

just when he was saying one of his cleverest things."

"He said it to the wrong person, mother. I'm neither a faded life nor am I going to be laid away in lavender. Do I look like it?"

She moved across the room swiftly, and stood in the slanting light from the window, offering herself for inspection. Nothing could be less like a faded life than the magnificent, broad-hipped, full-bosomed woman that met her mother's gaze. Her hair was auburn, her eyes brown with gold flecks, her lips red, her cheeks clear and young. She was cast physically in heroic mould—a creature of dancing blood and colour and warmth. Disparaging tea-parties called her an Amazon. The Vicar's wife regarded her as too large and flaring and curvilinear for reputable good looks. She towered over Nunsmere. Her presence disturbed the sedateness of the place. She was a wrong note in its harmony.

Mrs. Oldrieve sighed. She was small and colourless. Her husband, a wild explorer, a tornado of a man, had been killed by a buffalo. She was afraid that Zora took after her father. Her younger daughter Emmy had also inherited some of the Oldrieve restlessness, and had gone on the stage. She was playing now in musical comedy in London.

"I don't see why you should not be happy here, Zora," she remarked; "but if you want to go, you must. I used to say the same to your poor dear father."

"I've been very good, haven't I?" said Zora.