

1.

Once on a dark winter's day a little girl sat in a carriage with her father. Sara Crewe was only seven. But she felt as if she had a long, long life. At this moment she was remembering the voyage from Bombay with her father, Captain Crewe.

"Papa," she said, "papa."

"What is it, darling?" Captain Crewe answered, holding her closer and looking down into her face.

"Is this the place?" Sara whispered. "Is it, papa?"

"Yes, little Sara, it is. We have come at last." And though she was only seven years old, she knew that he felt sad when he said it.

She always prepared herself for "the place," as she always called it. Her mother died. Her young, handsome, rich father was her only relative. They always played together and were fond of each other. During her short life only one thing was a problem for her and that thing was "the place" she was to be taken to some day. The climate of India was

very bad for children, and as soon as possible they went to school in England.

Her father felt he would be lonely on his return to India. So he held her very closely in his arms as the carriage rolled into the big square. It was a big, dull, brick house; on the front door there were black letters: MISS MINCHIN, **Select Seminary for Young Ladies.**¹

“Here we are, Sara,” said Captain Crewe.

“I don’t like it, papa,” she said.

They came in. It was just then that Miss Minchin entered the room. She was very like her house: tall and respectable and ugly.

“It will be great to have such a beautiful child, Captain Crewe,” she said.

Sara stood quietly. “Why does she say I am a beautiful child?” she was thinking. “I am not beautiful at all.” She was slim, rather tall for her age, and had an attractive little face. Her hair was heavy and black; her eyes were green and gray, they were big, wonderful eyes.

Sara stood near her father and listened while he and Miss Minchin talked. “Sara likes learning,” Captain Crewe said. “She is always sitting with her little nose burrowing into books. Make her ride her pony or go out and buy a new doll. She should play more with dolls.”

“Papa,” said Sara, “you see, dolls should be friends. Emily is going to be my friend.”

¹ **Select Seminary for Young Ladies** — Институт благородных девиц

Captain Crewe looked at Miss Minchin and Miss Minchin looked at Captain Crewe.

“Who is Emily?” she asked.

“Tell her, Sara,” Captain Crewe said, smiling.

Sara answered.

“She is a doll I haven’t got yet,” she said.

“She is a doll papa is going to buy for me. We are going out together to find her. I have called her Emily. She is going to be my friend when papa is not here. I want to talk to her about him.”

Sara stayed with her father at his hotel for several days. They went out and visited many big shops together, and bought many things. And at last they found Emily, but they went to a number of toy shops and looked at many dolls before they discovered her. She was a large doll; she had golden-brown hair and her eyes were blue. “Of course,” said Sara, looking into her face as she held her on her knee, “of course, papa, this is Emily.”

“Heigh-ho, little Sara!” Captain Crewe said to himself “I don’t think you know how much your daddy will miss you.”

The next day he took her to Miss Minchin’s and left her there. “**She is a sensible little thing**¹, and she never wants anything it isn’t safe to give her,” he said.

He was to sail away the next morning. He went with Sara into her little sitting room and they bade each other goodbye.

¹ **She is a sensible little thing** — она разумная малышка

“Are you learning me **by heart**¹, little Sara?” he said, stroking her hair.

“No,” she answered. “I know you by heart. You are in my heart.”

And they put their arms round each other and kissed as if they would never let each other go.

When the carriage went away, Sara was sitting on the floor of her sitting room, while **Captain Crewe looked backward, waving and kissing his hand as if he could not stop.**²

¹ **by heart** — наизусть

² **Captain Crewe looked backward, waving and kissing his hand as if he could not stop.** — Капитан Кру всё оглядывался, махал и посылал воздушные поцелуи, как будто не мог остановиться.

2.

When Sara entered the schoolroom the next morning everybody looked at her with interested eyes. All the girls knew that she was a special pupil and had a lot of expensive things. Sara sat quietly in her seat. She was interested and looked back quietly at the children who looked at her.

“Young ladies,” Miss Minchin said, “**I want to introduce you to your new companion.**”¹

“Sara,” said Miss Minchin “come here to me.” She took a book from the desk.

“As your papa has a French maid for you,” she began, “I think that he wants you to learn French well.”

Sara said, “I think he took her,” she said, “because he—he thought I would like her, Miss Minchin.”

¹ I want to introduce you to your new companion. — Я хочу представить вам вашу новую одноклассницу.

“I am afraid,” said Miss Minchin, with a smile, “that you shouldn’t always imagine that things are for you because you like them.”

The truth was that Sara could not remember the time when she didn’t know French. Her mother was a French woman, and Captain Crewe loved her language.

“I—I have never really learned French, but—but—” she began.

One of Miss Minchin’s secrets was that she did not speak French herself and wanted to hide this fact.

“That is enough,” she said. “If you have not learned, you must begin at once. The French teacher, Monsieur Dufarge, will be here in a few minutes. Take this book and look at it until he arrives.”

Sara’s cheeks felt warm. She went back to her seat and opened the book.

“You look rather angry, Sara,” Miss Minchin said. “I am sorry you do not like the idea of learning French.”

“I am very fond of it,” answered Sara, thinking she would try again; “but—”

“You must not say ‘but’ when you must work,” said Miss Minchin. “Look at your book again.”

“When Monsieur Dufarge comes,” Sara thought, “I can make him understand.”

Monsieur Dufarge arrived very soon. He was a very nice, intelligent, middle-aged Frenchman.

“Is this a new pupil for me, madame?” he said to Miss Minchin.