

Would you like company? Someone to come along, too? Someone to talk to? Why didn't you think of saying it? Just once.

Tom Oh, come on . . .

Annie Or was the whole prospect just too awful?

Tom No . . .

Annie Well, then?

Tom You should have said something. You should have asked me along. I'd've come. You should've asked me.

Annie (*weakly*) Oh, dear God. Yes, I'd have had to have done.

Tom Don't blame me.

Annie I'm not blaming you. Oh—nun's knickers!

Tom Language. You're getting awfully het up. I should put your feet up.

Annie I don't want to put my bloody feet up.

Annie stamps out

Tom gazes after her, slightly puzzled. He helps himself to another biscuit, then puts the tin on the table. Reg is heard calling from the garden

Reg (*off*) Annie, Annie, Annie!

Reg bursts in from the garden

Where is she then? Where's that little sister of mine. (*Seeing no-one but Tom*) Oh. Where is she?

Tom No idea. Kitchen, possibly.

Reg Ah. He's a laugh, you know.

Tom Who?

Reg Norman. Goes on and on. Don't know what he's talking about. Makes me laugh, though. I don't care, I like him. She doesn't but I do.

Women don't, you know. Not many women like him. Don't know why. Sarah can't bear him. Won't have him in the house. Nor will his wife.

(*He laughs*)

Tom I think Annie gets on all right with him.

Reg Ah well. Annie. (*He smiles affectionately*) She's something special.

You'll be all right with her, Tom. Take my word. If you decide to marry any of us, marry her. Not that I'm saying you should but if you did.

Mind you, you can't marry Ruth and I don't think you'd fancy me, so there's not much choice, is there? (*He laughs*)

Tom Um. (*Thoughtfully*) They're all a bit peculiar at the moment.

Reg Who are?

Tom The women. All on edge, for some reason.

Reg The women are restless tonight, eh? Full moon.

Tom Eh

Reg Probably a full moon. (*He bays like a hound and laughs*)

Tom No. Something startled them.

Reg Norman. Or mice. One or the other. I hear Annie's not going now.

Tom Apparently not.

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Reg Could have had my golf. If I'd known. Never mind. Better go and see Mother in a minute. Sarah's up there at the moment. I'll wait till she comes down. Two of them, too much of a good thing. I'll put it off as long as I can. Mother always says the same thing. What did you go and marry her for? Biggest mistake of your life. You'll live to regret it. Trouble is, I can never think of a convincing answer. (*He laughs*) She's probably right. I mean, there are compensations. Children—sometimes. Even Sarah—sometimes. But when I sit here in this house and listen to the quiet. You know, I wonder why I left. I had my own room here, you know. All my books, my own desk, a shelf for my hobbies. I'd sit up there in my school holidays—happy as a sandboy. I'd make these balsa wood aeroplanes. Dozens of them. Very satisfying. Mind you, they never flew. Soon as I launched them—crack—nose dive—firewood. But it didn't really matter. It was a hell of a bore winding them up, anyway. I built one for the kids the other day. They didn't really take to it. Where's the guns, Dad? Where are the bombs then? (*He shakes his head*) Oh well, what do you expect.

Tom No, you see—I think I've stopped her from going.

Reg Who?

Tom Annie.

Reg You have?

Tom Yes . . .

Reg Hope we'll get some dinner soon. I'm getting peckish. (*He takes a biscuit from the tin, leaving the lid off*)

Tom You see, she didn't want to go on her own.

Reg On holiday? Ah well. Who does?

Tom She was rather expecting me to offer to come, too.

Reg Oh. You should have been in there—like a shot, eh?

Tom Yes.

Reg While you had the chance. These are stale.

Tom Now, I've gone and upset her.

Reg Oh, dear.

Tom I've never been very good at that sort of thing. Always seem to miss the moment.

Reg That's how it goes, isn't it?

Tom Yes. I've let her down. I can feel myself doing it while I'm doing it.

I suppose I'll have to find a way of making it up.

Reg I shouldn't bother. It'll blow over. Wait for the new moon.

Sarah enters from the house

Tom picks up some cutlery from the table

Sarah What are you doing in here?

Reg Oh. I beg your pardon. Is the dining-room closed? (*He laughs to Tom*)

Sarah Where's Annie?

Reg Getting us something to eat, I hope. Slaving over a hot stove.