

Norman (*yelling*) Don't pull! Don't pull! It's impaled in my leg.
 Annie (*bending to free him*) All right. Wait—wait . . .
 Norman Aaaah!
 Annie Ssh.
 Norman You must have hands like asbestos. (*As Annie frees him*) Aaah!
 Aaah! Aaah! (*Hopping away and sitting on the barrel*) God!
 Annie Mother's resting, you know. You'll wake her up.
 Norman (*rolling up his trouser leg*) Look at this. I'm scratched right down my leg.
 Annie If Mother's woken up before she's ready to wake up, she doesn't know where she is. It takes me an hour to explain.
 Norman Look, blood—bleeding . . .
 Annie Let's see. (*She bends to look*)
 Norman Careful! Deformed for life.
 Annie Hold these. (*She hands Norman the roses*)
 Norman (*taking them and dropping them immediately with another yell*) Aaah!
 Annie Ssh.
 Norman It's a death trap, this garden.
 Annie Look, will you please be quiet.
 Norman Only been here two minutes, lost three pints of blood. (*He sucks his hand*)
 Annie Oh, Norman, do shut up. You're so weedy.
 Norman (*indignantly*) Weedy? (*He rises*)
 Annie A real weed. (*She starts to pick up the flowers*)
 Norman (*romantic again*) Oh, Annie . . . (*He reaches out and touches her leg*)
 Annie (*pulling away, irritated*) Don't. Just a minute.
 Norman stares at her a second, then sits again
 Norman I'm exhausted.
 Annie I should think so. In that coat.
 Norman It was raining in Fulham.
 Annie Was it?
 Norman Metaphorically it was.
 Annie Oh.
 Norman (*expansively*) Ah, the sun, the sun, the sun . . .
 Annie Norman . . .
 Norman Mmm?
 Annie What are you doing here?
 Norman laughs secretly

No, seriously, Norman. What's the point of our making all these arrangements, of trying to make absolutely sure no-one was going to get upset—no-one was going to get hurt and then you turn up here.
 Norman I wanted to see you. I was frightened you'd changed your mind.
 Annie But I'm supposed to meet you. We're supposed to meet. In the village, at the back of the post office, seven o'clock.

START

Norman I got here early.
 Annie Well, you'll have to go away for an hour. I haven't even packed.
 Norman Where am I supposed to go?
 Annie I don't know. Go and walk round the Abbey.
 Norman That's five miles away. I'm not walking five miles, just to wander round some ruin with a suitcase.
 Annie I don't want you here when Reg and Sarah arrive. And I've got to see them in. I've got to show them where everything is for Mother. All her bottles and pills and God knows what. And which is their towel. I mean, there's masses. I can't just rush off. Anyway, Tom's here . . .
 Norman (*scornfully*) Tom.
 Annie He's only round the front of the house, looking for the cat.
 Norman Tom. Ha!
 Annie And don't say it like that. I don't say Ruth, ha!
 Norman I don't mind if you do. I say it.
 Annie Not to her face, you don't.
 Norman How do you know?
 Annie I bet you don't. I've seen you with her.
 Norman How do you know what I say to her face behind your back?
 Annie I know you. More important I know my sister.
 Norman She'll have got my note by now.
 Annie Note?
 Norman Telling all.
 Annie All what?
 Norman It's all over between us. That ever since we stayed here last Christmas, something wonderful happened. You and I were all that mattered. That everything else . . .
 Annie You didn't? You didn't say that?
 Norman That the love between us . . .
 Annie If you said that, I warn you, I'll ring her up this minute . . . (*She moves away*)
 Norman (*alarmed*) Where are you going?
 Annie To ring her up.
 Norman All right, all right. I didn't. I didn't leave her a note. Promise.
 Annie Promise?
 Norman Promise.
 Annie So long as you haven't. I mean—well, after all she is my sister. I'm fond of her. Quite. We've already agreed it's stupid to—upset everything just for us. We're being terribly adult, aren't we? You said we were—in your letter . . . Far better we two just go away quietly to a little hotel somewhere, get it all off our chests—out of our system—God, I'm making it sound like a laxative—you know what I mean—work it all off, that's what I mean. Then you go back to Ruth and live happily ever after—or as happily as you can seeing it's Ruth and I come back to Mother and—and—look after her . . .
 Norman And then? When your mother finally pegs out?
 Annie Oh well. I'll face that when it comes.
 Norman Yes, you'll have to.

Annie There's Tom. He's hovering in the background.

Norman The creeping vet.

