

have been that wine. Wonderful. It's a rotten drink but it makes a lovely sleeping draught. I'd market it. Sleep Nature's way with our dandelion brew. Arhar . . .

Annie goes out passing Sarah coming in with the last of the breakfast things

Norman What have we got for breakfast, then? What have we got?

Sarah (*calling*) Reg! Breakfast.

Reg (*off, distant*) Right . . .

Sarah sits and starts her breakfast

Norman How's old Reg this morning? All right, is he? Sleep well, did he? I can tell you I can do with some breakfast. Missed my meal last night. Did you know that? I missed my meal, I didn't hear the dinner gong. What sort of hotel do you call this?

Annie enters

Sarah Have you taken Mother her's up?

Annie Yes.

Norman I'll sit here, shall I? All right if I sit here? Anybody any objections if I sit here? (*He is ignored*) I'll sit here.

Norman sits at the head of the table. Sarah sits at the other end with Annie close to her, isolating Norman. Norman sits whistling

Reg enters, dressed in a sports shirt and sandals

Reg (*cheerily*) 'Morning, all.

Norman 'Morning.

Reg (*his face falling*) Oh.

Reg sits next to Sarah. Annie and Reg have cereal. Sarah butters toast

Norman Well, you're a right cheery lot, aren't you? Look at you. A right cheery lot. Woo-hoo-halloo . . . (*He waves at them*)

Sarah (*acidly*) Nobody in this house is speaking to you ever again.

Norman Oh, I see. I see. That's the way the Swiss rolls. I see. That's the way the apple crumbles, is it? Oh ho. That's the way the corn flakes . . . (*A pause. He ponders. Suddenly—sharply*) Sarah! Be careful! The butter . . .

Sarah (*alarmed*) What?

Norman Ha-ha! You spoke to me. Caught you. Caught you. (*Pause*) All right, I'll talk to myself then. (*Very rapidly, in two voices*) Hallo, Norman—good morning, Norman—how are you, Norman—I'm very well,

Norman—that's good news, Norman . . .

Annie Shut up, Norman.

Norman Ha-ha! Caught you again. That's two of you. Just got to catch

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Reg No, I didn't.

Norman Ha-ha! Three to me. I've won. (*Pause*) Nothing wrong in a few drinks. Don't speak. I don't care. Going to be a pretty dull Sunday if we all sit in silence, I can tell you. Well, I'm not sitting in silence. I'll find something to do. I know, I'll go up and frighten Mother.

Sarah looks up sharply and gives him a terrible glare

Ah-ha! Nearly got you again. Is it too much to ask for something to eat?

No response

It's too much to ask for something to eat. (*He gets up and moves down the table and takes the cereal bowl that Sarah is not using*) May I borrow your bowl? That's awfully nice of you. And your spoon? Thank you. Now then, what shall I have? (*Examining the cereal packets*) Puffa Puffa Rice. Ah-ha . . . (*He returns to the top of the table, sits and fills his bowl*) No Sunday papers. Dear, dear. Ah, well I shall have to read my morning cereal. (*He laughs*) Cereal. Do we all get that? Apparently we don't. (*He reads. Suddenly violently banging the table*) Stop!

The others jump involuntarily

Stop everything. Listen. A free pair of pinking shears for only seventy-nine p and six Puffa Puffa tokens. Hurry, hurry, hurry. What's this? Is nobody hurrying? Do you mean to tell me that none of you want them? Where's the spirit of British pinking? Dead, presumably. Like my relations. (*He eats a handful of dry cereal thoughtfully*) Hang on, I've got another game. Mind reading. I'll read your minds. Now then, where shall we start? Sarah. Sarah is thinking—that noisy man up there should be home with his wife. What is he doing shattering the calm of our peaceful Sunday breakfast with his offers of reduced price pinking shears. Why is he here, shouting at us like this? Why isn't he at home, like any other decent husband, shouting at his wife? He came down here to seduce his wife's own sister. How low can he get? The fact that his wife's own sister said, at one stage anyway, that she was perfectly happy to go along with him is beside the point. The fact that little Annie here was perfectly happy to ditch old reliable Tom—without a second thought—and come off with me is beside the point. We won't mention that because it doesn't quite fit in with the facts as we would like them. And what is little Annie thinking, I wonder? Maybe furtively admiring my pyjamas, who knows? Pyjamas that could have been hers. With all that

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they contain. (*He sits*) "These nearly were mine." Or maybe she is thinking, "Phew, that was a close shave. I could be shackled up in some dreadful hotel with this man—at this very moment—what a lucky escape for me. Thank heavens, I am back here at home amidst my talkative family exchanging witty breakfast banter. Knowing my two-legged faithful companion and friend, Tom, the rambling vet, is even now planning to propose to me in nineteen-ninety-seven just as soon as he's cured our cat. Meanwhile, I can live here peacefully, totally fulfilled, racing up and down stairs looking after Mother, having the time of my life and living happily ever after until I'm fifty-five and fat. I'm glad I didn't go to that hotel!" Well, let me tell you so am I. I wouldn't want a week-end with you, anyway. And I'll tell you the funniest thing of all, shall I?

