

know what kind of a life Virginia had lived before only by hearsay, but she did know that now she was miserable. Everything she could do during her leisure moments for the unhappy girl she did gladly and happily, finding sufficient reward in the careless words Miss Julian used in thanking her for part of her services. Most of them were as unobtrusive as the air, and Virginia did not know she was the object of such attention from the humble maid in the kitchen. She took everything as a matter of course, and was not interested enough to notice how favored she was.

'Miss High-and-Mighty still has breakfast by herself, I notice,' remarked Mr. Stonehill one morning late in the winter, pointing to a vacant place. 'Talk about icebergs! That girl would be a blessing in the tropic regions; she'd give everybody near her a decided chill by just staying in the house with them.'

'It is strange,' said Miss Vickers, 'that she stays so frigid. I'm sure we've taken pains to be nice with her, but she regards us with supreme unconcern. At first I pitied her, because she seemed so sad and lonely; but lately I've begun to feel sorry for the rest of us.'

'Hush!' said a girl who was a book-keeper in a large store, but who always looked like a merry schoolgirl bubbling over with good humor. 'You mustn't say a word against Miss Julian—she's Annie's pet.'

Annie was just going out for more milk, but she heard the whispered words, and a wave of indignation rose to her brow. What did they know of Virginia's troubles as they laughed and chatted together like old friends? The others treated Annie with a gay good humor mixed with a familiarity she did not like, and she much preferred Virginia's coldness to their careless good nature. She set the milk pitcher down with unusual firmness, and marched out to the kitchen to avoid hearing the other laughing comments flying back and forth about her favorite.

'I'm going away to-day, Miss Virginia,' said Annie, lingering in the big front room one morning after she had brought up hot water and started the fire.

'Is that so?' said Virginia with sleepy indifference. 'Will you pull down the shades, Annie, so I can take another nap?' Thank you.

It was a holiday, and Virginia rejoiced in the luxury of sleeping late. She did not trouble herself about the fire nor the hot water, but just as the clock was striking ten that morning she saw Annie steal in with some wood to replenish the fire, and she carefully and cautiously put a little kettle of water on the stove to heat. Virginia was wide awake, but she reflected that she would have to say good-bye and wish Annie a pleasant journey, if she opened her eyes when she tiptoed toward the bed, so she remained quiet. A work-roughened hand tenderly smoothed the bed-clothes, and then the thin figure in the faded cloak stole away.

But when Annie no longer cared for Virginia that spoiled young lady felt the difference. She shivered over the lighting of her fire in the morning, and awkwardly tried to heat water for herself on the stove in time for the early breakfast. She even inquired of the landlady when Annie was coming back, but received no satisfaction.

'I didn't ask her to come back,' said the indignant mistress of the house. 'The idea of leaving me just at this time. She knew I was planning to enlarge my house and take more boarders, so she left me with a green girl on my hands. I was so angry I didn't even ask where she was going. I suppose she's found a place which she things will be easy and pleasant compared with this. I must say, Annie was the best worker I ever had, but you can put no dependence in the whole race of servants.'

A week after Annie left the boarding-house a young man came into the office where Virginia worked, and was chatting with her employer as she entered from the wretched dinner Annie's successor had served. 'Miss Julian, I wish you would copy those letters on your desk as soon as possible and bring them to me,' said Mr. Sears, as she passed on to the private office. 'You can finish the other work afterward.'

'Miss Julian! Is that your stenographer's name. May I speak to her a few minutes when she is at leisure?' The young man's face glowed with interest, and Mr. Sears laughed mischievously.

'You must be interested in her,' he said. 'Certainly you may speak to her, Doctor Moultrie; she will soon be through with those letters.'

While Mr. Sears talked with a client Doctor Moultrie eagerly sought Miss Julian at her desk. 'I have a patient in the hospital who has spoken of you, Miss Julian,' he said. 'At least, I think she must have meant you, for Julian is not a common name. I looked in the city directory for it, and couldn't find it. I should explain first that I am a young physician—young in practice, anyway, and I have a place at the Mercy Hospital. They always put us young fellows in charge of the charity patients, and I think it is a very good plan. Well, this patient of mine is to be operated upon to-morrow, and it is doubtful whether she will get well. She gave me a letter for Miss Virginia Julian to be delivered in case she did not recover, and now I am taking the liberty of telling you about it against her wishes. She is so alone in the world, I can't help it.'

