahem! *(The waiter goes to the service table and beckons to the kitchen entrance, whence issue a young waiter with soup plates, and a cook, in white apron and cap, with the soup tureen. The young waiter remains and serves: the cook goes out, and reappears from time to time bringing in the courses. He carves, but does not serve. The waiter comes to the end of the luncheon table next the steps.)*

MRS. CLANDON: *as they all assemble about the table.* I think you have all met one another already to-day. Oh, no, excuse me. *Introducing* Mr Valentine: Mr McComas. *She goes to the end of the table nearest the hotel.* Fergus: will you take the head of the table, please.

CRAMPTON: Ha! *Bitterly.* The head of the table!

WAITER: *holding the chair for him with inoffensive encouragement.* This end, sir. *Crampton submits, and takes his seat.* Thank you, sir.

MRS. CLANDON: Mr Valentine: will you take that side *indicating the side nearest the parapet* with Gloria? *Valentine and Gloria take their places, Gloria next Crampton and Valentine next Mrs Clandon.* Finch: I must put you on this side, between Dolly and Phil. You must protect yourself as best you can. *The three take the remaining side of the table, Dolly next her mother, Phil next his father, and McComas between them. Soup is served.*

WAITER: *to Crampton.* Thick or clear, sir?

CRAMPTON: *to Mrs Clandon.* Does nobody ask a blessing in this household?

PHILIP: *interposing smartly.* Let us first settle what we are about to receive. William!

WAITER: Yes, sir. *He glides swiftly round the table to Phil's left elbow. On his way he whispers to the young waiter* Thick.

PHILIP: Two small Lagers for the children as usual, William; and one large for this gentleman *indicating Valentine.* Large Apollinaris for Mr McComas.

WAITER: Yes, sir.

DOLLY: Have a six of Irish in it, Finch?

DOLLY: McCOMAS *scandalized.* No—no; thank you.

PHILIP: Number 413 for my mother and Miss Gloria as before; and—*turning enquiringly to Crampton* Eh?

CRAMPTON: *scowling and about to reply offensively.* I—

WAITER: *striking in mellifluously.* All right, sir. We know what Mr Crampton likes here, sir. *He goes into the hotel.*

PHILIP: *looking gravely at his father.* You frequent bars. Bad habit! *The cook, accompanied by a waiter with a supply of hot plates, brings in the fish from the kitchen to the service table, and begins slicing it.*

CRAMPTON: You have learnt your lesson from your mother, I see.

MRS. CLANDON: Phil: will you please remember that your jokes are apt to irritate people who are not accustomed to us, and that your father is our guest to-day.

CRAMPTON: *bitterly.* Yes, a guest at the head of my own table. *The soup plates are removed.*

DOLLY: *sympathetically.* Yes: it's embarrassing, isn't it? It's just as bad for us, you know.

PHILIP: Sh! Dolly: we are both wanting in tact. *To Crampton.* We mean well, Mr Crampton; but we are not yet strong in the filial line. *The waiter returns from the hotel with the drinks.* William: come and restore good feeling.

WAITER: *cheerfully.* Yes, sir. Certainly, sir. Small Lager for you, sir. *To Crampton.* Seltzer and Irish, sir. *To McComas.* Apollinaris, sir. *To Dolly.* Small Lager, miss. *To Mrs Clandon, pouring out wine.* 413, madam. *To Valentine.* Large Lager for you, sir. *To Gloria.* 413, miss.

DOLLY: *drinking.* To the family!

PHILIP: *drinking.* Hearth and Home! *Fish is served.*

PHILIP: McCOMAS *with an obviously forced attempt at cheerful domesticity.* We are getting on very nicely after all.

DOLLY: *critically.* After all! After all what, Finch?

CRAMPTON: *sarcastically.* He means that you are getting on very nicely in spite of the presence of your father. Do I take your point rightly, Mr McComas?

CRAMPTON: McCOMAS *disconcerted.* No, no. I only said "after all" to round off the sentence. I—er—er—er—

WAITER: *tactfully.* Turbot, sir?

WAITER: McCOMAS *intensely grateful for the interruption.* Thank you, waiter: thank you.

WAITER: *sotto voce.* Don't mention it, sir. *He returns to the service table.*

CRAMPTON: *to Phil.* Have you thought of choosing a profession yet?

PHILIP: I am keeping my mind open on that subject. William!

WAITER: Yes, sir.

PHILIP: How long do you think it would take me to learn to be a really smart waiter?

WAITER: Can't be learnt, sir. It's in the character, sir. *Confidentially to Valentine, who is looking about for something.* Bread for the lady, sir? yes, sir. *He serves bread to Gloria, and resumes at his former pitch.* Very few are born to it, sir.