Annie He's done a lot to help here, you know. He did all the kitchen ceiling for me. Two coats. He's a jolly good vet, too. He has a marvellous way with animals. Actually, he's better with them than he is with people really.

Norman You'll have to start going around on all fours then, won't you.

Annie Oh, shut up. I don't know why you're so nasty about him, he likes you very much.

Norman He takes you for granted. Here you are—a beautiful girl. Vibrant.

He could marry you tomorrow. He could make you happy. And what does he do? He spends more time with that cat than he does with you.

Annie Well, he's a vet, isn't he?

Norman Vet. V.E.T. Very Egocentric Twit. He doesn't deserve you.

Annie And you do?

Norman No. But I'm strangely engaging.

Annie No, you're not, you're foul. I don't think I want to come with you after all. I've changed my mind. I'll give Mother a blanket bath, it'll be much more fun.

Norman I love you.

Annie Oh, Norman . . . When you look like that, I almost believe you. You look like a—what are those things?

Norman Greek gods. (*He does a "Greek god" attitude*)

Annie Old English sheepdogs.

Norman Oh, great.

Annie They're super dogs. All woolly and double-ended.

Norman I'm not woolly and double-ended.

Annie You are a bit. You're like a badly built haystack.

Norman I'm going.

Annie Yes, you'd better before Tom . . .

Norman (*taking her hand, suddenly very serious and intense*) Good-bye, my darling.

Annie (*suppressing her laughter*) Oh, Norman, do stop it.

Norman What?

Annie Oh, I'm sorry, I . . . (*She starts laughing*)

Norman (*hurt*) What?

Annie It's just you're so—terribly quaint.

Norman (*huffily*) If it's quaint to be romantic . . . I mean, if you prefer me to knock you down . . .

Annie Try it.

Norman If that's what you want. Where's the romance? Where's the romance gone? Destroyed by the cynics and liberationists. Woe betide the man who dares to pay a woman a compliment today—he bends to kiss her hand and wham—the old karate chop on the back of the neck and she's away with his wallet. Forget the flowers, the chocolates, the soft word—rather woe her with a self-defence manual in one hand and a family planning leaflet in the other.

Annie Oh, Norman, you are stupid.

Annie p. 2/2

Norman Yes. I really do love you, Annie.

Annie Do you?

Norman Yes.

Annie That's a pity.

Norman Why?

Annie For everyone. Golly, look at this garden. It's like a jungle. Old Mr Purdy's got his leg again. He's been off a fortnight.

Norman (*uninterested*) Oh.

Annie Mrs Purdy says it's a war wound but I think it's gout. He's a terrific drinker. All day. The potting shed's full of his empties. He says they're for weed killer but he's got enough there to defoliate the whole of Sussex. If you look out of the window at tea time, you can see him draped over his spade. Like an old bag of fertilizer . . .

Norman Seven o'clock, then, back of the post office. (*He goes to move*)

Annie Seven o'clock. I say, it's awfully exciting in a way, isn't it? I mean, do you know I haven't been away from this place for nearly two years, what with Mother and one thing and another. I'm longing to see the sea again. I've forgotten what it looks like.

Norman Ah.

Annie Where did you say we were going? Hastings. Why did you choose Hastings?

Norman Well—it looks sort of close on the map.

Annie I'm not complaining. I mean, I'm sure Hastings is super.

Norman Yes. As a matter of fact, I wasn't able to get a vacancy after all—not in Hastings.

Annie Oh.

Norman It's summer, you see.

Annie Yes, I've noticed.

Norman Ah, well, I'd forgotten.

Annie So we're not going to Hastings?

Norman I'm afraid not.

Annie Where are we going?

Norman Well, I managed after a bit of trouble to get us fixed up in East Grinstead. They had a cancellation.

Annie (*digesting this*) Oh, well. Super. East Grinstead, then. I haven't been there, either.

Norman It was the best I could do. It's on the way to Hastings.

Annie Lovely.

Norman (*leering*) Not that we'll see much of it—eh?

Annie (*blankly*) How do you mean?

Norman Well . . .

Annie Oh. (*Doubtfully*) Oh, yes. (*She thinks*) I expect we'll want some fresh air at some stage though, won't we? I mean, we won't—all the time. I mean, if it's a hotel they'll want to make the beds and—change the soap—so I expect we'll get time for a bit of a snoop around, just a bit.

Norman (*unconvinced*) Oh, yes . . .

Annie It'd be a shame to go all the way to East Grinstead and then not