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The Barretts of Wimpole Street

By Rudolph Besier

Almighty Father giver of all good gifts...
... who of thy divine providence
has provided thy unworthy servants...
... with all things necessary to their bodily sustenance,
Grant, we beseech thee, spiritual grace...
... that we may enjoy it in
quietness of spirit as proof of Thy bounty...
... and render unto Thee
most humble and hearty thank. Amen
No, my dear. We doctors can't do everything.
Oh, my dear Dr. Chambers, you've done a great deal.
Yes, but now it's your turn.
You've got to help. You've got to want to get well.
Oh, if I could, I'd be downstairs now
having dinner with pa and the others.
But if you shut a person up
in one room for years on end...
... you can't very well expect
to find her bursting with life and vigor.
Tell me, Miss Elizabeth,
have you ventured on your feet at all lately ?
No, hardly at all.
Sometimes when I'm feeling venturesome,
my maid supports me across the room.
You know, the fact is a change
from these surroundings would do you a world of good.
Italy is the place for you.
Italy...
Oh, no, doctor. This is my Italy.
Rubbish ! That's just it.
You don't want to go anywhere,
you don't want to see anybody.
Confounded, my dear.
Isn't there something you want to do ?
Yes, and I'm doing it.
I'm writing poetry.
And there are those
who think it isn't such bad poetry.
Mr. Robert Browning has sent me several kind letters of approval.
Browning ?
Never heard of him.
Oh, you will, some day.
I daresay. Well, I'm glad at least
there is something you care about.

Eve if it's only poetry ?
Yes, only don't overtax yourself.
All right. One small verse to be written
an hour after each meal with a little water.
Oh, doctor, that reminds me.
Sit down a minute.
Do you remember papa suggesting to you
that a certain kind of beer called Porter might do me good ?
Yes, and an excellent suggestion, too.
Oh, forgive me. But it was nothing of the kind.
I've had to drink it twice a day
and in consequence my life has become one long misery.
Bless my soul.
I'm not exaggerating, one long misery.
You poor little lady.
It's no use my appealing to papa
But if you did, Dr. Chambers,
suggest to him that something else might be equally beneficial...
What would you say to
a couple of glasses of hot milk as a substitute ?
I hate milk, but I'll drink it all day long
if you'll only rescue me from Porter.
Come in.
Beg your pardon, Miss Elizabeth.
May I take the tray now ?
Yes, Wilson.
Well, goodbye, Miss Elizabeth.
Goodbye, doctor, and you won't forget...
Eh ?
P-O-R-T-E-R.
I'll speak to him about it now.
Oh, thank you, doctor, thank you.
Goodbye, dear. Goodbye, old man.
Good night.
Thank God, away with it !
What, miss ?
The Porter, Quick take it away
and never mention the word to me again.
Very good, miss.
Since you haven't had your Porter...
I told you never to mention the word to me again.
Now, take it away, please. Please.
Very good, Miss Ba.
Hello, dear. May we come in ?

Yes, come in.

How was dinner ? Was papa... ?

He was, and dinner was awful.

Awful awful, awful.

Oh, Ba, dear, I do hope for all our sakes
that Dr. Chambers' report of you isn't too good.

It won't be.

Oh, darling.

Forgive me, dearest.

You know I didn't mean it, don't you ?

But any good news seems to depress him so.

It isn't pa's fault, I suppose.

In his way he loves us all.

In his way...

Captain Cook ? Is he nice ?

He seems quite nice.

I can't tell, of course. He isn't allowed to call.

Do you think it's serious ?

Oh, Ba, I hope not.

Do you remember when young Mr. Paul Frey
wanted to marry her two years ago ?

The dreadful scene with papa.

He's there.

Oh, Ba, I wish you could see him.

So drawn. So soldierly.

I can imagine.

It's so mean. He'll wait there for hours.

Just hoping that I can slip out for a moment.

And so I will.

But Henrietta. Papa ?

Oh, I know.

It's dreadfully imprudent, dear. And not very ladylike.

I don't care.

I don't care ! I...

Hello, Ba dear. I've just come to see
how you are and to wish you good night.

Come in.

Come in, Henry.

Ba, my dear, how are you ?

Better, thank you.

