

A Woman of Substance

Barbara Taylor Bradford

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Extract

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FOREWORD

When *A Woman of Substance* was published thirty years ago I was thrilled and also very surprised when the book, my first novel, became such a runaway bestseller. What amazed me even more was that it reached the top of the bestseller charts in so many other countries, and was available in a variety of foreign languages. You see, when I had finished writing the book it occurred to me that perhaps it was a little too parochial, since so much of it was set in my native Yorkshire. My French publisher soon set me straight about that, ‘Nobody cares that much about location,’ he explained. ‘It’s Emma that intrigues and captivates. We all become enmeshed in her story and want to keep reading about her, to see how she ends up.’

Well, she ended up being a role model for women all around the world. I soon discovered that Emma both inspired and empowered women of all ages. She was strong and brave, bold and fearless, and she broke the glass ceiling long before that phrase was even invented. In many ways she redefined a new generation of women, and she still does today . . . in ninety countries and forty languages. And all I wanted to do was tell a good tale about an enterprising woman who makes it in a man’s world when women weren’t doing that.

I suppose I succeeded more than I realized at the time. Emma and her life story captured everybody’s imagination, and still does. Tough and often ruthless, brilliant when it came to dissimulations, she was an amazing businesswoman, and could be a powerful and fearsome adversary when she thought this was necessary. Yet

conversely, she was kind and loving, had an understanding heart, was generous to a fault, especially to her family, and the most loyal of women.

Aside from its publishing success, *A Woman of Substance* was brilliantly brought to life on our television screens. Deborah Kerr played Emma as the older woman, and Jenny Seagrove was Emma from her early youth to her mid-forties.

I will never forget seeing the film for the first time in our home, long before it had been aired. I started to cry and was filled with emotion when I saw Jenny in the role of Emma, trampling across the implacable Yorkshire moors, where she bumped into a young man called Blackie O'Neill, a character who flew so easily and swiftly from my pen, and was played by Liam Neeson in the film. They were both astounding in these roles, as was Deborah Kerr and Barry Bostwick as Paul McGill, the great love of Emma's life. I will never forget the marvelous performances given by Sir John Mills, Gayle Hunnicutt, Barry Morse, Nicola Pagett and Miranda Richardson, to name just a few other members of this extraordinary cast. And the most wonderful thing was that each actor looked exactly right, almost as I had imagined them in my mind's eye.

I was very proud when the six hour mini-series was nominated for an Emmy, and although it didn't win, it nevertheless had the word *winner* written all over it. It is still playing somewhere in the world as I write this, and the book is still selling in every country where I am published. Everyone tells me it's as fresh and beguiling as ever and that Emma Harte is as much a woman of today, in 2009, as she was in 1979.

No author who sits at a desk for hours at a time wants to write a book that nobody reads, and I am proud that my first novel has sold over thirty-one million copies worldwide. It is also on the list of the ten best-selling books of all time, up there with *Gone With the Wind*, and other famous classics. In fact, *A Woman of Substance* has become a classic itself, and I smile every time I see the phrase 'a woman of substance' used to describe other successful or unique women. My title has seeped into everyday language and is used all the time, in newspapers, magazines and on the airwaves.

I started writing when I was seven years old, encouraged by my mother who was a voracious reader. When I was ten she found one

of my stories and sent it to a children's magazine. Imagine my surprise and joy when they accepted it, and even paid me seven shillings and sixpence for it. But it was the by-line 'Barbara Taylor' that impressed me and I announced to my mother that I was going to be a writer when I grew up. Many years later when I gave my mother a copy of the book she looked at me and said quietly, 'This is the fulfillment of your childhood dream.' It was.

Of all the things that have happened to my first novel over the years, the one that has truly astonished me has been the desire on the part of my readers to have more books about Emma Harte and her family. To date *A Woman of Substance* has spawned five other novels, and a sixth, entitled *Breaking The Rules*, is published alongside this anniversary edition.

