

SIR WILFRID. A butcher's?

WOMAN. A butcher's 'ook – look.

SIR WILFRID. Oh, yes – yes.

(She opens her handbag.)

WOMAN. I've got the goods on her all right. It's letters, that's what it is. Letters.

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

WOMAN. *(Laughing.)* To the prisoner? Don't make me laugh. Poor ruddy prisoner, he's been took in by her all right. *(Winking.)* 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 takes his wallet from his pocket and extracts ten pounds.)

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

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

(SIR WILFRID takes a further ten pounds from MAYHEW's wallet.)

SIR WILFRID. 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.

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

(SIR WILFRID puts the notes on the desk.)

SIR WILFRID. Twenty pounds.

*Romaine Vole
P. 92-94
MAYHEW*

(The WOMAN watches him and wets her lips. It is too much for her. She takes the letters from her handbag, puts them on the desk.)

WOMAN. All right, blast you. 'Ere, take 'em. Quite a packet of 'em.

(She takes the letters from her handbag and puts them on the desk.)

The top one's the one will do the trick.

(She goes to pick up the money, but SIR WILFRID is too quick for her and picks it up first. 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 – for the moment.

(SIR WILFRID hands her the notes, takes the letters and begins to read. MAYHEW moves to SIR WILFRID's side and does the same. The WOMAN slowly counts the notes.)

It's incredible. Quite incredible.

MAYHEW. The coldblooded vindictiveness.

SIR WILFRID. How did you get hold of these?

WOMAN. That'd be telling.

SIR WILFRID. What have you got against Romaine Vole?

(The WOMAN pushes back her hair, revealing a scarred, slashed and disfigured cheek. SIR WILFRID starts.)

WOMAN. See that?

SIR WILFRID. Did she do that to you?

WOMAN. 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. 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 thrusts her face forward, pushing her hair aside.)

Want to kiss me?

(SIR WILFRID shrinks.)

I don't blame yer.

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

(MAYHEW shows his empty wallet. SIR WILFRID takes his wallet from his pocket and extracts a five pound note.)

Er - we'll make it another five pounds.

(The WOMAN grabs the note, advancing on SIR WILFRID.)

WOMAN. 'Oldin' out on me, were yer? Willin' to go up another five quid. 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.)