How's our dear tonight

How's our dear Ba tonight ?

Alfred.

How are you, Ba ?

I do think you're looking a little better.

Do you think so ?

What do you say, Charles ?

What ?

Looking better. More herself.

Well, Septimus.

How's Ba tonight ?

The doctor's just been here

and I'm afraid he wasn't too pleased with you.

No ?

Not looking quite so well, is she, Albert ?

On the contrary, I think she's looking considerably better.

So does Charles. don't you, Charles ?

What ?

Come in, George.

My dear.

How's the world's greatest poetess ?

The world's greatest poetess is much better, thank you.

Hello, Flush, old chum.

Come in.

A note for Mr. George.

I wonder what's in the note.

A note ?

From the master, sir.

Thank you.

When papa starts sending out notes from his study...

... the crowds must draw. Read it for us !

Hear ye. Hear ye ! Hear ye ! This is undoubtedly a royal decree.

Given at our study at 50 Wimpole Street on this

the 19th day of November, 1845. God save papa !

What is it, George ?

You'll all be interested to learn that papa

is going to Plymouth on business this weekend...

And what ? Go on !

And that he's not expected to return for at least a fortnight.

George, will you Polk ?

Not a chance.

Well, I'll Polk.

Ha ha ha you and me

little brown jug don't I love thee

Ha ha ha you and me

little brown jug don't I love thee

My wife and I lived all alone in a little brown hut we called our own

She loves gin and I love rum

tell you what don't we have fun
Ha ha ha you and me
little brown jug don't I love thee
Ha ha ha you and me
little brown jug don't I love thee
Ha ha ha...

Good evening, papa.

I am most displeased.

I think I have told not once but several times
that in your sister's very precarious state of health...

... it is not advisable for more than three of you
to be in her room at the same time.

You all of you know that she must avoid every kind of excitement...
... and yet I find you rumping around her like a lot of disorderly
children.

I am gravely displeased.

I am not aware that I have said anything amusing, Henrietta.

I beg your pardon, sir.

May I ask what you were doing as I came into the room ?

Showing Ba the polk.

How to...

to... dance the Polka.

I see.

Well, Ba, I think I'll say good night and...

I'd be grateful if you allowed me to finish speaking.

Are you being insolent, sir ?

No, indeed, sir. I assure you...

Very well.

Now...

Papa. I like nothing better than a little noise occasionally.

Perhaps you won't forgive my saying, Elizabeth,

but you're not the best judge of what is good or bad for you.

And that brings me to what I came here to speak to you about.

Dr. Chambers has just told me...

... that you have persuaded him

to allow you to discontinue drinking Porter.

It needed very little persuasion, papa.

I said I detested Porter

and he agreed at once that I should take milk instead.

I questioned him closely

as to the comparative strenght giving values of milk and Porter...

... and he was forced to admit that Porter came decidedly first.

That may be, but when you dislike a thing to loathing,

I don't see how it can do you any good.

Your likes and dislikes
are quite beside the point in a case like this.
But Dr. Chambers himself...
I have told you what Dr. Chambers said.
But, papa...
Did you drink your Porter at dinner ?
No.
Then I hope you'll will do so before you go to bed.
No, papa. That's really asking too much.
I can't drink the horrible stuff in cold blood.
Of course I have no means of cohersing you...
... but I intend to give
your better nature every chance of asserting itself.
A tankard of Porter
will be left at your bedside and I hope that by tomorrow...
... you will be able to tell me that you have obeyed your father.
Sorry, papa, but I shan't drink it.
Henrietta, go and fetch a tankard of Porter.
No.
I beg your pardon ?
It's sheer cruelty.
You know how Ba hates the stuff.
You're just torturing her because you like torturing.
I have told you to fetch a tankard of Porter.
I won't do it.
Must I ask you a third time ?
Obey me this instant !
Papa !
Go and fetch it, Henrietta. Go at once.
I can't stand this.
Oh, no, Ba...
Please.
You had all better say good night to your sister.
Good night, darling.
Good night, Ba, dear.
Good night, darling.
Give it to me, please.
No. You may go.
Good night, darling.
You may go !
Elizabeth, why do you look at me like that, child ?
Are you frightened ?
No.
You're trembling. Why ?

I... don't know.