My husband Robert Bradford was the first person to hear the title *Breaking the Rules*, and he loved it immediately. Then he reminded me that this was what Emma had always done throughout her life . . . she had flaunted the rules and done it her way. And I can only say bravo to that.

Barbara Taylor Bradford

ONE

Emma Harte leaned forward and looked out of the window. The private Lear jet, property of the Sitex Oil Corporation of America, had been climbing steadily up through a vaporous haze of cumulus clouds and was now streaking through a sky so penetratingly blue its shimmering clarity hurt the eyes. Momentarily dazzled by this early-morning brightness, Emma turned away from the window, rested her head against the seat, and closed her eyes. For a brief instant the vivid blueness was trapped beneath her lids and, in that instant, such a strong and unexpected feeling of nostalgia was evoked within her that she caught her breath in surprise. It's the sky from the Turner painting above the upstairs parlour fireplace at Pennistone Royal, she thought, a Yorkshire sky on a spring day when the wind has driven the fog from the moors.

A faint smile played around her mouth, curving the line of the lips with unfamiliar softness, as she thought with some pleasure of Pennistone Royal. That great house that grew up out of the stark and harsh landscape of the moors and which always appeared to her to be a force of nature engineered by some Almighty architect rather than a mere edifice erected by mortal man. The one place on this violent planet where she had found peace, limitless peace that soothed and refreshed her. Her home. She had been away far too long this time, almost six weeks, which was a prolonged absence indeed for her. But within the coming week she would be returning to London, and by the end of the month she would travel north to Pennistone. To peace, tranquillity, her gardens, and her grand-children.

This thought cheered her immeasurably and she relaxed in her seat, the tension that had built up over the last few days diminishing until it had evaporated. She was bone tired from the raging battles that had punctuated these last few days of board meetings at the Sitex corporate headquarters in Odessa; she was supremely relieved to be leaving Texas and returning to the relative calmness of her own corporate offices in New York. It was not that she did not like Texas; in point of fact, she had always had a penchant for that great state, seeing in its rough sprawling power something akin to her native Yorkshire. But this last trip had exhausted her. I'm getting too old for gallivanting around on planes, she thought ruefully, and then dismissed that thought as unworthy. It was dishonest and she was never dishonest with herself. It saved so much time in the long run. And, in all truthfulness, she did not feel old. Only a trifle tired on occasion and especially when she became exasperated with fools; and Harry Marriott, president of Sitex, was a fool and inherently dangerous, like all fools.

Emma opened her eyes and sat up impatiently, her mind turning again to business, for she was tireless, sleepless, obsessive when it came to her vast business enterprises, which rarely left her thoughts. She straightened her back and crossed her legs, adopting her usual posture, a posture that was contained and regal. There was an imperiousness in the way she held her head and in her general demeanour, and her green eyes were full of enormous power. She lifted one of her small, strong hands and automatically smoothed her silver hair, which did not need it, since it was as impeccable as always. As indeed she was herself, in her simple yet elegant dark grey worsted dress, its severeness softened by the milky whiteness of the matchless pearls around her neck and the fine emerald pin on her shoulder.

She glanced at her granddaughter sitting opposite, diligently making notes for the coming week's business in New York. She looks drawn this morning, Emma thought, I push her too hard. She felt an unaccustomed twinge of guilt but impatiently shrugged it off. She's young, she can take it, and it's the best training she could ever have, Emma reassured herself and said, 'Would you ask that nice young steward – John, isn't it? – to make some coffee please, Paula. I'm badly in need of it this morning.'

The girl looked up. Although she was not beautiful in the accepted sense of that word, she was so vital she gave the impression of

beauty. Her vividness of colouring contributed to this effect. Her glossy hair was an ink-black coif around her head, coming to a striking widow's peak above a face so clear and luminous it might have been carved from pale polished marble. The rather elongated face, with its prominent cheek-bones and wide brow, was alert and expressive and there was a hint of Emma's resoluteness in her chin, but her eyes were her most spectacular feature, large and intelligent and of a cornflower blue so deep they were almost violet.

