

"You know very well what I mean. That doctor of yours!"

"Well— isn't he a nice doctor?" She took the older woman's hand and patted it. "I am sure you think so."

Miss Innes pulled the hand away. "You are carrying this too far. I don't like him, but it is hard on him, and you are old enough to know better."

Stella's lips trembled. She wanted to laugh. Then Miss Innes went on.

"The captain told me all about him. He is as poor as a church mouse, not a stick to bless himself with. It's a very old family. They have lived in the same place for hundreds of years, and are as proud as peacocks. The captain says their blood is so old that it's thin. They always seem to get hold of the wrong end of things, and never give in or admit they're wrong, and always die fighting."

"Tell me some more, Auntie."

"I will," replied Miss Innes acidly. "There's a time when a game becomes something else, that's what I'm afraid of with your doctor. You've everything to lose, and he has everything to gain."

Stella felt suddenly breathless. "What have I to lose?"

"Yourself and your money," said her aunt with a touch of asperity.

Stella saw Blantyre's tall figure at the far end of the deck. He hesitated a moment, then disappeared. The sight of him flashed a quick question through her brain. Was it a game? He had seemed to approach her through hitherto unused channels.