PHILIP: You don't happen to have such a thing as a son, yourself, have you?

WAITER: Yes, sir: oh, yes, sir. *To Gloria, again dropping his voice.* A little more fish, miss? you won't care for the joint in the middle of the day.

GLORIA: No, thank you. *The fish plates are removed.*

DOLLY: Is your son a waiter, too, William?

WAITER: *serving Gloria with fowl.* Oh, no, miss, he's too impetuous. He's at the Bar.

WAITER: McCOMAS *patronizingly.* A potman, eh?

WAITER: *with a touch of melancholy, as if recalling a disappointment softened by time.* No, sir: the other bar—your profession, sir. A Q.C., sir.

WAITER: McCOMAS *embarrassed.* I'm sure I beg your pardon.

WAITER: Not at all, sir. Very natural mistake, I'm sure, sir. I've often wished he was a potman, sir. Would have been off my hands ever so much sooner, sir. *Aside to Valentine, who is again in difficulties.* Salt at your elbow, sir. *Resuming.* Yes, sir: had to support him until he was thirty-seven, sir. But doing well now, sir: very satisfactory indeed, sir. Nothing less than fifty guineas, sir.

WAITER: McCOMAS. Democracy, Crampton!—modern democracy!

WAITER: *calmly.* No, sir, not democracy: only education, sir. Scholarships, sir. Cambridge Local, sir. Sidney Sussex College, sir. *Dolly plucks his sleeve and whispers as he bends down.* Stone ginger, miss? Right, miss. *To McComas.* Very good thing for him, sir: he never had any turn for real work, sir. *He goes into the hotel, leaving the company somewhat overwhelmed by his son's eminence.*

VALENTINE: Which of us dare give that man an order again!

DOLLY: I hope he won't mind my sending him for ginger-beer.

CRAMPTON: *doggedly.* While he's a waiter it's his business to wait. If you had treated him as a waiter ought to be treated, he'd have held his tongue.

DOLLY: What a loss that would have been! Perhaps he'll give us an introduction to his son and get us into London society. *The waiter reappears with the ginger-beer.*

CRAMPTON: *growling contemptuously.* London society! London society!! You're not fit for any society, child.

DOLLY: *losing her temper.* Now look here, Mr Crampton. If you think—

WAITER: *softly, at her elbow.* Stone ginger, miss.

DOLLY: *taken aback, recovers her good humor after a long breath and says sweetly.* Thank you, dear William. You were just in time. *She drinks.*

DOLLY: McCOMAS *making a fresh effort to lead the conversation into dispassionate regions.* If I may be allowed to change the subject, Miss Clandon, what is the established religion in Madeira?

GLORIA: I suppose the Portuguese religion. I never inquired.

DOLLY: The servants come in Lent and kneel down before you and confess all the things they've done: and you have to pretend to forgive them. Do they do that in England, William?

WAITER: Not usually, miss. They may in some parts: but it has not come under my notice, miss. *Catching Mrs Clandon's eye as the young waiter offers her the salad bowl.* You like it without dressing, ma'am: yes, ma'am, I have some for you. *To his young colleague, motioning him to serve Gloria.* This side, Jo. *He takes a special portion of salad from the service table and puts it beside Mrs Clandon's plate. In doing so he observes that Dolly is making a wry face.* Only a bit of watercress, miss, got in by mistake. *He takes her salad away.* Thank you, miss. *To the young waiter, admonishing him to serve Dolly afresh.* Jo. *Resuming.* Mostly members of the Church of England, miss.

DOLLY: Members of the Church of England! What's the subscription?

CRAMPTON: *rising violently amid general consternation.* You see how my children have been brought up, McComas. You see it; you hear it. I call all of you to witness—*He becomes inarticulate, and is about to strike his fist recklessly on the table when the waiter considerately takes away his plate.*

MRS. CLANDON: *firmly.* Sit down, Fergus. There is no occasion at all for this outburst. You must remember that Dolly is just like a foreigner here. Pray sit down.

CRAMPTON: *subsiding unwillingly.* I doubt whether I ought to sit here and countenance all this. I doubt it.

WAITER: Cheese, sir; or would you like a cold sweet?

CRAMPTON: *take aback.* What? Oh!—cheese, cheese.

DOLLY: Bring a box of cigarets, William.

WAITER: All ready, miss. *He takes a box of cigarets from the service table and places them before Dolly, who selects one and prepares to smoke. He then returns to his table for a box of vestas.*

CRAMPTON: *staring aghast at Dolly.* Does she smoke?