She smiled at her grandmother and said, 'Of course, Grandy. I'd like some myself.' She left her seat, her tall slender body moving with grace. She's so thin, Emma commented to herself, too thin for my liking. But she always has been. I suppose it's the way she's made. A leggy colt as a child, a racehorse now. A mixture of love and pride illuminated Emma's stern face and her eyes were full of sudden warmth as she gazed after the girl, who was her favourite, the daughter of Emma's favourite daughter, Daisy.

Many of Emma's dreams and hopes were centred in Paula. Even when she had been only a little girl she had gravitated to her grandmother and had also been curiously attracted to the family business. Her biggest thrill had been to go with Emma to the office and sit with her as she worked. While she was still in her teens she had shown such an uncanny understanding of complex machinations that Emma had been truly amazed, for none of her own children had ever displayed quite the same aptitude for her business affairs. Emma had secretly been delighted, but she had watched and waited with a degree of trepidation, fearful that the youthful enthusiasm would be dissipated. But it had not waned, rather it had grown. At sixteen Paula scorned the suggestion of a finishing school in Switzerland and had gone immediately to work for her grandmother. Over the years Emma drove Paula relentlessly, more harsh and exacting with her than with any of her other employees, as she assiduously educated her in all aspects of Harte Enterprises. Paula was now twenty-three years old and she was so clever, so capable, and so much more mature than most girls of her age that Emma had recently moved her into a position of significance in the Harte organization. She had made Paula her personal assistant, much to the stupefaction and irritation of Emma's oldest son, Kit, who worked for the Harte organization. As Emma's right hand, Paula was privy to most of her corporate and private business and, when Emma

deemed fit, she was her confidante in matters pertaining to the family, a situation Kit found intolerable.

The girl returned from the galley kitchen laughing. As she slid into her seat she said, 'He was already making tea for you, Grandy. I suppose, like everyone else, he thinks that's all the English drink. But I said we preferred coffee. You do, don't you?'

Emma nodded absently, preoccupied with her affairs. 'I certainly do, darling.' She turned to her briefcase on the seat next to her and took out her glasses and a sheaf of folders. She handed one to Paula and said, 'Please look at these figures for the New York store. I would be interested in what you think. I believe we are about to take a major step forward. Into the black.'

Paula looked at her alertly. 'That's sooner than you thought, isn't it? But then your reorganization has been very drastic. It should be paying off by now.' Paula opened the folder with interest, her concentration focused on the figures. She had Emma's talent for reading a balance sheet with rapidity and detecting, almost at a glance, its strengths and its weaknesses and, like her grandmother's, her business acumen was formidable.

Emma slipped on her horn-rimmed glasses and took up the large blue folder that pertained to Sitex Oil. As she quickly ran through the papers there was a gleam of satisfaction in her eyes. She had won. At last, after three years of the most despicable and manipulative fighting she had ever witnessed, Harry Marriott had been removed as president of Sitex and kicked upstairs to become chairman of the board.

Emma had recognized Marriott's shortcomings years ago. She knew that if he was not entirely venal he was undoubtedly exigent and specious, and dissimulation had become second nature to him. Over the years, success and the accumulation of great wealth had only served to reinforce these traits, so that now it was impossible to deal with him on any level of reason. As far as Emma was concerned, his judgement was crippled, he had lost the little foresight he had once had, and he certainly had no comprehension of the rapidly shifting inner worlds of international business.

