

The Lace Makers

A young woman had just left Mrs Attwell's house. She was wearing a simple grey dress with a lace-trimmed bonnet, and was heading down The Walk to the Cobb, observed by two of Mrs Attwell's fellow lace makers, who were standing at the street corner, having a gossip. Very soon, out came Mrs Attwell.

- Thought I saw you there. I've just had a visitor.
- Yes, so we saw. What did *she* want?
- She wanted a bit of lace sewing on the sleeves of a dress: quite a nice one, but it's seen better days. The lace was a bit torn and sad looking.
- Bit like her!
- But with a new bit of lace, it should be OK for the ball next Thursday.
- Who was she, anyway?
- Have you not seen her before? She's here on holiday with her parents. They were here last year too, the whole family: loads of them. It's just the three of them here now, though: her and her parents. She seemed nice enough: said she loved walking down to the Cobb, admiring the views around the bay and watching the ships passing. She's going to the ball next Thursday, she said; and her parents.
- Why isn't she married? She can't be far off 30. Must be something wrong with her.
- She used to have a young man years ago, so I heard. They were often seen together at dances. Rather a good dancer she was, by all accounts; but there was a bit of talk, 'cos she was always dancing with this one, and was even seen *sitting* with him. *Shocking!* Her father a preacher, and all. Irish, they say the young man was – well, what can you expect? Anyway, he hopped it back to Ireland.
- Who told you all that?
- Mrs Hughes from down the road told me, and she should know. Her sister lives next door to Mrs Brown's guest house, where they're staying.
- Well, maybe she's right, but it's not what I heard.
- Which was what?
- I heard her young man had been killed by a horse.
- Huh, a likely one!
- Could have been a different man. She sounds like a bit of a one.
- Where did that come from, anyway?
- Mrs Larkin's daughter Laura told her. Laura's husband has a cousin, whose daughter lives not far from where that lot live. Can't remember the name of the village now – she did say; but any road, the cousin's daughter knows a friend of that one's sister, and round there, they know everyone's business.
- I've seen her walking down to the Cobb. Sometimes she goes in a bathing machine. Other times she just sits on the beach and reads. Mrs Thomas said that she even saw her writing something in a notebook, one day. At it for a whole hour, she was. Don't ask me what she'd be writing, for all that time.
- Maybe it was a love letter to a young man?
- What, in a notebook? I don't think so!
- Well, whatever it was, it's not normal. A young woman like that should be at home sewing: or with a chaperone, if she's going to be out and about.
- Ah well, she's on holiday, I suppose. Better get home and get on, if 'Cinderella' is going to get to her ball. We'll have to get Mr Bunting's lace finished first though, or we won't get paid, which is more to the point! As if we haven't got enough already to get through. Ta-ta for now, ladies. See you later!