DOLLY: *out of patience.* Really, Mr Crampton, I'm afraid I'm spoiling your lunch. I'll go and have my cigaret on the beach. *She leaves the table with petulant suddenness and goes down the steps. The waiter attempts to give her the matches; but she is gone before he can reach her.*

CRAMPTON: *furiously.* Margaret: call that girl back. Call her back, I say.

CRAMPTON: McCOMAS *trying to make peace.* Come, Crampton: never mind. She's her father's daughter: that's all.

MRS. CLANDON: *with deep resentment.* I hope not, Finch. *She rises: they all rise a little.* Mr Valentine: will you excuse me: I am afraid Dolly is hurt and put out by what has passed. I must go to her.

CRAMPTON: To take her part against me, you mean.

MRS. CLANDON: *ignoring him.* Gloria: will you take my place whilst I am away, dear. *She crosses to the steps. Crampton's eyes follow her with bitter hatred. The rest watch her in embarrassed silence, feeling the incident to be a very painful one.*

WAITER: *intercepting her at the top of the steps and offering her a box of vestas.* Young lady forgot the matches, ma'am. If you would be so good, ma'am.

MRS. CLANDON: *surprised into grateful politeness by the witchery of his sweet and cheerful tones.* Thank you very much. *She takes the matches and goes down to the beach. The waiter shepherds his assistant along with him into the hotel by the kitchen entrance, leaving the luncheon party to themselves.*

CRAMPTON: *throwing himself back in his chair.* There's a mother for you, McComas! There's a mother for you!

GLORIA: *steadfastly.* Yes: a good mother.

CRAMPTON: And a bad father? That's what you mean, eh?

VALENTINE: *rising indignantly and addressing Gloria.* Miss Clandon: I—

CRAMPTON: *turning on him.* That girl's name is Crampton, Mr Valentine, not Clandon. Do you wish to join them in insulting me?

VALENTINE: *ignoring him.* I'm overwhelmed, Miss Clandon. It's all my fault: I brought him here: I'm responsible for him. And I'm ashamed of him.

CRAMPTON: What d'y' mean?

GLORIA: *rising coldly.* No harm has been done, Mr Valentine. We have all been a little childish, I am afraid. Our party has been a failure: let us break it up and have done with it. *She puts her chair aside and turns to the steps, adding, with slighting composure, as she passes Crampton.* Good-bye, father.

She descends the steps with cold, disgusted indifference. They all look after her, and so do not notice the return of the waiter from the hotel, laden with Crampton's coat, Valentine's stick, a couple of shawls and parasols, a white canvas umbrella, and some camp stools.

CRAMPTON: *to himself, staring after Gloria with a ghastly expression.* Father! Father!! *He strikes his fist violently on the table.* Now—

WAITER: *offering the coat.* This is yours, sir, I think, sir. *(Crampton glares at him; then snatches it rudely and comes down the terrace towards the garden seat, struggling with the coat in his angry efforts to put it on. McComas rises and goes to his assistance; then takes his hat and umbrella from the little iron table, and turns towards the steps. Meanwhile the waiter, after thanking Crampton with unruffled sweetness for taking the coat, offers some of his burden to Phil.)* The ladies' sunshades, sir. Nasty glare off the sea to-day, sir: very trying to the complexion, sir. I shall carry down the camp stools myself, sir.

PHILIP: You are old, Father William; but you are the most considerate of men. No: keep the sunshades and give me the camp stools *taking them.*

WAITER: *with flattering gratitude.* Thank you, sir.

PHILIP: Finch: share with me *giving him a couple.* Come along. *They go down the steps together.*

VALENTINE: *to the waiter.* Leave me something to bring down—one of these. *Offering to take a sunshade.*

WAITER: *discreetly.* That's the younger lady's, sir. *Valentine lets it go.* Thank you, sir. If you'll allow me, sir, I think you had better have this. *He puts down the sunshades on Crampton's chair, and produces from the tail pocket of his dress coat, a book with a lady's handkerchief between the leaves, marking the page.* The eldest young lady is reading it at present. *Valentine takes it eagerly.* Thank you, sir. Schopenhauer, sir, you see. *He takes up the sunshades again.* Very interesting author, sir: especially on the subject of ladies, sir. *He goes down the steps. Valentine, about to follow him, recollects Crampton and changes his mind.*

VALENTINE: *coming rather excitedly to Crampton.* Now look here, Crampton: are you at all ashamed of yourself?

CRAMPTON: *pugnaciously.* Ashamed of myself! What for?

VALENTINE: For behaving like a bear. What will your daughter think of me for having brought you here?

CRAMPTON: I was not thinking of what my daughter was thinking of you.

VALENTINE: No, you were thinking of yourself. You're a perfect maniac.