As she made notations on the documents for future reference, she hoped there would be no more vicious confrontations at Sitex. Yesterday she had been mesmerized by the foolhardiness of Harry's actions, had watched in horrified fascination as he had so skilfully

manoeuvred himself into a corner from which Emma knew there was no conceivable retreat. He had appealed to her friendship of some forty-odd years only once, floundering, helpless, lost; a babbling idiot in the face of his adversaries, of whom she was the most formidable. Emma had answered his pleas with total silence, an inexorable look in her pitiless eyes. *And she had won.* With the full support of the board. Harry was out. The new man, her man, was in and Sitex Oil was safe. But there was no joy in her victory, for to Emma there was nothing joyful in a man's downfall.

Satisfied that the papers were in order, Emma put the folder and her glasses in her briefcase, settled back in her seat, and sipped the cup of coffee. After a few seconds she addressed Paula. 'Now that you have been to several Sitex meetings, do you think you can cope alone soon?'

Paula glanced up from the balance sheets, a look of astonishment crossing her face. 'You wouldn't send me in there alone!' she exclaimed. 'It would be like sending a lamb to the slaughter. You wouldn't do that to me yet.' As she regarded her grandmother she recognized that familiar inscrutable expression for what it truly was, a mask to hide Emma's ruthless determination. My God, she *does* mean it, Paula thought with a sinking feeling. 'You're not really serious, are you, Grandmother?'

'Of course I'm serious!' A flicker of annoyance crossed Emma's face. She was surprised at the girl's unexpected but unequivocal nervousness, for Paula was accustomed to high-powered negotiations and had always displayed nerve and shrewdness. 'Do I ever say anything I don't mean? You know better than that, Paula,' she said sternly.

Paula was silent and, in that split second of silence, Emma became conscious of her tenseness, the startled expression that lingered on her face. Is she afraid? Emma wondered. Surely not. She had never displayed fear before. She was not going to turn out like the others, was she? This chilling possibility penetrated Emma's brilliant mind like a blade and was so unacceptable she refused to contemplate it. She decided then that Paula had simply been disturbed by the meeting, perhaps more so than she had shown. It had not disturbed Emma; rather it had irritated her, since she had found the bloodletting unnecessary and a waste of precious time, and therefore all the more reprehensible. But *she* had seen it all before, had witnessed the

rapacious pursuit of power all of her life, and she could take it in her stride. With her strength she was equipped to deal with it dispassionately. As Paula will have to learn to do, she told herself.

The severity of her expression did not change, but her voice softened as she said, 'However, I won't send you alone to Sitex until you know, as I already know, that you can handle it successfully.'

Paula was still holding the folder in her hands, delicate hands with tapering fingers. She put the folder down and sat back in her seat. She was regaining her composure and, gazing steadily at her grandmother, she said quietly, 'What makes you think they would listen to me the way they listen to you? I know what the board think of me. They regard me as the spoiled, pampered granddaughter of a rich and powerful woman. They dismiss me as empty-headed and silly, a brainless pretty face. They wouldn't treat me with the same deference they treat you, and why should they? I'm not you.'

Emma pursed her lips to hide a small amused smile, sensing injured pride rather than fear. 'Yes, I know what they think of you,' she said in a much milder tone, 'and we both know how wrong they are. And I do realize their attitude riles you, darling. I also know how easy it would be for you to disabuse them of their opinions of you. But I wonder, Paula, would you want to do that?'

She looked at her granddaughter quizzically, a shrewd glint in her eyes, and when the girl did not answer, she continued: 'Being underestimated by men is one of the biggest crosses I've had to bear all of my life, and it was particularly irritating to me when I was your age. However, it was also an advantage and one I learned to make great use of, I can assure you of that. You know, Paula, when men believe they are dealing with a foolish or stupid woman they lower their guard, become negligent and sometimes even downright reckless. Unwittingly they often hand you the advantage on a plate.'

'Yes, but . . .'

'No buts, Paula, please. And don't you underestimate me. Do you honestly think I would expose you to a dangerous situation?' She shook her head and smiled. 'I know what your capabilities are, my dear. I have always been sure of you. More sure of you than any of my own children, apart from your mother, of course, and you've never let me down.'

