

"Signorina?"

"You enjoy diving?"

He shrugged his shoulders, and again used what seemed with him a favourite expression.

"Signorina, I must enjoy it, by force."

"You do it wonderfully. Do you know that? You do it better than the men."

Again the conscious look came into the boy's face and body, as if his soul were faintly swaggering.

"There is no one in the Bay who can dive better than I can," he answered. "Giovannino thinks he can. Well, let him think so. He would not dare to make a bet with me."

"He would lose it if he did," said Vere. "I'm sure he would. Just now you were under water nearly a minute by my mother's watch."

"Where is the Signora?" said the boy, looking round.

"Why d'you ask?"

"Why—I can stay under longer than that."

"Now, look here!" said the girl eagerly. "Never mind Madre! Go down once for me, won't you? Go down once for me, and you shall have the dolce and two packets of cigarettes."

"I don't want the dolce, Signorina; a dolce is for women," he said, with the complete bluntness characteristic of Southern Italians and of Sicilians.

"The cigarettes, then."

"Va bene. But the water is too shallow here."

"We'll take my boat."

She pointed to a small boat, white with a green line, that was moored close to them.

"Va bene," said the boy again.

He rolled his white trousers up above his knees, stripped off his blue jersey, leaving the thin vest that was beneath it, folded the jersey neatly and laid it on the stones, tightened his trousers at the back, then caught hold of the rope by which Vere's boat was moored to the shore and pulled the boat in.

Very carefully he helped Vere into it.

"I know a good place," he said, "where you can see right down to the bottom."

Taking the oars he slowly paddled a little way out to a deep clear pool of the sea.

"I'll go in here, Signorina."

He stood up straight, with his feet planted on each side of the boat's prow, and glanced at the water intimately, as might a fish. Then he shot one more glance at Vere and at the cigarettes, made the sign of the cross, lifted his brown arms above his head, uttered a cry, and dived cleanly below the