CRAMPTON: *heartrent.* She told you what I am—a father—a father robbed of his children. What are the hearts of this generation like? Am I to come here after all these years—to see what my children are for the first time! to hear their voices!—and carry it all off like a fashionable visitor; drop in to lunch; be Mr Crampton—M i s t e r Crampton! What right have they to talk to me like that? I'm their father: do they deny that? I'm a man, with the feelings of our common humanity: have I no rights, no claims? In all these years who have I had round me? Servants, clerks, business acquaintances. I've had respect from them—aye, kindness. Would one of them have spoken to me as that girl spoke?—would one of them have laughed at me as that boy was laughing at me all the time? *Frantically.* My own children! M i s t e r Crampton! My—

VALENTINE: Come, come: they're only children. The only one of them that's worth anything called you father.

CRAMPTON: *wildly.* Yes: "good-bye, father." Oh, yes: she got at my feelings—with a stab!

VALENTINE: *taking this in very bad part.* Now look here, Crampton: you just let her alone: she's treated you very well. I had a much worse time of it at lunch than you.

CRAMPTON: You!

VALENTINE: *with growing impetuosity.* Yes: I. I sat next to her; and I never said a single thing to her the whole time—couldn't think of a blessed word. And not a word did she say to me.

CRAMPTON: Well?

VALENTINE: Well? Well??? *Tackling him very seriously and talking faster and faster.* Crampton: do you know what's been the matter with me to-day? You don't suppose, do you, that I'm in the habit of playing such tricks on my patients as I played on you?

CRAMPTON: I hope not.

VALENTINE: The explanation is that I'm stark mad, or rather that I've never been in my real senses before. I'm capable of anything: I've grown up at last: I'm a Man; and it's your daughter that's made a man of me.

CRAMPTON: *incredulously.* Are you in love with my daughter?

VALENTINE: *his words now coming in a perfect torrent.* Love! Nonsense: it's something far above and beyond that. It's life, it's faith, it's strength, certainty, paradise—

CRAMPTON: *interrupting him with acrid contempt.* Rubbish, man! What have you to keep a wife on? You can't marry her.

VALENTINE: Who wants to marry her? I'll kiss her hands; I'll kneel at her feet; I'll live for her; I'll die for her; and that'll be enough for me. Look at her book! See! *He kisses the handkerchief.* If you offered me all your money for this excuse for going down to the beach and speaking to her again, I'd only laugh at you. *(He rushes buoyantly off to the steps, where he bounces right into the arms of the waiter, who is coming up form the beach. The two save themselves from falling by clutching one another tightly round the waist and whirling one another around.)*

WAITER: *delicately.* Steady, sir, steady.

VALENTINE: *shocked at his own violence.* I beg your pardon.

WAITER: Not at all, sir, not at all. Very natural, sir, I'm sure, sir, at your age. The lady has sent me for her book, sir. Might I take the liberty of asking you to let her have it at once, sir?

VALENTINE: With pleasure. And if you will allow me to present you with a professional man's earnings for six weeks—*offering him Dolly's crown piece.*

WAITER: *as if the sum were beyond his utmost expectations.* Thank you, sir: much obliged. *Valentine dashes down the steps.* Very high- spirited young gentleman, sir: very manly and straight set up.

CRAMPTON: *in grumbling disparagement.* And making his fortune in a hurry, no doubt. I know what his six weeks' earnings come to. *He crosses the terrace to the iron table, and sits down.*

WAITER: *philosophically.* Well, sir, you never can tell. That's a principle in life with me, sir, if you'll excuse my having such a thing, sir. *Delicately sinking the philosopher in the waiter for a moment.* Perhaps you haven't noticed that you hadn't touched that seltzer and Irish, sir, when the party broke up. *He takes the tumbler from the luncheon table, and sets if before Crampton.* Yes, sir, you never can tell. There was my son, sir! who ever thought that he would rise to wear a silk gown,

sir? And yet to-day, sir, nothing less than fifty guineas, sir. What a lesson, sir!

CRAMPTON: Well, I hope he is grateful to you, and recognizes what he owes you.

WAITER: We get on together very well, very well indeed, sir, considering the difference in our stations. *With another of his irresistible transitions.* A small lump of sugar, sir, will take the flatness out of the seltzer without noticeably sweetening the drink, sir. Allow me, sir. *He drops a lump of sugar into the tumbler.* But as I say to him, where's the difference after all? If I must put on a dress coat to show what I am, sir, he must put on a wig and gown to show what he is. If my income is mostly tips, and there's a pretence that I don't get them, why, his income is mostly fees, sir; and I understand there's a pretence that he don't get them! If he likes society, and his profession brings him into contact with all ranks, so does mine, too, sir. If it's a little against a barrister to have a waiter for his father, sir, it's a little against a waiter to have a barrister for a son: many people consider it a great liberty, sir, I assure you, sir. Can I get you anything else, sir?

