

What If One



Pops Up!

By Raymond Howell

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## Section One

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**P**erched on a very rare antique and priceless Louise XIII, or so the police report suggested, two-seater piano stool, that was once the prized possession of someone incredibly famous until in a surreptitious midnight exchange it became hers, Edna bobbed sparrow-like before her beloved laptop greedily devouring the internet's latest news headlines.

Usually for Edna, it was a case of, 'the more salacious the better' but the news item she was scrolling through with such prima-donna aghast set her exclaiming excitably and squeakily, "Oh, no!" Which in a see-sawing passage through her thin lips nudged a faintly worrying "Hmmm..." to rise from her sister Edith's throat. Was this to be one of Edna's infamous dramatic head-in-the-cloud moments where she dashes outside and does something silly without any thought for her slowing abilities? She seriously hoped not. There was a casserole to put in the oven, the indoor plants to finish watering and with her slight headache she was in no mood to suffer unwanted attentions from idiot busybodies.

"What is it, dear?" Edith wondered cautiously, in a sensible slow slightly resigned tone which for the best part of a century has perfectly complimented Edna's quick excitable top of scale frantic piano-like chatter.

Some of their acquaintances, essentially those who have suffered the ladies wrath may well as they stand safely away from them on the other side of the local theatre's foyer listening to the old ladies good-natured bickering about who had the tickets last, "I haven't got them, could they be in one of your

large inside pockets dear?” - where usually they were - with a certain amusement might comment that the rise and fall of Edna and Edith’s banter is like following the ponderous flow of a bassoon journeying through a doleful piece, only to be interrupted by bright flighty bursts of naughty or laughing piccolos. Or those more unkindly disposed towards the old ladies may well cut in to testily suggest, I’d say it’s more like a tired trombone fighting the screeches of an out-of-tune violin. Which is not totally unfair. If the moment turns fraught when they discover that neither have the blessed tickets, that is exactly how they might start to sound.

That afternoon, Edith’s ponderous flow and almost manly tone, besides occasioning Edna’s earlier tease, “Oh help us do Edith, your psycho-scoping Father again”, also nicely soothed and settled the flustered other occupant of the ladies jumbled and worn out but comfortable lounge. Namely, their poor long suffering auditory-sensitive parrot, whose protesting squawks at one or other of Edna’s many sudden off-key violin outbursts were notably much less shrill than hers.

While the parrot huffily turned its back on this new drama Edna smiled as her sister hurriedly removed the gardening gloves she insists on wearing when tending their vast array of indoor plants. “They mask my fingerprints,” Edith once explained bizarrely which raised spectres of heavy cocky steps and the sarky quips of those dreadful but thankfully long past official callers. Although those types of visitations have lessened over the years, the ladies instinctive hatred of them still hangs as heavy in the air as that acrid smoke which issues from their often spooked badly vented coal fire.

“But we’re retired from all those capers, you know...” Edna teases, “All of them...” but notably with a touch of regret. “And we live here, so fingerprints are to be expected. So it doesn’t matter,” Edna reminds her with a smile. Although, the last few discussion along those lines had her voice trailing off as if lost in wistful dreams of relatively recent days past. At other times she

has been known to shriek in unsettled protest, “Don’t say that... please...” when Edith retorts, “But they can lift ours from here you know if they choose... And if they do that we’re likely done for girl...”

## Section Two

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**H**owever in this instance, caught as she was by the outrageous article there was no room for Edna to tease Edith as she peered over her shoulder to mutter. "And what are you reading about on this bloody intrusive thing anyway?"

"It's about the author who wrote that book... em..., oh I've forgotten what it was..." Edna said, still all a fluster. "It was something or other Edith, anyway it was a while ago, which a few took offence to and they put a Fatima thing on him. Do you remember that, dear...?"

"Ah... I rather think the word you want Edna is Fatwa, although I do prefer your version," Edith laughed. "And do you mean him..., you know...?"

"Yes..., I do mean him..., Old Salmonella."

"Your malaproping again," Edith laughed. "Now shift up a bit and let me read." Only to curse. "Oh dammit, I've left my glasses upstairs. You'll have to tell me what it says dear."

"I can make the text bigger if you like," Edna suggested helpfully.

"Oh don't bother with that nonsense, you know I hate it. It feels like the thing is shouting at me, just like the police did the last time they tried to throw all those silly offences at us. And let me tell you my girl, that experience still makes me shudder," she declared while doing exactly that, which she ended with an exaggerated groan that set her handsome collection of chins wobbling

like an overfull cow's udder.