What is her name?' asked Virginia.

'Miss Graves—Annie Graves, I think.'

'I know of no one by that name,' said Virginia blankly. 'And I know no girl who might be at the Mercy Hospital. Though this is my native town I know few people in it.'

'Are you sure of that?' asked the doctor. 'She was a domestic somewhere, and spoke particularly of knowing you. I wanted to send for you to be with her to-morrow, but she said emphatically that I should not. She said you had troubles enough of your own without being bothered with hers. She wouldn't even tell me where to find you, so it is purely accidental that I met you to-day.'

'It can't be Annie,' said Virginia musingly. 'She went—where did she go? At the boarding-house where I stay there was a girl named Annie—I never heard her last name—but she went away to take a better place; at least I think some one said that.'

'It must be the same girl,' said the young man positively. 'She must have been running down for months, for she looks miserable. Of course, such girls have no one to look after them, and they are usually beyond help when they finally give up.'

'I never noticed that Annie looked ill,' said Virginia as if to excuse herself, and then she burst into tears. 'I never noticed anything,' she wept. 'That poor girl used to carry hot water to my room every morning, and start my fire, and look after me like an older sister, and I took it all as a matter of course. I'm so sorry and ashamed.'

'Don't cry,' said the doctor, who had all of a man's horror of tears. 'She said you had a great deal of trouble of your own, and she—'

'Trouble!' said Virginia scornfully. 'What trouble have I compared with what that poor girl endured? I remember how she used to hold her side as she came upstairs, and could hardly get her breath after hurrying around. And I let her wait on me! There was such intense disgust in her tone that she sat up to dry her tears and reproach herself more than ever. May I go to see her? I'll stay with her to-morrow, if Mr. Sears can spare me.'

'That is exactly what I want,' said the doctor. 'It would be so easy for her to slip out of the world that she needs some one to cling to her, and make her feel how necessary she is here below. She is so frail that I tremble for to-morrow.'

Mr. Sears gave Virginia permission to be gone as long as Doctor Moultrie needed her, and altogether they started toward the hospital. 'I don't suppose you would want to leave off that—that veil,' said Doctor Moultrie, rather timidly, as he watched Virginia don her hat shrouded in crape. 'I always think black is so depressing to sick people.'

'I suppose it is,' said Virginia with a surprised air. 'I am glad you mentioned it. We pass my boarding-house on the way to the hospital, and I will run in and change, if you can wait a few minutes.'

Doctor Moultrie sat waiting in the boarding-house parlor, and when he heard quick steps in the hall he rose to go at once. 'I—I beg your pardon,' he said apologetically to the young lady he met there. 'I was looking for Miss Julian, and thought this—'

His face looked so blank that Virginia had to laugh. 'The transformation must be complete,' she said. 'I wonder whether Annie will know me.'

The young man forgot his careful home-training to stare at the young lady before him. She was dressed in a becoming blue frock, and wore a pretty hat and jacket to match. If he had been a woman, he would have noted that the whole costume was out of style about a year, but being only a man he could see no defect.

'Annie, dear,' said Virginia, taking the slender form in her strong arms, 'why didn't you tell me? I know I've been selfish and mean and altogether heartless, but I wish you had told me yourself.'

'I didn't want to worry you,' said Annie, wiping away a few happy tears. 'You have so much to bear.'

'I haven't anything to bear, but the knowledge that I have wasted a good share of my life and have been utterly selfish,' broke in Virginia. 'Dear, you must hurry and get well, so we can go to housekeeping together. I'm tired of the boarding-house, and so are you. We'll get a few rooms somewhere, and you'll be the housekeeper, won't you? Then we'll both have a real home. Say you will, won't you? I just can't get along without you. Why, I've been so helpless since you have been away that I don't know what to do.'

'I did think I was too tired to make the effort,' said Annie with a bright smile, 'but I guess I'll just have to. Won't it be lovely to have a real home?'

Several months later the boarders from Mrs. Randolph's boarding-house were invited to the house-warming by Virginia and Annie. The latter was still pale and delicate, but Virginia hovered about her like a hen with one chick. The guests had to come by twos and threes, and then go, to make room for others, owing to the size of the house, but everything was fun and frolic.

'We used to call you "Annie's pet," Virginia,' said Miss Vickers, 'but now we'll have to call Annie your pet, it seems.'

'That suits me,' said Virginia, putting a strong arm about the thin shoulders. 'It is time I was doing a little