CRAMPTON: No, thank you. *With bitter humility.* I suppose that's no objection to my sitting here for a while: I can't disturb the party on the beach here.

WAITER: *with emotion.* Very kind of you, sir, to put it as if it was not a compliment and an honour to us, Mr Crampton, very kind indeed. The more you are at home here, sir, the better for us.

CRAMPTON: *in poignant irony.* Home!

WAITER: *reflectively.* Well, yes, sir: that's a way of looking at it, too, sir. I have always said that the great advantage of a hotel is that it's a refuge from home life, sir.

CRAMPTON: I missed that advantage to-day, I think.

WAITER: You did, sir, you did. Dear me! It's the unexpected that always happens, isn't it? *Shaking his head.* You never can tell, sir: you never can tell. *He goes into the hotel.*

CRAMPTON: *his eyes shining hardly as he props his drawn, miserable face on his hands.* Home! Home!! *(He drops his arms on the table and bows his head on them, but presently hears someone approaching and hastily sits bolt upright. It is Gloria, who has come up the steps alone, with her sunshade and her book in her hands. He looks defiantly at her, with the brutal obstinacy of his mouth and the wistfulness of his eyes contradicting each other pathetically. She comes to the corner of the garden seat and stands with her back to it, leaning against the end of it, and looking down at him as if wondering at his weakness: too curious about him to be cold, but supremely indifferent to their kinship.)* Well?

GLORIA: I want to speak with you for a moment.

CRAMPTON: *looking steadily at her.* Indeed? That's surprising. You meet your father after eighteen years; and you actually want to speak to him for a moment! That's touching: isn't it? *He rests his head on his hands, and looks down and away from her, in gloomy reflection.*

GLORIA: All that is what seems to me so nonsensical, so uncalled for. What do you expect us to feel for you—todo for you? What is it you want? Why are you less civil to us than other people are? You are evidently not very fond of us—whyshould you be? But surely we can meet without quarrelling.

CRAMPTON: *a dreadful grey shade passing over his face.* Do you realize that I am your father?

GLORIA: Perfectly.

CRAMPTON: Do you know what is due to me as your father?

GLORIA: For instance—?

CRAMPTON: *rising as if to combat a monster.* For instance! For instance!! For instance, duty, affection,

respect, obedience—

GLORIA: *quitting her careless leaning attitude and confronting him promptly and proudly.* I obey nothing but my sense of what is right. I respect nothing that is not noble. That is my duty. *She adds, less firmly* As to affection, it is not within my control. I am not sure that I quite know what affection means. *She turns away with an evident distaste for that part of the subject, and goes to the luncheon table for a comfortable chair, putting down her book and sunshade.*

CRAMPTON: *following her with his eyes.* Do you really mean what you are saying?

GLORIA: *turning on him quickly and severely.* Excuse me: that is an uncivil question. I am speaking seriously to you; and I expect you to take me seriously. *She takes one of the luncheon chairs; turns it away from the table; and sits down a little wearily, saying* Can you not discuss this matter coolly and rationally?

CRAMPTON: Coolly and rationally! No, I can't. Do you understand that? I can't.

GLORIA: *emphatically.* No. That I c a n n o t understand. I have no sympathy with—

CRAMPTON: *shrinking nervously.* Stop! Don't say anything more yet; you don't know what you're doing. Do you want to drive me mad? *She frowns, finding such petulance intolerable. He adds hastily* No: I'm not angry: indeed I'm not. Wait, wait: give me a little time to think. *(He stands for a moment, screwing and clinching his brows and hands in his perplexity; then takes the end chair from the luncheon table and sits down beside her, saying, with a touching effort to be gentle and patient)* Now, I think I have it. At least I'll try.

GLORIA: *firmly.* You see! Everything comes right if we only think it resolutely out.

CRAMPTON: *in sudden dread.* No: don't think. I want you to feel: that's the only thing that can help us. Listen! Do you—but first—I forgot. What's your name? I mean you pet name. They can't very well call you Sophronia.

GLORIA: *with astonished disgust.* Sophronia! My name is Gloria. I am always called by it.

CRAMPTON: *his temper rising again.* Your name is Sophronia, girl: you were called after your aunt Sophronia, my sister: she gave you your first Bible with your name written in it.

GLORIA: Then my mother gave me a new name.

CRAMPTON: *angrily.* She had no right to do it. I will not allow this.

GLORIA: You had no right to give me your sister's name. I don't know her.

CRAMPTON: You're talking nonsense. There are bounds to what I will put up with. I will not have it. Do you hear that?

GLORIA: *rising warningly.* Are you resolved to quarrel?