The eleven-month-younger than her sister - although it ought to have been twelve months, but their Father's impatient and dominant nature did what he did and so Edna is what she is, or so Edith has always believed - echoed her sister's sentiment with a "Quite so too," which on this occasion to the parrot's relief Edna declared using her rarely visited lower range, the one she reserves for such indelicate or quietly disturbing moments, such as hearing steps on the stairs when the owners of the house they were visiting ought to have been elsewhere, like at the theatre. Not to be undone by Edith she dressed her comment up with a little shiver of her own. "But as for this article, I do rather think it should be shouted about very loudly," Edna said, clearly affronted by it.

And very nearly as much, Edith noted silently, as those times you feign outrage my dear when you're being accused of pick-pocketing by an interfering bystander.

Sadly for Edna but blessedly so for Edith's increasing bouts of angina her younger sister rarely indulges in her favourite pastime..., "Although..." she recently explained with glistening eyes and a quickening heart, "when opportunity calls or needs arise, I just might..."

To Edith's then sternly delivered but lightly felt, "Don't you dare go out and start that again my girl...", Edna offered by way of a balm. "It does not hurt to keep one's hand in, you know" she explained jokingly, fully aware of her word play, "I just have to be mindful not to do so for too long and get caught, ay... sister of mine." She laughed, to which she added a sharp and smartly delivered wink, which not only cut Edith's sternness into pieces, it also cleverly refashioned it into peals of unrestrained laughter.

Despite Edith's reservations it is not usual for such exchanges to pass

between them silently on the streets, with eyebrows raised in warning, look out girl, or discrete encouraging nods that see a purse or wallet deftly slipped from an owner's rightful pocket into one or other of the secret sections sewn into the lining of their coats. Where the moment ends with Edith and Edna skilfully evaporating as quickly as aged limbs allow, leaving behind them traces of shadows, whiffs of lavender water and trails of ringingly high and deeply booming laughter.

## Section Three

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''W

ell... It's utterly horrible. Ghastly even." Edna gushed in shrill outrage as if she has just involuntarily gone head to head with a transvestite man's thingy in the alleged safety of a woman's public toilet. A subject they both tended to steer away from in fear of one of them being called phobic and the other too liberal. And then there were the parrot's sensitivities to consider.

Edna was passionately against such a thing being legally allowed, while Edith was more forgiving of the idea of transvestites using the ladies room or any room, what does it matter?

"But..." Edna protested the last time they discussed the subject. "...I do understand their needs, I do, honestly, but why cause us women to suffer? Don't we suffer enough at the hands of men? The privacy of a woman's toilet is our last refuge and now men want to invade it. And neither do I fancy the idea of them weeing on the seat! And I bet they won't close the cubicle door either while they wee! And if there is a seat they'll leave it up! It's far too much to expect us women to accept. And how do we know they're not just perverts out to spy under or over the doors? The thought of it makes me go cold, Edith."

"I rather think you're being a bit hysterical, Edna," is Edith's usual response. "They've run mixed toilets in Europe for many years without issue. I'm sure we'll adjust to it just fine. As we did mixed hospital wards and swimming bath's changing rooms."

“But it is not democratic, Edith?” The majority are being bullied into changing their habits for a few. And the hospital ward thing was simply so they could close a number down and squeeze patients in together, which they then cynically called progressive nursing! As if it was!” She declared with true socialist effrontery. “And neither I do like the idea of being squeezed in a toilet by a transvestite. A man in a dress Edith is still a man!” She is apt to say with vigour. “And my understanding is that many transvestites and in-betweens still possess the sexual habits of men.”

Around that point, for the sake of peace and to spare the parrot’s further blushes, their discussion might end. But not the article Edna was currently incensed about, that was still a very hot topic, open still for discussion.

“Yes... dear, I’ve gathered the article has upset you.” Edith said a little impatiently. “But what exactly has horrified you about it? If you care to hear my opinion it would be helpful to know what you’ve read,” she said with a sarky chortle.

“It’s about that author who wrote that book about...”

“...Yes... yes... yes, I’ve gathered all that”, Edith cut in testily, “but what exactly is it about *him* that has got you so riled?”

“He’s been stabbed quite a few times dear. That’s what! And whatever they say, it can’t be an accident, can it? Not a few times. Once yes..., I agree it might be. Maybe even twice... like we did... But...”