'I appreciate your confidence, Grandmother,' Paula replied steadily, 'but I do find it hard to deal effectively with people who don't take

me seriously and the Sitex board do not.’ A stubborn look dulled the light in her eyes and her mouth became a thin tight line, an unconscious replica of her grandmother’s.

‘You know, you really surprise me. You have enormous self-assurance and have dealt with all manner of people, on all levels, since you were quite a young girl. It has never seemed to disturb you before.’ Emma sighed heavily. ‘And haven’t I told you countless times that what people think about you in business is unimportant. The important thing is for you to know who you are and what you are. And frankly I always thought you did.’

‘I do!’ Paula cried, ‘but I am not sure that I have your capacity for hard work, or your experience.’

Emma’s face darkened. ‘Yes, you do. Furthermore, you have all the advantages of education I never had, so don’t let me hear you speak so negatively of yourself again! I’ll concede experience to you, but only to a degree. And you are gaining more of that every day. I’ll tell you in all honesty, Paula, I would have no compunction in sending you back to Sitex tomorrow – and without me. Because I know you would handle yourself brilliantly. After all, I raised you, I trained you. Don’t you think I *know* what I created?’

A carbon copy of yourself and a copy is never quite as good as the original, Paula thought dryly, but said, ‘Please don’t be angry, Grandmother.’ Her voice was gentle. ‘You did a wonderful job. *But I am not you*. And the board are very aware of that. It’s bound to affect their attitude!’

‘Now listen to me!’ Emma leaned forward and her narrowed eyes were like green glass slits underneath the old wrinkled lids. She spoke more slowly than was her custom, to give weight to her words.

‘You seem to have forgotten one thing! When you walk into Sitex in my place, you walk in there with something they have to take seriously. Power! Whatever they think of your ability, that power is the one thing they cannot ignore. The day you take over from me, after my death, you will be representing your mother, who will have become the single largest stock-holder of Sitex. With her power of attorney you will be controlling twenty-five per cent of the preferred stock and fifteen per cent of the common stock of a multi-million-dollar corporation.’ She paused and stared intently at Paula, and then continued: ‘That’s not ordinary power, Paula. That’s immense power, and especially so in one person’s hands. And don’t you ever

forget that. Believe me, they won't when it comes to the crunch. They didn't yesterday. But in spite of their unparalleled behaviour – and I am beginning to realize just how much it did upset you – they were unable to ignore me and what I represent!' Emma sat back in her seat, but she kept her eyes focused on Paula, and her face was implacable.

The girl had been listening attentively to her grandmother, as she always did, and her nervousness was ebbing away. For she did have courage and spirit, and not a little of Emma's resoluteness. But the virulence of the fighting at Sitex had indeed appalled her, as Emma suspected. As she gazed at her grandmother, reflecting on her words, she marvelled at her again, as she had yesterday. Emma was seventy-eight years old. An old woman. Yet she had none of the infirmities of the aged, nor their loss of grace. She was vital and totally in command of her faculties. Paula had watched her grandmother's performance at Sitex with awe, had been amazed at her invincible strength, but most of all she had admired her integrity in the face of incredible pressure and opposition. Now Paula wondered, with a cold and calculating objectivity, whether she would ever have that sense of purpose, that icy tenacity to manipulate those men as astutely as her grandmother had. She was not sure. But then some of the nagging doubts were dispelled as she recognized the truth of her grandmother's words. Finally it was her own driving ambition that ultimately overcame the remnants of nervousness.

She spoke with renewed confidence. 'You're right, of course. Power is the most potent of weapons, probably more so than money. And I'm sure it is the only thing the Sitex board do understand.' She paused and looked at her grandmother directly. 'I'm not afraid of them! Don't think that, Grandy. Although I must admit they did disgust me. I suppose if I was afraid, I was afraid of failing you.' The smile she gave Emma was full of sureness and the troubled look had left her face.

