

**WOMAN.** Aw, come off it! I didn't say I knew anything, did I? I've *got* something. That's more to the point.

**MAYHEW.** What is it you have got, madam?

**WOMAN.** Aye – aye! I was in court today. I watched that – that trollop give her evidence. So high and mighty about it too. She's a wicked one. A Jezebel, that's what she is.

**SIR WILFRID.** Quite so. But as to this special information you have...

**WOMAN.** (*cunningly*) Ah, but what's in it for me? It's valuable, what I've got. A hundred quid, that's what I want.

**MAYHEW.** I'm afraid we could not countenance anything of that character, but perhaps if you tell us a little more about what you have to offer...

**WOMAN.** You don't buy unless you get a butcher's, is that it?

**SIR WILFRID.** A butcher's?

**WOMAN.** A butcher's 'ook – look.

**SIR WILFRID.** Oh, yes – yes.

**WOMAN.** I've got the goods on her all right. (*She opens her handbag.*) It's letters, that's what it is. Letters.

**SIR WILFRID.** Letters written by Romaine Vole to the prisoner?

**WOMAN.** (*laughing coarsely*) To the prisoner? Don't make me laugh. Poor ruddy prisoner, he's been took in by her all right. (*she winks*) I've got something to *sell*, dear, and don't you forget it.

**MAYHEW.** (*smoothly*) If you will let us see these letters, we shall be able to advise you as to how pertinent they are.

**WOMAN.** Putting it in your own language, aren't you? Well, as I say, I don't expect you to buy without seeing. But fair's fair. If those letters will do the trick, if they'll get the boy off, and put that foreign bitch where she belongs, well, it's a hundred quid for me. Right?

**MAYHEW.** (*taking his wallet from his pocket and extracting ten*

*pounds*) If these letters contain information that is useful to the defence – to help your expenses in coming here! am prepared to offer you ten pounds.

**WOMAN.** (*almost screaming*) Ten bloody quid for letters like these. Think again.

**SIR WILFRID.** (*crossing to MAYHEW and taking the wallet from him*) If you have a letter there that will help to prove my client's innocence, twenty pounds would I think not be an unreasonable sum for your expenses.

*(he crosses to right of the desk, takes ten pounds from the wallet, returns the empty wallet to MAYHEW, and takes the first ten pounds from him.)*

**WOMAN.** Fifty quid and it's a bargain. That's if you're satisfied with the letters.

**SIR WILFRID.** Twenty pounds. (*he puts the notes on the desk*)

*(The WOMAN watches him and wets her lips. It is too much for her.)*

**WOMAN.** All right, blast you. 'Ere, take 'em. Quite a packet of 'em. (*she takes the letters from her handbag*) The top one's the one will do the trick. (*she puts the letters on the desk, then goes to pick up the money*)

*(SIR WILFRID is too quick for the WOMAN and picks up the money. The WOMAN quickly retrieves the letters.)*

**SIR WILFRID.** Just a moment. I suppose this is her handwriting?

**WOMAN.** It's her handwriting all right. She wrote 'em. It's all fair and square.

**SIR WILFRID.** We have only your word for that.

**MAYHEW.** Just a moment. I have a letter from Mrs. Vole – not here, but at my office.

**SIR WILFRID.** Well, madam, it looks as though we'll have to trust you – (*he hands her the notes*) for the moment. (*he takes the letters from her, smoothes them out and begins to read*)

*(The WOMAN slowly counts the notes, carefully watching*

*the OTHERS meanwhile. MAYHEW moves to SIR WILFRID and peers at the letters. The WOMAN rises and crosses towards the door.)*

**SIR WILFRID.** (*cont.*) (*to MAYHEW*) It's incredible. Quite incredible.

**MAYHEW.** (*reading over his shoulder*) The coldblooded vindictiveness.

**SIR WILFRID.** (*crossing to the WOMAN*) How did you get hold of these?

**WOMAN.** That'd be telling.

**SIR WILFRID.** What have you got against Romaine Vole?

*(The WOMAN crosses to the desk, suddenly and dramatically turns her head, swings the desk lamp so that it flows on to her face on the side that has been turned away from the audience, pushing her hair back as she does so, revealing that her cheek is all slashed, scarred and disfigured. SIR WILFRID starts back with an ejaculation.)*

**WOMAN.** See that?

**SIR WILFRID.** Did she do that to you?

**WOMAN.** (*crossing to center*) Not her. The chap I was going with. Going with him steady, I was too. He was a bit younger than me, but he was fond of me and I loved him. Then she came along. She took a fancy to him and she got him away from me. She started to see him on the sly and then one day he cleared out. I knew where he'd gone. I went after him and I found them together. (*She sits left of the desk.*) I told 'er what I thought of 'er and 'e set on me. In with one of the razor gangs, he was. He cut my face up proper. "There," he says, "no man'll ever look at you now."

**SIR WILFRID.** Did you go to the police about it?

**WOMAN.** Me? Not likely. 'Sides it wasn't 'is fault. Not really. It was hers, all hers. Getting him away from me, turning 'im against me. But I waited my time. I

followed 'er about and watched 'er. I know some of the things she's bin up to. I know where the bloke lives who she goes to see on the sly sometimes. That's how I got hold of them letters. So now you know the whole story, mister. *(She rises, thrusts her face forward and pushes her hair aside.)* Want to kiss me?

*(SIR WILFRID shrinks back.)*

I don't blame yer. *(She crosses to left.)*

**SIR WILFRID.** I'm deeply sorry, deeply sorry. Got a fiver, John?

*(MAYHEW shows his empty wallet.)*

*(He takes his wallet from his pocket and extracts a five pound note.)* Er - we'll make it another five pounds.

**WOMAN.** *(grabbing the note)* 'Oldin' out on me, were yer? Willin' to go up another five quid. *(She advances on SIR WILFRID.)*

*(SIR WILFRID backs towards MAYHEW.)*

Ah, I knew I was being too soft with you. Those letters are the goods, aren't they?

**SIR WILFRID.** They will, I think, be very useful. *(He turns to MAYHEW and holds out a letter.)* Here, John, have a butcher's at this one.

*(The WOMAN slips quickly out of the door.)*

**MAYHEW.** We'll have a handwriting expert on these for safety's sake, and he can give evidence if necessary.

**SIR WILFRID.** We shall require this man's surname and his address.

**MAYHEW.** *(looking around)* Hullo, where has she gone? She mustn't leave without giving us further particulars.

*(He crosses to center.)*

**SIR WILFRID.** *(Crosses and exits hurriedly. Off, calling.)* Carter! Carter!

**CARTER.** *(offstage)* Yes, Sir Wilfrid?

**SIR WILFRID.** *(offstage)* Carter, where did that young woman