“We acted in defence of our liberty, so we can be forgiven, can’t we?” Edith cut in quickly, concerned as always they might be overheard. “But yes, I do agree. A few times is certainly a giveaway... of the... erm...” only to struggle for a word other than criminal, the use of which in their household was considered highly vulgar and offensive.

Blessedly, even the usually freely squawking and often foul-beaked parrot shied away from repeating that offensive word, although its reluctance might have more to do with Edna's judicious use of a spray bottle of water, my teaching aid she calls it, which she leaves conveniently near the cage. More comfortably so for their peculiar sensitivities, Edith suggested, "...the stabbers intent."

## Section Four

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**E**dith also struggled with the notion of terrorism, for that is certainly what the article was all about she thought. The idea that she and Edna or others might be killed by an unknown assailant because such has taken a dislike to a dominating religion, or whatever, was, she believed, an appalling thing. As well as an utter waste of life and energy. They saw enough of that nonsense when they were 'children of the realm' back in the late fifties and early sixties. And frankly, it is pointless too. The more that terrorists try to extinguish, say, a religion the stronger it becomes because those once silent voices on the fringes start objecting loudly. Even Edna, she reasons would be disturbed by the attacks enough even to stand up and defend the C.O.E, even though she believes it all to be some massive con against the people. But as for disliking the state and wanting to change it? Well! That's quite a different matter. And who honestly cares much for the state?

Even politicians try hard to change or avoid the state's reach, she reasons. While in their own particular ways, criminals and many businesses fight against its interference as well. And so, as Edith so often asks, "Is the shooting of undesirable politicians any worse an act of terrorism than the deliberate pollution of our rivers and wanton destruction of habitats? Especially when politicians look the other way."

She is also prone to say, but quietly lest they are overheard. "Maybe a little bit of terrorism is exactly what is needed to refocus everyone's attention."

Edith has other arguments too, one, in particular, she used on the old vicar who afterwards wondered, “Is this church the right place for you, Edith?”

“Didn’t terrorists take our country over in 1066, only for their descendants to declare that terrorism is illegal... So, if terrorist’s aims are good and do not involve the killing or deliberate harming of citizens, then are the aims of terrorism so wrong? Who honestly doesn’t want to change things? And how can a person not be extreme when the system has been designed to make political and social change impossible? Just like religion did, which in itself is a form of terrorism against the people,” she argued. “So, does rising against the system or wanting to change the fact that the will of a few is forced upon the many, make a person a terrorist? Like Edna and her dislike of transvestites using woman’s toilets? Are her views those of a terrorist? Some might suggest they are!”

So, because Edith is unable to make her mind up as to what the word terrorist actually means, the use of it in a discriminatory way is banned in the household, unless they happen to kill or attack citizens needlessly, like this poor Salmonella chap.

Edna for her part in any discussion is generally more fickle in her reasoning. Less altruistic too and more personally motivated about such things, or so Edith believes kindly. Psychopath is another word she cares not to use openly especially around Edna, as it tends to upset her and that is not a good idea. Anyway, if Edna wants something she merely sets out to get it, that is all and what is wrong with that? Or if she dislikes something or someone she puts an immediate stop to it, or them, without any trace of guilt. And sisters of a certain upbringing stick together, don’t they? Where the phrase ‘through thick and thin’ makes them both laugh. “I’m thick” Edith chuckles as she alludes to her build, “while I’m thin,” Edna joins in, “because truthfully I am and we are and so what! And together we act as one.”

The reason for their different builds is very much set in the past. Such times that neither care to dwell on for too long. But comfort eating dictated Edith's shape, while Edna's slight frame was down to her nervous disposition. But both stem from the same place and are deeply embedded, as are their unusual and some might say, unnatural yet natural proclivities.

## Section Five

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"Y

es, a multiple stabbing is indeed a giveaway of intent!" Edna exclaimed shrilly as if to ensure her feelings on the matter were clear. "Stabbed merely for saying something years ago which a few silly people didn't like! How appalling is that Edith? It's an attack on our liberties, isn't it? And I'm sure you'll remember dear old Father's rant to us as children. Which I must confess I rather took to heart." Then lowering her voice to a near manly pitch while thrusting out her non-existent chest soldier-like, she mimicked their father. "You must defend your honour girls... with your damned life if necessary!"

"But that was said in Egypt during the troubles and Father was talking about that other 'honour' dear. Which at our respectful years I suspect is well and truly safe. Don't you?"