Emma leaned forward and patted her hand reassuringly. 'Don't ever be afraid of failing, Paula. It's stopped more people achieving their goals than I care to think about. When I was your age I didn't have time to worry about failing. I *had* to succeed to survive. And always remember what you just said to me about power. It *is* the ultimate weapon. Power, not money, talks. Money is only important when you're truly poor, when you need it for a roof over your

head, for food and clothes. Once you have these essentials taken care of and go beyond them, money is simply a unit, a tool to work with. And don't ever let anyone persuade you that power corrupts. It doesn't always, only when those with power will do anything to hold on to that power. Sometimes it can even be ennobling.' She smiled briefly and added with great positiveness, 'And you won't fail me, my dear.'

'I hope not, Grandy,' Paula said, and when she saw the challenging look that swept over Emma's face, she added quickly, 'I know I won't! But what about Harry Marriott? He's the chairman and he appears to hate me.'

'I don't think he hates you, Paula. Fears you perhaps.' Emma's voice was suddenly flat, but there was a dark gleam in her eyes. She had many memories of Harry Marriott, none of them very pleasant, for she had crossed swords with him innumerable times in the past.

'Fears me! Why?' Surprise made the girl's voice rise noticeably, and she leaned forward towards her grandmother.

A flicker of contempt touched Emma's face as she thought of Marriott. 'Because you remind him too much of your grandfather and that unnerves him. Harry was afraid of your grandfather from the very beginning, when they formed the original Sydney – Texas Oil Company and started drilling. Your grandfather always knew what Harry was and Harry instinctively knew that he knew. Hence his fear. When your grandfather left the Sitex stock to me it was with the understanding that I would never sell it as long as I lived. I was to hold it in trust for your mother and any children she might have. You see, your grandfather had great vision, Paula. He recognized years ago that Sitex would become the major company it is today and he wanted us to benefit from it. And he wanted Harry controlled. He wanted my rein on him always.'

'I don't think he can do any more damage at Sitex. He's been rendered virtually powerless, thanks to you. Grandfather would be proud of you, darling,' Paula said, and then asked with some curiosity, 'Do I really resemble him? Grandfather, I mean?'

Emma looked at Paula quickly. They were flying into the sun and a passage of light, very intense and golden, came in through the window. It centred on Paula as she was speaking. To Emma, her hair seemed shinier and blacker in this golden light, hanging in folds like switches of velvet around the pale still face, and her eyes were

bluer and more alive than ever. His eyes. His hair. She smiled gently, her eyes lighting up. 'Sometimes you do, like right now. But mostly I think it's something in your manner that flusters Harry Marriott. And you have no cause to worry about him, Paula. He won't be there for long.' She turned to the briefcase on the seat and began sorting her papers. After a few minutes she looked up and said, 'If you've finished with the balance sheets of the New York store I'll have them back. By the way, do you agree with me?'

'Yes, I do, Grandy. They've made a marvellous turnaround.'

'Let's hope we can keep *them* on the straight and narrow,' Emma said as she took the folder from Paula. She put on her glasses and began studying the figures from the Paris store, already calculating the changes that would have to be made there: Emma knew the store was running into trouble and her mouth tightened in aggravation as she concentrated on the damning figures, and considered the moves she would make on their return to England.