CRAMPTON: *terrified, pleading.* No, no: sit down. Sit down, won't you? *She looks at him, keeping him in suspense. He forces himself to utter the obnoxious name.* Gloria. *She marks her satisfaction with a slight tightening of the lips, and sits down.* There! You see I only want to shew you that I am your father, my—my dear child. *The endearment is so plaintively inept that she smiles in spite of herself, and resigns herself to indulge him a little.* Listen now. What I want to ask you is this. Don't you remember me at all? You were only a tiny child when you were taken away from me; but you took plenty of notice of things. Can't you remember someone whom you loved, or *shyly* at least liked in a childish way? Come! someone who let you stay in his study and look at his toy boats, as you thought them? *He looks anxiously into her face for some response, and continues less hopefully and more urgently* Someone who let you do as you liked there and never said a word to you except to tell you that you must sit still and not speak? Someone who was something that no

one else was to you—who was your father.

GLORIA: *unmoved.* If you describe things to me, no doubt I shall presently imagine that I remember them. But I really remember nothing.

CRAMPTON: *wistfully.* Has your mother never told you anything about me?

GLORIA: She has never mentioned your name to me. *He groans involuntarily. She looks at him rather contemptuously and continues* Except once; and then she did remind me of something I had forgotten.

CRAMPTON: *looking up hopefully.* What was that?

GLORIA: *mercilessly.* The whip you bought to beat me with.

CRAMPTON: *gnashing his teeth.* Oh! To bring that up against me! To turn from me! When you need never have known. *Under a grinding, agonized breath.* Curse her!

GLORIA: *springing up.* You wretch! *With intense emphasis.* You wretch!! You dare curse my mother!

CRAMPTON: Stop; or you'll be sorry afterwards. I'm your father.

GLORIA: How I hate the name! How I love the name of mother! You had better go.

CRAMPTON: I—I'm choking. You want to kill me. Some—I—*His voice stifles: he is almost in a fit.*

GLORIA: *going up to the balustrade with cool, quick resourcefulness, and calling over to the beach.* Mr Valentine!

VALENTINE: *answering from below.* Yes.

GLORIA: Come here a moment, please. Mr Crampton wants you. *She returns to the table and pours out a glass of water.*

CRAMPTON: *recovering his speech.* No: let me alone. I don't want him. I'm all right, I tell you. I need neither his help nor yours. *He rises and pulls himself together.* As you say, I had better go. *He puts on his hat.* Is that your last word?

GLORIA: I hope so. *(He looks stubbornly at her for a moment; nods grimly, as if he agreed to that; and goes into the hotel. She looks at him with equal steadiness until he disappears, when she makes a gesture of relief, and turns to speak to Valentine, who comes running up the steps.)*

VALENTINE: *panting.* What's the matter? *Looking round.* Where's Crampton?

GLORIA: Gone. *Valentine's face lights up with sudden joy, dread, and mischief. He has just realized that he is alone with Gloria. She continues indifferently* I thought he was ill; but he recovered himself. He wouldn't wait for you. I am sorry. *She goes for her book and parasol.*

VALENTINE: So much the better. He gets on my nerves after a while. *Pretending to forget himself.* How could that man have so beautiful a daughter!

GLORIA: *taken aback for a moment; then answering him with polite but intentional contempt.* That seems to be an attempt at what is called a pretty speech. Let me say at once, Mr Valentine, that pretty speeches make very sickly conversation. Pray let us be friends, if we are to be friends, in a sensible and wholesome way. I have no intention of getting married; and unless you are content to accept that state of things, we had much better not cultivate each other's acquaintance.

VALENTINE: *cautiously.* I see. May I ask just this one question? Is your objection an objection to marriage as an institution, or merely an objection to marrying me personally?

GLORIA: I do not know you well enough, Mr Valentine, to have any opinion on the subject of your personal merits. *She turns away from him with infinite indifference, and sits down with her book on*

the garden seat. I do not think the conditions of marriage at present are such as any self-respecting woman can accept.

VALENTINE: *instantly changing his tone for one of cordial sincerity, as if he frankly accepted her terms and was delighted and reassured by her principles.* Oh, then that's a point of sympathy between us already. I quite agree with you: the conditions are most unfair. *He takes off his hat and throws it gaily on the iron table.* No: what I want is to get rid of all that nonsense. *He sits down beside her, so naturally that she does not think of objecting, and proceeds, with enthusiasm* Don't you think it a horrible thing that a man and a woman can hardly know one another without being supposed to have designs of that kind? As if there were no other interests—no other subjects of conversation—as if women were capable of nothing better!

GLORIA: *interested.* Ah, now you are beginning to talk humanly and sensibly, Mr Valentine.