"I know what he was talking about Edith." Edna scolded, "And don't be so rude about, you know... my erm..." she said pointing to her delicate region. "I'm sure if we wanted to... you know, there's some life left in our thingy's to do the thing with... you know. But regardless, Father's principle still applies... Doesn't it? Freedom of speech is an honour worth upholding... Defending even if we must." She declared firmly. "So, dear sister of mine, the question is, how do we intend to put this matter to right?"

"I intend to have a sherry and a rather large one too," Edith said with an exaggerated shiver. "You've just made me come over all cold and faint. I think it was your reference too..., you know... that... erm, the thingy. You

know, the idea that there's some life left in it and we might still be made to use it...! And you dear?" She then inquired somewhat obliquely.

"Oh, No...!" Edna exclaimed, affronted a little by Edith's jibe. Personally, she was inclined to the whim that it might be fun to let the erm... the thingy..., get some hot air blown into it. Who knows where that particular balloon might sail her off to if it did? "...I'm not feeling faint at all." Edna retorted honestly. "If anything I'm frustrated by it all... dear!"

"I did not mean him in the article... OR THAT UNSPEAKABLE ACT...! Edna...!" Edith barked, "I was merely asking. Do you want a drink...?"

"Ah...!" Edna responded somewhat confused. "That wasn't what I was thinking. But now you've asked. Yes... OK! Why not? I'll have my usual... The ice is there ready."

As an afterthought, while glassware chinked and ice tinkled Edna called out, "Just a splash of tonic dear..." Then more dreamily she floated off to become lost in the clouds seemingly after happily having given her all in a hot air balloon, where without thinking she murmured, "...I so need a good rouser."

Lost as she was in her moment Edna failed to catch Edith's quick replying quip, "Oh, I bet you do dear." So it merely became another of their many little moments of genteel differences which were best left unexplored. They were more than happy not to rake private things over. Very much like the distasteful droppings in the parrot's cage. It was best to simply slide out the tray, tip the messy paper in the bin without looking at it, and then after a quick wipe slide it back in and forget all about the chore. Which perfectly mirrors Edith's view of anything yucky.

Edna, on the other hand, might ponder long on the idea of sliding the 'it' back in slowly... while gladly omitting the forgetting part. Those very differences

are what made them back in the day such a formidable team. Edith's straightforward no-nonsense practical approach brilliantly supporting Edna's more fanciful gung-ho, occasionally reckless forays to relieve other people, or 'our financiers' as Edna referred to them, of their riches. Or other things as the urgency of the time might dictate - but such things are best not dwelt on. As Edna so often sang in the car when returning from a 'visit to collect their private welfare', it's a case of, "Que sera, sera, Whatever will be, will be. The future's not theirs to see. Que sera, sera."

Where Edith would happily laugh along, "And it's so kind of them not to see it, dear. Isn't it? And easier!"

## Section Six

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"So... Edith. What do you think about the article then?", Edna asked after ceding part of her seat to a now bespectacled Edith, while inadvertently waving her drink around extravagantly, sloshing a little onto the tabletop, which they both ignored as it was a common enough occurrence. But with the damask cover so brilliant at hiding stains neither worried over much about such things. Knowing well her sister's clumsiness it was why Edith had firmly insisted they decorate everywhere using dark heavy florals. "It's what the Victorians did to hide stains", she explained. An idea which has served them well over the years, unless a picture is knocked crooked or the sofa cushions are moved to reveal annoying bright patches. Then it's ho-hum parrot-dropping mood until all is set right again. But never by Edna. Or so Edith's terse undercurrent occasionally flows.

Her present twinging peevishness had been set off by a Google ad for cleaning aids that appeared on the page she was reading. How did Google ever connect me with such things! And as for Edna she never cleans, slipped unwanted into her mind as she skimmed through the article - that flibbertigibbet never minds mess at all. Then, as the article moved up the screen echoes of Edna's defensive plea when challenged about her untidiness jolted Edith's hand. "But it's much easier to hide when everywhere is untidy," which caused Edith to lose her place. Only then to scroll back past it when a ghost of Edna's quip came to haunt Edith's clumsy fingers, "It's why I wear these floral dresses dear. I can sort of blend in here easier." Which on the surface would seem irrelevant to the matter at hand, except it was not fully. It was not Edna's lack of cleaning prowess she was feeling particularly

terse about although after working around her for eighty-odd years it is getting wearing. Nevertheless, it was not that, but Google's invasive bullying. It upset her world-view - how dare the misogynists decide that women readers want to know about cleaning things and generally think it's OK to butt in and spy on our reading choices.