Paula poured herself another cup of coffee and, as she sipped it, regarded her grandmother carefully. This is the face I've seen all my life and loved all my life, she reflected, a wave of tenderness sweeping through her. And she doesn't look her age at all, in spite of what she thinks. She could easily pass for a woman in her early sixties. Paula knew that her grandmother's life had been hard and frequently painful, yet, surprisingly, her face was incredibly well preserved. Paula realized, as she looked at Emma, that this was due in no small measure to the excellence of her bone structure. She noted the webs of wrinkles etching lacy patterns around her grandmother's eyes and mouth, as well as the two deep lines scoring down from her nostrils to her chin. But she also saw that the cheeks above these lines were still firm, and the green eyes that turned flinty in anger were not the rheumy wavering eyes of an old woman. They were alert and knowing. And yet some of her troubled life *is* reflected in her face, she thought, observing the indomitable set of Emma's mouth and the pugnacious tilt of her chin. Paula acknowledged to herself that her grandmother *was* austere and somewhat stern of eye, to many the basilisk. Yet she was also aware that this autocratic bearing was often softened by a beguiling charm, a sense of humour, and an easy naturalness. And, now that her guard was down, it was a vulnerable face, open and fine and full of wisdom.

Paula had never been afraid of her grandmother, but she recognized

that most of the family were, her Uncle Kit in particular. Paula remembered now how delighted she had been when her Uncle Kit had once likened her to Emma. 'You're as bad as your grandmother,' he had said when she was about six or seven years old. She had not fully understood what he had meant, or why he had said it, but she had guessed that it was a reprimand from the look on his face. She had been thrilled to be called 'as bad as your grandmother', because surely this meant that she, too, must be special like Grandy and everyone would be afraid of *her*, as they were afraid of her grandmother.

Emma looked up from the papers. 'Paula, how would you like to go to the Paris store when we leave New York? I really think I have to make some changes in the administration, from what I see in these balance sheets.'

'I'll go to Paris if you want, but to tell you the truth, I had thought of spending some time in Yorkshire, Grandy. I was going to suggest to you that I do a tour of the northern stores,' Paula remarked, keeping her voice casual and light.

Emma was thunderstruck and she did not attempt to disguise this. She took off her glasses slowly and regarded her granddaughter with a quickening interest. The girl flushed under this fixed scrutiny and her face turned pink. She looked away, dropped her eyes, and murmured, 'Well, you know I'll go where you think I'm most needed. Obviously it's Paris.' She sat very still, sensing her grandmother's surprised reaction.

'Why this sudden interest in Yorkshire?' Emma demanded. 'It strikes me there is some fatal fascination up there! Jim Fairley, I presume,' she added.

Paula shifted in her seat, avoiding her grandmother's unflickering stare. She smiled falteringly and the flush deepened as she said defensively, 'Don't be ridiculous! I just thought I ought to take inventory at the northern stores.'

'Inventory my eye and Peggy Martin!' Emma exclaimed, and she thought to herself: I can read Paula like a book. Of course it's Fairley. Aloud she said, 'I do know that you are seeing him, Paula.'

'Not any more!' Paula cried, her eyes flashing. 'I stopped seeing him months ago!' As she spoke she instantly recognized her mistake. Her grandmother had so easily trapped her into admitting the one thing she had vowed she would never admit to her.

Emma laughed softly, but her gaze was steely. 'Don't be so upset. I'm not angry. Actually I never was. I only wondered why you never told me. You usually tell me everything.'

'At first I didn't tell you because I know how you feel about the Fairleys. That vendetta of yours! And I didn't want to upset you. God knows, you've had enough trouble in your life, without me causing you any more. When I stopped seeing him there seemed to be no point in bringing up something that was finished. I didn't want to disturb you unnecessarily, that's all.'

'The Fairleys don't upset me,' Emma snapped. 'And in case you've forgotten, I employ Jim Fairley, my dear. I would hardly have him running the Yorkshire Consolidated Newspaper Company if I didn't trust him.' Emma gave Paula a searching glance and asked quickly, curiously, 'Why did you stop seeing him?'

'Because I . . . we . . . he . . . because,' Paula began, and hesitated, wondering whether she dare go on. She did not want to hurt her grandmother. But in her crafty way she's known about our relationship all the time, Paula thought. The girl drew in her breath and, knowing herself to be trapped, said, 'I stopped seeing Jim because I found myself getting involved. I knew if I continued to see him it would only mean eventual heartache for me, and for him, and pain for you, too.' She paused and looked away and then continued with the utmost quiet: 'You know you wouldn't accept a Fairley in the family, Grandmother.'