VALENTINE: *with a gleam in his eye at the success of his hunter's guile.* Of course!—two intelligent people like us. Isn't it pleasant, in this stupid, convention-ridden world, to meet with someone on the same plane—someone with an unprejudiced, enlightened mind?

GLORIA: *earnestly.* I hope to meet many such people in England.

VALENTINE: *dubiously.* Hm! There are a good many people here—nearly forty millions. They're not all consumptive members of the highly educated classes like the people in Madeira.

GLORIA: *now full of her subject.* Oh, everybody is stupid and prejudiced in Madeira—weak, sentimental creatures! I hate weakness; and I hate sentiment.

VALENTINE: That's what makes you so inspiring.

GLORIA: *with a slight laugh.* Am I inspiring?

VALENTINE: Yes. Strength's infectious.

GLORIA: Weakness is, I know.

VALENTINE: *with conviction.* Y o u're strong. Do you know that you changed the world for me this morning? I was in the dumps, thinking of my unpaid rent, frightened about the future. When you came in, I was dazzled. *Her brow clouds a little. He goes on quickly.* That was silly, of course; but really and truly something happened to me. Explain it how you will, my blood got—*he hesitates, trying to think of a sufficiently unimpassioned word* —oxygenated: my muscles braced; my mind cleared; my courage rose. That's odd, isn't it? considering that I am not at all a sentimental man.

GLORIA: *uneasily, rising.* Let us go back to the beach.

VALENTINE: *darkly—looking up at her.* What! you feel it, too?

GLORIA: Feel what?

VALENTINE: Dread.

GLORIA: Dread!

VALENTINE: As if something were going to happen. It came over me suddenly just before you proposed that we should run away to the others.

GLORIA: *amazed.* That's strange—very strange! I had the same presentiment.

VALENTINE: How extraordinary! *Rising.* Well: shall we run away?

GLORIA: Run away! Oh, no: that would be childish. *She sits down again. He resumes his seat beside her, and watches her with a gravely sympathetic air. She is thoughtful and a little troubled as she adds* I wonder what is the scientific explanation of those fancies that cross us occasionally!

VALENTINE: Ah, I wonder! It's a curiously helpless sensation: isn't it?

GLORIA: *rebelling against the word.* Helpless?

VALENTINE: Yes. As if Nature, after allowing us to belong to ourselves and do what we judged right and reasonable for all these years, were suddenly lifting her great hand to take us—her two little children—by the scruff's of our little necks, and use us, in spite of ourselves, for her own purposes, in her own way.

GLORIA: Isn't that rather fanciful?

VALENTINE: *with a new and startling transition to a tone of utter recklessness.* I don't know. I don't care. *Bursting out reproachfully.* Oh, Miss Clandon, Miss Clandon: how could you?

GLORIA: What have I done?

VALENTINE: Thrown this enchantment on me. I'm honestly trying to be sensible—scientific—everything that you wish me to be. But—but—oh, don't you see what you have set to work in my imagination?

GLORIA: *with indignant, scornful sternness.* I hope you are not going to be so foolish—so vulgar—as to say love.

VALENTINE: *with ironical haste to disclaim such a weakness.* No, no, no. Not love: we know better than that. Let's call it chemistry. You can't deny that there is such a thing as chemical action, chemical affinity, chemical combination—the most irresistible of all natural forces. Well, you're attracting me irresistibly—chemically.

GLORIA: *contemptuously.* Nonsense!

VALENTINE: Of course it's nonsense, you stupid girl. *Gloria recoils in outraged surprise.* Yes, stupid girl: t h a t's a scientific fact, anyhow. You're a prig—a feminine prig: that's what you are. *Rising.* Now I suppose you've done with me for ever. *He goes to the iron table and takes up his hat.*

GLORIA: *with elaborate calm, sitting up like a High-school-mistress posing to be photographed.* That shows how very little you understand my real character. I am not in the least offended. *He pauses and puts his hat down again.* I am always willing to be told of my own defects, Mr Valentine, by my friends, even when they are as absurdly mistaken about me as you are. I have many faults—very serious faults—of character and temper; but if there is one thing that I am not, it is what you call a prig. *She closes her lips trimly and looks steadily and challengingly at him as she sits more collectedly than ever.*

VALENTINE: *returning to the end of the garden seat to confront her more emphatically.* Oh, yes, you are. My reason tells me so: my knowledge tells me so: my experience tells me so.

GLORIA: Excuse my reminding you that your reason and your knowledge and your experience are not infallible. At least I hope not.

VALENTINE: I must believe them. Unless you wish me to believe my eyes, my heart, my instincts, my imagination, which are all telling me the most monstrous lies about you.