Annie gets up and runs out

(*yelling furiously after her*) I didn't even book the hotel. I knew you wouldn't come. You didn't have the guts. ~~SKIP~~

A pause

Sarah You can be very cruel, can't you, Norman?

Sarah goes out after Annie

Norman Oh, well. It's a bit quieter without those two. Hear yourself speak. Too damned noisy before. All that crunching of toast. Like a brigade of Guards marching on gravel. Well now, Reg . . .

Reg chews glumly through his cereal

(*Looking round the table*) Milk? Ah. (*He gets up*) Sugar? (*He returns with these and sits. Pouring milk over his cereal*) Nice peaceful morning. Just the two of us and—hark! the soft crackle of my Puffa Puffa Rice. 'Tis spring indeed. (*Slight pause*) I suppose you think I'm cruel, too, don't you? Well, I've damn good cause to be, haven't I? I mean, nobody's thought about my feelings, have they? It's all Annie—Annie—Annie—what about me? I was going to give her everything. Well, as much as I could. My whole being. I wanted to make her happy for a week-end, that's all. I wanted to give her . . . (*Angrily*) It was only for a few hours for God's sake. Saturday night, back on Monday morning. That was all it was going to be. My God! The fuss. What about your wife, Norman? What about my wife. Don't you think I'd take Ruth away, just the same? If she'd come. But she won't. She has no need of me at all, that woman, except as an emotional punch bag. I tell you, if you gave Ruth a rose, she'd peel all the petals off to make sure there weren't any greenfly. And when she'd done that, she'd turn round and say, do you call that a rose? Look at it, it's all in bits. That's Ruth. If she came in now, she wouldn't notice me. She'd probably hang her coat on me. It's not fair, Reg. Look, I'll tell you. A man with my type of temperament should really be ideally square-jawed, broad-shouldered,

have blue twinkling eyes, a chuckle in his voice and a spring in his stride. He should get through three women a day without even ruffling his hair. That's what I'm like inside. That's my appetite. That's me. I'm a three-a-day man. There's enough of me in here to give. Not just sex, I'm talking about everything. The trouble is, I was born in the wrong damn body. Look at me. A gigolo trapped in a haystack. The tragedy of my life. Norman Dewars, gigolo and assistant librarian. ~~What's inside you, Reg? Apart from twelve bowls of cornflakes? What do you feel with Sarah? Do you sometimes feel like saying to her, no, this is me. The real me. Look at me . . .~~ ~~STOP~~

Reg finishes his cornflakes

Reg I'll tell you something, Norman. You're a nice bloke. You've got your faults but you're a nice bloke, but I think you must be the last person in the world I ever want to have breakfast with again.

Norman Oh.

Reg No hard feelings you understand, but . . .

Sarah enters, looking pleased

Sarah Well, Norman. A little surprise for you.

Norman Oh, yes.

Sarah Someone to see you.

Norman Ruth?

Sarah Just arrived. Isn't that nice? (*Turning to go off, calling*) Ruth!

Sarah goes out to the house

Reg (*alarmed*) Did someone say Ruth? Oh, no . . . (*He rises, snatches a piece of toast and butters it hastily*)

Norman Tell her I'm not here. Tell her I'm . . .

Ruth enters. She is yelling the end of a conversation with Annie back in the kitchen

Ruth . . . I was pulled right over to the left, there was plenty of room for him to pass me. He had yards and yards, he just . . . (*Turning into the room*) Norman? Where is Norman?

Norman Norman is here.

Ruth (*peering short-sightedly*) Norman?—Oh, there you are.

Reg (*battered toast in hand, heading for the french window*) 'Morning, Ruth. See you later.

Reg goes out to the garden

Ruth (*continuing as if he was still in the room, fumbling in her bag*) Oh, Reg, how ate you. I've been meaning to ring you but I haven't had a minute and how are those enchanting kids of yours? Little whatser-name . . . ?