

She retreated a few steps from the sea, followed closely by the eager boy.

"We shan't disturb them now," she said, stopping. "Do you know why I've brought you these?"

She stretched out her hands, with the dolce and the cigarettes. The boy threw his chin up again and half shut his eyes.

"No, Signorina."

"Because you did what I told you."

She spoke rather with the air of a little queen.

"I don't understand."

"Didn't you hear me call out to you from up there?"—she pointed to the cliff above their heads,—"when you were sitting in the boat? I called to you to go in after the men."

"Why?"

"Why? Because I thought you were a lazy boy."

He laughed. All his brown face gave itself up to laughter—eyes, teeth, lip, cheeks, chin. His whole body seemed to be laughing. The idea of his being lazy seemed to delight his whole spirit.

"You would have been lazy if you hadn't done what I told you," said Vere emphatically, forcing her words through his merriment with determination. "You know you would."

"I never heard you call, Signorina."

"You didn't?"

He shook his head several times, bent down, dipped his fingers in the sea, put them to his lips: "I say it."

"Really?"

There was a note of disappointment in her voice. She felt dethroned.

"But then, you haven't earned these," she said, looking at him almost with rebuke, "if you went in of your own accord."

"I go in because it is my mestiere, Signorina," the boy said simply. "I go in by force."

He looked at her and then again at the cigarettes. His expression said, "Can you refuse me?" There was a quite definite and conscious attempt to cajole her to generosity in his eyes, and in the pose he assumed. Vere saw it, and knew that if there had been a mirror within reach at that moment the boy would have been looking into it, frankly admiring himself.

In Italy the narcissus blooms at all seasons of the year.

She was charmed by the boy, for he did his luring well, and she was susceptible to all that was naturally picturesque. But a gay little spirit of resistance sprang up like a flame and danced within her.

She let her hands fall to her sides.

"But you like going in?"