You're not frightened of me.

No, no.

Don't say it. I couldn't bear it.

You're everything in the world to me and you know that.

Without you I should be quite alone and you know that too.

If you love me

you can't be afraid of me, for love casts out fear.

You love me, my darling ? You love your father ?

Yes.

Then you will prove your love by doing as I wish.

But I don't understand. I was going to drink...

Yes, out of fear, not love.

Listen to me, my dear.

I shall never in any way reproach you.

You shall never know by deed or word or hint of mine...

... how much you have grieved and wounded your father
by refusing to do the little that he asked of you.

Oh, papa. Let us get this over with and forget it.

I can't forgive myself for having made

the whole house miserable over a tankard of Porter.

You're acting of your own free will and not...

Yes, papa, yes.

You're not feeling any worse tonight, my darling.

No, papa.

Just tired ?

Yes, just tired.

I'd better leave you now.

Shall I say a little prayer with you before I go ?

Please, papa.

Almighty and merciful God...

in thine inscrutable wisdom

thou hast seen fit to lay upon thy daughter Elizabeth...

... grievous and heavy afflictions.

For many years she hath languished in sickness...

... for many years, unless in thy mercy thou take her to thyself, she may
languish on.

Give her to bear her sufferings in patience.

Give her to fix her heart and soul on thee.

And on that heavenly eternity

which may at any moment open out before her...

Amen.

Amen.

Good night.

Good night, papa.
Better see your bed now, Miss Ba.
Oh, what a pity.
These flowers are dead, just since this morning.
Why don't they live longer ?
Nothing lives in this room.
What was that, miss ?
Oh, Wilson, I'm so tired.
Tired, tired.
Will it never end ?
End, miss ?
This long, long gray death of life.
Oh, Miss Ba, you shouldn't say such things.
No, I suppose I shouldn't.
Is it a fine night outside ?
Yes, it cleared up nicely after the rain.
And there's such a lovely moon.
Moon ? Do you think I could see it from here ?
Mm, I don't know, I'm sure.
Pull back the curtains.
There you are.
The moon is right above the chimney.
Yes.
Please put out the lamps, Wilson,
and leave me for a little while.
I don't want to go to bed quite yet.
Very well, Miss Ba.
Be careful.
Don't talk to me.
The woman opposite is watching.
Listen. But don't look at me.
It was kind of you to come so far.
And in the snow.
I wish I could ask you in, but I daren't.
Aren't you freezing ?
Don't answer me !
You're so tall.
I wish I could see you in full uniform. Could I ?
Don't tell me !
I daren't stay any longer.
It looks so odd.
And in this weather.
I'll come again tomorrow.
You'll wait for me, won't you ?

Don't tell me.
Goodbye. Goodbye.
Miss Barrett.
Hush !
But I say, Miss Barrett...
If the thing were only in the proper footing...
If you'd permit me to call on your father...
You mustn't think of it.
You'd be ordered out of the house.
But if I made it quite clear ?
My intentions are perfectly honorable and all that.
But that would make it worse.
Ever distinctly fatal, don't you see ?
I can't say that I do.
Papa would never permit any of us to marry.
A marriage in the family ?
He just almost goes insanelly angry if you talk of it.
Yes, but I mean...
Oh, I say !
I proposed and I thought it would be so difficult.
Oh, yes, Wilson, I'm quite ready for my lunch.
You've had your lunch, Miss Ba.
Oh, yes, of course. I enjoyed it very much.
Let's keep covered up.
These cold days are are that treacherous.
No, it's quite beyond me.
I give it up.
Beg your pardon ?
Wilson, have you noticed anything strange in me today ?
Strange, miss ?
Yes, strange. I mean stupid, thickheaded, idiotic.
Good gracious, no, miss.
Very well.
But now listen carefully and see what you can make of this.
And after, for pastime, if June be refulgent
with flowers in completeness.
All petals, no prickles, delicious as trickles of wine..
... poured at mass time
And choose one indulgent
To redness and sweetness.
Or if, with experience of man and of spider,
June use my June-lightning, the strong insect-ridder,
To stop the fresh film-work... why, June will consider.
I call that just lovely, Miss Ba.

