

The Secret Agent

'What do you mean?' said Mrs Verloc.

'You know you can trust me,' said Mr Verloc.

'Oh yes, I can trust you,' she replied slowly.

She continued preparing dinner. In the kitchen she thought, 'He'll be hungry after being out all day.' She took out some cold beef. She came back into the room with the carving knife.¹ They both sat down at the table. Mr Verloc did not look well. He drank three cups of tea but did not eat anything.

'You must eat,' said Mrs Verloc. 'Put your slippers on. You aren't going out again this evening.'

Mr Verloc ignored this advice. He was not thinking of going out that evening. Instead, he was thinking that moving to France or California was a good idea. He told his wife.

This was unexpected and improbable to Mrs Verloc.

'Don't be silly!' she said.

Mr Verloc mumbled² something about having to move.

'Do we have to?' repeated Winnie. 'I don't see why. The business isn't so bad. We have a comfortable home.' She looked around her. She missed Stevie; this was his home as well. To go abroad suddenly was not a good idea for Stevie.

'Well, if you go abroad, you'll have to go without me,' she said.

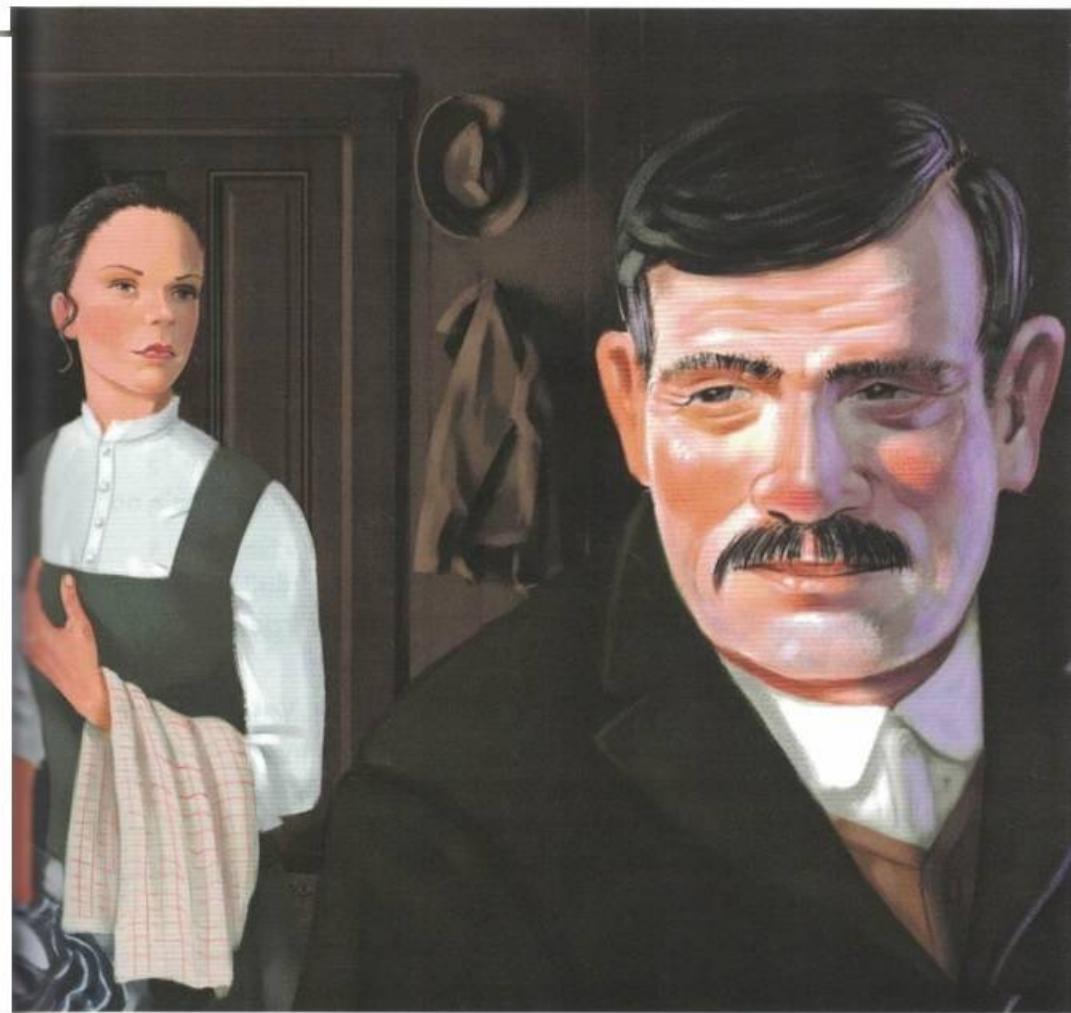
At that moment the bell at the shop door rang. A customer came in.

'You go, Adolf, I'll finish clearing up here.' Mr Verloc went.

Winnie washed the dishes and cups. Then she stopped to listen but she heard nothing. The customer was in the shop for a long time.

1. **carving knife** : long, sharp knife used to cut cooked meat.

2. **mumbled** : spoke quietly and in an unclear way.



Mr Verloc came in. He was very white.

'What's the matter?' asked Winnie.

'I do have to go out tonight,' said Mr Verloc.

Winnie walked through into the shop and looked at the man standing in the middle of the room. He was tall and thin with a moustache. She did not know him. He was not a customer.

Mrs Verloc looked at him. The stranger smiled but said nothing.