

There was a movement in the boat. The boy looked round.

"I must go back to the boat, Signorina," he said.

"Oh, must you?" Vere said. "What a pity! But look, they are really still asleep."

"I must go back, Signorina," he protested.

"You want to sleep too, perhaps?"

He seized the excuse.

"Sì, Signorina. Being under the sea so much—it tires the head and the eyes. I want to sleep too."

His face, full of life, denied his words, but Vere only said:

"Here are the cigarettes."

"Grazie, Signorina!"

"And I promised you another packet. Well, wait here, just here, d'you see?—under the bridge, and I'll throw it down, and you must catch it."

"Sì, Signorina."

He took his stand on the spot she pointed out, and she disappeared up the steps towards the house.

"Madre! Madre!"

Hermione heard Vere's voice calling below a moment later.

"What is it?"

There was a quick step on the stairs, and the girl ran in.

"One more packet of cigarettes—may I? It's instead of the dolce. Ruffo says only women eat sweet things."

"Ruffo!"

"Yes, that's his name. He's been diving for me. You never saw anything like it! And he's a Sicilian. Isn't it odd? And sixteen—just as I am. May I have the cigarettes for him?"

"Yes, of course. In that drawer there's a whole box of the ones Monsieur Emile likes."

"There would be ten cigarettes in a packet. I'll give him ten."

She counted them swiftly out.

"There! And I'll make him catch them all, one by one. It will be more fun than throwing only a packet. Addio, mia bella Madre! Addio! Addio!"

And singing the words to the tune of "Addio, mia bella Napoli," she flitted out of the room and down the stairs.

"Ruffo! Ruffo!"

A minute later she was leaning over the bridge to the boy, who stood sentinel below. He looked up and saw her laughing face full of merry mischief, and prepared to catch the packet she had promised him.

"Ruffo, I'm so sorry, but I can't find another packet of cigarettes."

The boy's bright face changed, looked almost sad, but he called up: