

Side 6

Start

~~SIMON. Is there any reason why you should know it?~~

DR. BESSNER. (*showing emotion*) You will excuse me... you see... that man - that man... (*He sits above the center table.*)

SMITH. Am I right in thinking that one of Melhuish Ridgeway's financial operations has at some time affected you personally?

(*The STEWARD enters left with drink. He crosses up center. JACKIE takes the drink and sits at the table up right. She pays no attention to the others and sits staring straight ahead. Her humming grows louder.*)

DR. BESSNER. You will forgive me, gentlemen - but I have very strong feelings. (*Much affected.*) In my country in Europe - a small country - an obscure country - that man, he buys the politicians - he corrupts the government. Those who get the concession, you understand - it is not that they want to develop it - on the contrary - the people - the peasants - they starve. The ore, you see, it would be a rival and that must not be - instead, all is desolate - deserted. (*He gesticulates.*) And we who believed in it, we lose all we had! We are finished, wiped out. My father, an old man and feeble, he dies with the heart broken. But it is not the non-progress - the industry that not developed is - the - the ah, you understand?

SMITH. Frankly, old boy, no. But I get the general idea. International finance, like some obscene spider, up to its usual tricks. And old man Ridgeway, sitting in his office in London with a big cigar, right in the centre of the web. No offence, Mostyn, but Melhuish Ridgeway's methods are pretty common knowledge and his handsome donations to charities can't quite wipe out the taste of them.

~~SIMON. Oh, that's all right by me. I never even saw my father-in-law. He was dead years before I met Kay. I suppose these financial birds usually sail fairly near~~

end

Bessner/Smith

the wind. Don't know anything about finance myself. Often wish I did.

DR. BESSNER. (*still very emotional*) The little man in the back street, he would be sent to prison - but the big man with the cigar, he can rob and cheat and stay inside the law.

SMITH. It won't be so for ever.

(*CHRISTINA enters right.*)

DR. BESSNER. They, too, should suffer - yes, suffer. Forgive me, I am upset.

(*He rises and hurries off left.*)

CHRISTINA. (*looking accusingly at SMITH*) What have you been saying to upset poor Dr. Bessner?

(*She crosses downstage to him.*)

SMITH. Me? I like that! Nothing at all. And why should you defend him?

CHRISTINA. He's a foreigner. And foreigners are very sensitive. Their feelings are easily hurt.

SMITH. (*rising*) And what about my feelings? Your aunt taunted me this evening with my inferior social position.

CHRISTINA. You must forgive Aunt Helen. It's been a tiring day for her and the dust and sand affect her eyes.

SMITH. "Darkness falls from the sky; Dust hath closed Helen's eye" - I wish it would.

JACKIE. Boy!

(*The STEWARD enters left.*)

Get me another brandy.

SMITH. And get me a pink gin. Christina?

CHRISTINA. I wouldn't mind a lemonade. (*She sits left of the center table.*)

SMITH. Too tame; make it a gin-fizz. What about you, Mostyn?

SIMON. No, thanks.