GLORIA: *the collectedness beginning to relax.* Lies!

VALENTINE: *obstinately.* Yes, lies. *He sits down again beside her.* Do you expect me to believe that you are the most beautiful woman in the world?

GLORIA: That is ridiculous, and rather personal.

VALENTINE: Of course it's ridiculous. Well, that's what my eyes tell me. *Gloria makes a movement of contemptuous protest.* No: I'm not flattering. I tell you I don't believe it. *She is ashamed to find that this does not quite please her either.* Do you think that if you were to turn away in disgust from my weakness, I should sit down here and cry like a child?

GLORIA: *beginning to find that she must speak shortly and pointedly to keep her voice steady.* Why should you, pray?

VALENTINE: *with a stir of feeling beginning to agitate his voice.* Of course not: I'm not such an idiot. And yet my heart tells me I should—my fool of a heart. But I'll argue with my heart and bring it to reason. If I loved you a thousand times, I'll force myself to look the truth steadily in the face. After all, it's easy to be sensible: the facts are the facts. What's this place? it's not heaven: it's the Marine Hotel. What's the time? it's not eternity: it's about half past one in the afternoon. What am I? a dentist—a five shilling dentist!

GLORIA: And I am a feminine prig.

VALENTINE: *passionately.* No, no: I can't face that: I must have one illusion left—the illusion about you. I love you. *He turns towards her as if the impulse to touch her were ungovernable: she rises and stands on her guard wrathfully. He springs up impatiently and retreats a step.* Oh, what a fool I am!—an idiot! You don't understand: I might as well talk to the stones on the beach. *He turns away, discouraged.*

GLORIA: *reassured by his withdrawal, and a little remorseful.* I am sorry. I do not mean to be unsympathetic, Mr Valentine; but what can I say?

VALENTINE: *returning to her with all his recklessness of manner replaced by an engaging and chivalrous respect.* You can say nothing, Miss Clandon. I beg your pardon: it was my own fault, or rather my own bad luck. You see, it all depended on your naturally liking me. *She is about to speak: he stops her deprecatingly.* Oh, I know you mustn't tell me whether you like me or not; but—

GLORIA: *her principles up in arms at once.* Must not! Why not? I am a free woman: why should I not tell you?

VALENTINE: *pleading in terror, and retreating.* Don't. I'm afraid to hear.

GLORIA: *no longer scornful.* You need not be afraid. I think you are sentimental, and a little foolish; but I like you.

VALENTINE: *dropping into the iron chair as if crushed.* Then it's all over. *He becomes the picture of despair.*

GLORIA: *puzzled, approaching him.* But why?

VALENTINE: Because liking is not enough. Now that I think down into it seriously, I don't know whether I like you or not.

GLORIA: *looking down at him with wondering concern.* I'm sorry.

VALENTINE: *in an agony of restrained passion.* Oh, don't pity me. Your voice is tearing my heart to pieces. Let me alone, Gloria. You go down into the very depths of me, troubling and stirring me—I can't struggle with it—I can't tell you—

GLORIA: *breaking down suddenly.* Oh, stop telling me what you feel: I can't bear it.

VALENTINE: *springing up triumphantly, the agonized voice now solid, ringing, and jubilant.* Ah, it's come at last—my moment of courage. *He seizes her hands: she looks at him in terror.* Our moment of courage! *He draws her to him; kisses her with impetuous strength; and laughs boyishly.* Now you've done it, Gloria. It's all over: we're in love with one another. *She can only gasp at him.* But what a dragon you were! And how hideously afraid I was!

PHILIP'S VOICE: *calling from the beach.* Valentine!

DOLLY'S VOICE: Mr Valentine!

VALENTINE: Good-bye. Forgive me. *He rapidly kisses her hands, and runs away to the steps, where*

he meets Mrs Clandon, ascending. Gloria, quite lost, can only start after him.

MRS. CLANDON: The children want you, Mr Valentine. *She looks anxiously around.* Is he gone?

VALENTINE: *puzzled.* He? *Recollecting.* Oh, Crampton. Gone this long time, Mrs Clandon. *He runs off buoyantly down the steps.*

GLORIA: *sinking upon the seat.* Mother!

MRS. CLANDON: *hurrying to her in alarm.* What is it, dear?

GLORIA: *with heartfelt, appealing reproach.* Why didn't you educate me properly?

MRS. CLANDON: *amazed.* My child: I did my best.

GLORIA: Oh, you taught me nothing—nothing.

MRS. CLANDON: What is the matter with you?

GLORIA: *with the most intense expression.* Only shame—shame—shame. *Blushing unendurably, she covers her face with her hands and turns away from her mother.*

Le note di scena sono tra parentesi *quadre* o *(tonde).*

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