In that way, the essence of her annoyance inadvertently passed into the room to which the parrot responded with a subdued squawk and Edna suddenly found an itch which saw Edith for her part snap. "You're being impatient today Edna! You could at least let me read the damned article before you start badgering me about it?"

"Yes... Sorry, dear, you're right" Edna ceded, while vigorously scratching her inner thigh. Where the sudden movement passed through the piano stool they were sharing and on into Edith which started up a tut, only for it to be swiftly swallowed when Edna explained. "I am a little impatient... it's true and I'm worried too. What if one of those people who attacked Salmonella suddenly pops up here seeking revenge? Father did work abroad a lot for the government, didn't he? And he was rather rude at times and occasionally said some very unforgivable things to people, such as calling them unworthy foreigners and savages and such like. And only the other day in the shop you annoyed that lady in the mask. What if she's one of them? And this Fatima thing with Salmonella fires her imagination and gives her grand ideas."

"You mean like it has you," Edith replied with laughter which nicely saw off her annoyance. Fatima indeed! "Anyway, that woman was wearing a black face mask dear and not a Yashmak thingy. And as for Father, well... he's been dead some forty-odd years, so I doubt they'll want to bother much with us now."

"Oh, I suppose you're right, Edith", Edna ceded but this time her shoulders slumped disappointedly. "Life is so much more thrilling when there's a cause

to fight or something to fear and plan against, isn't it dear". Only for Edith to deflate her further.

"And as for that rude woman." Edith continued bullishly, which seemingly ignored Edna's woes. "I think you'll find she's not of church. Of any kind dear! And I bet she lives on that council estate around the corner too. And if I'm right - and when have you ever known me to be wrong about people's backgrounds - my witch skill as you called it served us well didn't it? Anyway, I'm sure she's too busy selling drugs or fighting with the neighbours or choosing tattoos for her children, to care much to bother with us." Then she added with laughter, "or having her butt filled with fat and then inked. You know they do that now" she laughed again. "And I've plenty of spare lard here if they want it," she laughed again.

But instead of laughing along with Edith as Edna would normally, for some reason she was reminded of the times they applied haemorrhoid cream to their then-disabled Father's over large buttocks. Causing her to shudder and then blush as Edith's shrewd enquiring tilt of head wondered, what are you thinking dear?

## Section Seven

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"Oh, I was just remembering Father's piles." Edna offered vaguely with a wistful air, suggesting regret that his was the only bare male backside she has ever been that intimate with. Which in the way of subconscious intrusions inflicted an involuntary twitch of the balloon ride kind and a flashing thought... maybe it's time I booked an appointment for a full-on medical with that delightful Dr Fredrickson? There was no need for her to add, 'whose hands are always soft and warm', as a subtle balloon ride squirm suggested it for her.

"Yes... Father was a martyr to them, wasn't he, Edna?" Edith replied while deliberately ignoring her sister's unsettled condition. "But I do like to think we helped him out by not letting him suffer for too long... But shush now. Let me finish reading..."

Which nicely dismissed her thoughts about those other ways their father was helped out - which she remembers only too clearly, but Edna was too young to understand and so has thankfully forgotten. Or has she fully? She suddenly wondered. It might explain her occasional fidgets... and her propensity to don makeup that gives her the look of that Thai whore we brought over for Forbes as a gift for his long service. Especially when the woman returns from a long night of unpleasant duress. And it might also explain Edna's large collection of men's underwear. Well! Such thinking is not unrealistic, is it, her reasoning continued. They say some men like to wear plastic because it appeals to their subconscious yearnings for those old-fashioned diaper pants... And of mothers with bright red lipstick and deep cleavages liberally

talcing their bottoms - and elsewhere, while accidentally fostering illicit desires and cancer! So as young as she was then she may still have strange unresolved hankerings?

Oh father, she silently sighed. What did you make Edna do while my back was turned? Wasn't those things I did for you after Mother died enough!

Other than Edna's slurping and Edith's fingers tapping on the laptop's pad along with a few breathy curses when Edith lost her place, yet again, the room fell unusually quiet. Even the parrot was subdued for once. There were no sudden outbursts of swearing from it, or cor blimeys, or more recently, although where he learnt it from the old ladies had no idea, its bawdy, "Show us your knickers." Which for a hoot Edna did once. Only for the sisters to howl with laughter when the affronted parrot loudly screeched, "Cor Blimey! Cor Blimey!"

