

VI (*jumping up*): I'll run and get some.

SYLVIA (*not moving*): Don't worry, dear—I'll go.

VI: You stay where you are, Auntie Syl—it won't take a minute.

*She runs out with the jug.*

SYLVIA, *left alone, sits pensively with her chin resting on her hands. In a moment or two VI returns with the hot water.*

SYLVIA (*as she comes in*): I always knew it, you know.

VI: Always knew what?

SYLVIA: That there wouldn't be a war.

VI: Well, I thought there would, I must say, otherwise I shouldn't have sent Sheila and Joan down to Mrs. Marsh in Dorset.

SYLVIA: I know you did, dear. Your mother was worried too about Queenie and little Frankie—but I wasn't. Neither was Mrs. Wilmot.

VI: Fancy that now.

SYLVIA: Mrs. Wilmot laughed outright, you know, when the woman came to try on her gas-mask. "Take that stupid thing away," she said. Just like that—quite simply. The woman was furious.

VI: I'm not surprised.

SYLVIA: It's funny how cross people get when you refuse to believe in evil.

VI: It's rather difficult not to believe in evil, Auntie Syl, when you think of what's going on in different parts of the world just now.

SYLVIA: If enough people believed in good, none of it would happen.

VI: Yes, but they don't do they?

SYLVIA: You remind me of your father sometimes Vi, you're material-minded.

VI: Well, I can't help that, can I?

SYLVIA: Well, if you don't mind me saying so—I think you can.

VI: As far as I can see facts are facts, Auntie Syl, and if looking at it like that means I'm material-minded I'm afraid that's what I shall go on being.

SYLVIA: You don't understand what I mean, dear.

VI: No—I'm afraid I don't.

SYLVIA: To begin with, what you call facts may not be facts at all.

VI: What are they then?

SYLVIA: Illusion—and error.

VI: Isn't error a fact then?

SYLVIA (*a little nettled*): Of course it is in a way—that's just the trouble. But still if you admit it's a fact and regard it as a fact, it makes it more of a fact than ever, doesn't it?

VI: I shouldn't think it made much difference one way or the other.

SYLVIA: But it DOES!

VI: You mean that when Sheila had toothache the other day I ought to have told her that she hadn't.

SYLVIA: I don't mean any such thing.

VI: What do you mean then?

SYLVIA: I mean that if she had been brought up to believe that pain is evil and that evil doesn't really exist at all, she wouldn't have had toothache in the first place.

VI: But she'd broken it on a bit of toffee and the nerve was exposed.

SYLVIA: Nonsense.

VI: It isn't nonsense, Auntie Syl, it's true.

SYLVIA: I wish Mrs. Wilmot was here.

VI: I'm sure I'm glad she isn't.