'I'm not so sure about that,' Emma said in a voice that was hardly audible. So it went that far, she thought. She felt unutterably weary. Her cheekbones ached and her eyes were scratchy from fatigue. She longed to close her eyes, to be done with this silly and useless discussion. Emma tried to smile at Paula, but her mouth was parched and her lips would not move. Her heart constricted and she was filled with an aching sadness, a sadness she thought had been expunged years ago. The memory of him was there then, so clearly evoked that it bit like acid into her brain. And Emma saw Edwin Fairley as vividly as if he was standing before her. And in his shadow there was Jim Fairley, his spitting image. Edwin Fairley, usually so elusive in her memory, was caught and held and all the pain he had caused her was there, a living thing. A feeling of such oppression overcame her she could not speak.

Paula was watching her grandmother intently and she was afraid

for her when she saw the sad expression on that severe face. There was an empty look in Emma's eyes and, as she stared into space, her mouth tightened into a harsh and bitter line. Damn the Fairleys, all of them, Paula cursed. She leaned forward and took hold of her grandmother's hand anxiously. 'It's over, Grandy. It wasn't important. Honestly. I'm not upset about it. And I *will* go to Paris, Grandy! Oh, Grandy darling, don't look like that, please. I can't bear it.' Paula smiled shakily, concerned, afraid, conciliatory. These mingled emotions ran together and underlying them all was a sickening fury with herself for permitting her grandmother to goad her into this ridiculous conversation, one she had been avoiding for months.

After a short time the haunted expression faded from Emma's face. She swallowed hard and took control of herself, exercising that formidable iron will that was the root of her power and her strength. 'Jim Fairley's a good man. Different from the others . . .' she began. She stopped and sucked in her breath. She wanted to proceed, to tell Paula she could resume the friendship with Jim Fairley. But she could not. *Yesterday was now. The past was immutable.*

'Don't let's talk about the Fairleys. I said I would go to Paris,' Paula cried, clinging to her grandmother's hand. 'You know best and perhaps I should look the store over anyway.'

'I think you *must* go over there, Paula, to see what's going on.'

'I'll go as soon as we get back to London,' Paula said swiftly.

'Yes, that's a good idea,' Emma agreed rather brusquely, as glad as Paula to change the subject, but also instinctively pressed for time, as she had been all of her life. Time was a precious commodity to Emma. Time had always been evaluated as money and she did not want to waste it now, dwelling on the past, resurrecting painful events that had taken place some sixty years ago.

Emma said, 'I think I must go directly to the office when we arrive in New York. Charles can take the luggage to the apartment, after he's dropped us off. I'm worried about Gaye, you see. Have you noticed anything peculiar when you've spoken to her on the phone?'

Paula was sitting back in her seat, relaxed and calm again, relieved that the subject of Jim Fairley had been dropped. 'No, I haven't. What do you mean?'

'I can't pin it down to anything specific,' Emma continued thoughtfully, 'but instinctively I know something is dreadfully wrong.'

She has sounded edgy during all of our conversations. I noticed it the day she arrived from London and called me at Sitex. Haven't you detected anything in her voice?'

'No. But then she has been speaking mostly to you, Grandmother. You don't think there is some trouble with the business in London, do you?' Paula asked, alarmed.

'I sincerely hope not,' Emma said, 'that's all I need after the Sitex situation.' She drummed her fingers on the table for a few moments and then looked out of the window, her mind awash with thoughts of her business and her secretary, Gaye Sloane. In her sharp and calculating way she enumerated all of the things that could have gone wrong in London and then gave up. Anything might have happened and it was futile to speculate and hazard wild guesses. That, too, was a waste of time.

She turned to Paula and gave her a wry little smile. 'We'll know soon enough, my dear. We should be landing shortly.'