Even the old clock on the mantelpiece, which was always hurriedly removed from its slightly off-centre spot in case it was ever recognised when visitors were due, seemed to tick subduedly as if finally understanding it was never going to repeat its moment of brief T.V fame. To the lady's profound shock, it had appeared in a Police 5 segment, "Have you been offered this stolen clock" shown sometime way back in the early '80s. It was also why its now silenced quarterly chime has never been repaired. The ladies daren't take it into the shop.

To Edna's "No one will remember the clock it was a long time ago," Edith patiently replies, "Even though the present police may not be able to claim morality as a credit, it can still call upon a long memory. And neither of us has any wish to spend our last days locked up. Unless of course, the money runs out... Then free bed and board will be favourably considered, especially if we can bunk in together."

“Yes... I do have to agree with you Edna...,” Edith finally declared, where the parrot opened its beak as if to squawk Cor Blimey, or some such thing, only to close it again and turn its back on them to defecate. “...This thing is a muddled affair, isn’t it? But exactly what we might do about it dear I must confess other than getting us another drink I’m not certain?”

“Well...” Edna uttered with the beginning of a smile as she warmed to a fancy. “...I was rather thinking we might hunt the man down and shoot him,” she suggested frankly. “It’s not as if we...”

“Shush... Enough said!” Edith exclaimed quickly. “Walls have ears and so does your laptop...!”

“... oops! Yes... sorry...”

Edna then raised her hand to shield her mouth, which caused Edith to smile as she thought ‘as if the damn parrot can lip read’, only to wonder, ‘although it might, mightn’t it?’ But Edna’s enthusiastic whisper then cut across any further consideration. “Remember, we still have Father’s old revolver in the attic. And I’m sure after a good clean and polish it’ll work fine.” She declared brightly, then more persuasively. “It did the last time we used it, didn’t it? And it wasn’t really that long ago, was it? So, what do you think dear? Shall I fetch it down? Shall I? Is it a plan?”

## Section Eight

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**W**e didn't use Father's pistol," Edith reminded her dryly. "We used the one we brought from... you know who... down at... you know where... do you remember now?" Edith prodded gently, while fleetingly wondering, I do hope the poor darlings mind isn't going? It would be simply awful to have to put her down after all these years.

Although that is not what she said. More delicately she offered. "And besides, Edna, do you think you're up to chasing around the States with your dicky hip? Remember, you're finding the stairs rather difficult these days. And in case you didn't notice, the stabbing occurred in New York, America and not New York, Boston, Lincolnshire, as I suspect you're thinking. And the stabber has fled..."

"Oh, dear me! Yes! You're right! I was thinking exactly that. How silly of me. And yes of course the stabber won't be there waiting for us. So that presents a bit of a hurdle, doesn't it? And there was me thinking Forbes might tootle us along to New York in the car and we could, you know, take care of the offensive man. Oh, how disappointing and ho-hum and all that... So what shall we do now?" She wondered, disappointedly.

"I'll go and top us up shall I?" Edith suggested while collecting up the glasses, "and I'll leave you in peace to think, which when you're calm you do so well."

"You know, I honestly don't know!" Edna suddenly blurted when Edith

placed a very large G&T before her - with extra tonic to calm her down, for she hadn't missed Edna's fidgets... "I was rather looking forward to going out and... Anyway, I don't suppose there's anything worth watching on that blasted T.V, is there?"

"Urm..., No! Not really, Edna," Edith said mopily after quickly consulting their viewing guide. "We haven't ringed anything. Although shortly there's some programme on about that awful trickster, Boris Johnson, otherwise my girl that's about it."

"Oh no! Not him! Not again! How many times must he ruin our day? Still, it'll give us something to rant at... Won't it Edith? And he does live in the UK, doesn't he...?" she reasoned vaguely, before falling silent.

"It looks to me like you're off plotting something, dear."

"Oh, how clever of you. I was actually. I was wondering... Should we suddenly feel a certain..., how shall I put it... hmm, yes...I've got it," she then said with a wide balloon-ride smile. "If we feel a certain urge after that programme..., do you suppose Forbes might be up for a little jaunt into London?"

"I'd say yes, he'll be up for it. He was only saying the other day just how quiet things have become around here lately." Edith conceded. "Should I pop down and bang on the basement door and put him on standby, dear?"

"Yes, you do that Edith and while you do, I'll nip up to the attic and fetch Father's box down and start cleaning the revolver."