Yes, but do you know what it means ?
Oh, no, miss.
Does it convey anything at all to your mind ?
Oh, no, Miss Ba.
Well, thank heavens for that.
But then, real poetry never does, miss.
Least ways not real poetry like what you make.
Oh, but I didn't write that.
It's by Mr. Browning.
Oh, he must be a clever gentleman.
Oh, Ba. Cousin Bella is here. May she come in ?
Yes, dear.
Oh. And Ba, just think. She's engaged.
She's going to be married.
Cousin Elizabeth !
Dear, dear cousin.
Bella, dear.
What's this I hear, engaged ?
Yes.
I just had to run right over and tell you.
Well, congratulations, dear.
Isn't it too thrilling ?
Harry couldn't come, but I'll bring him next time.
May I ? Oh, you'll love Harry.
I'm sure we shall. Harry who ?
Harry Bevan.
Oh, Henrietta, the very person !
I want want you to be one of my bridesmaids.
Bridesmaid ?
Yes, you simply must.
Cousin Bella's engaged. She's going to be married.
I want you te be a bridesmaid.
Oh, yes, it's your wedding. Thank you.
It's going to be a great big wedding.
Twelve bridesmaids.
You must help me to pick out the dresses.
And I'm going to wear mother's wedding veil.
Don't you just love weddings, Henrietta ?
Yes, I love weddings.
And we're going to Paris on our honeymoon.
And then to Rome.
And then we're going to take the dearest, sweetest little house.
It'll be just too thrilling for words.
And I'll be so happy to have you for a bridesmaid.

Thank you, Bella.
Of course, I'd love to if papa...
Oh, I don't see how he can possibly object.
Object ? Isn't she funny, Ba ?
You're only being asked to be a bridesmaid,
not a bride.
Yes, I know, Bella. Oh, it's so hard to explain.
What's the matter ?
You know what's the matter.
It's simply that nothing at all can happen without papa's assention.
We've got to obey his least will.
We can't move hand or foot without his permission.
We haven't got a soul of our own, not one of us.
Henrietta !
Or have we ? Have we, Ba ?
I tell you, Bella. He'll more than likely refuse
to let me be your bridesmaid...
... and just because he's in a beastly temper.
Oh, gracious, cousin Henrietta,
you mustn't say such things about uncle Edward.
And I'm afraid we're disturbing poor dear cousin Elizabeth.
Poor, Ba. So pale, so fragile, so wisteria.
One has only to see your dear face
to know how near you are to heaven.
I wouldn't quite say that, Bella.
Oh, yes, you always have a look in your eyes...
... as if you already saw the angels.
I really must be going.
Goodbye. I'll come again and bring Harry.
Yes, do.
Oh, you mustn't tell anybody about my getting married.
It's to be a big surprise.
And don't worry, cousin Henrietta. I'll manage uncle Edward.
Men are really so easy to manage.
If you just know how.
But, of course, you girls have had so little experience.
Goodbye, dear, dear cousins.
Well, why don't you say something ?
What do you want me to say ?
Nothing.
Oh, Ba, darling. Don't disown me.
I deserve it, I know.
But I couldn't help it.
I'm so miserable.

Miserable, dear ?

Yes, and so wildly happy.

Oh, Ba, darling. Do you mind if I tell you about it ?

I oughtn't to, I know...

... because if papa ever found out you knew about it he'd spend half his anger on you for not warning him.

What are you talking about, dear ?

Surtees has just asked me to marry him.

Surtees ?

Captain Cook. I've told you about him.

The guardsman, you know.

Yes, I remember, dear.

And of course I expected him and said that I couldn't...

... and I had to tell him we must never never see each other again so when we meet tomorrow...

You're not talking sense, child.

What really has happened ?

I don't know, Ba.

Except that we both love each other.

Terribly.

Oh, my darling.

But Henrietta, papa...

Do you think I haven't thought of that ?

He'll never consent. Never.

I know.

Ba, dear, is there anything at all to be said for papa's attitude towards marriage ?

Can it possibly be wrong to want a man's love desperately and...

long for babies of my own ?

Love and babies are something I don't know much about.

I know, dear, you're a woman apart.

But love and babies are natural to a normal girl like me.

And what's natural can't be wrong.

No...

And yet the holiest men and women renounce these things.

I daresay, Ba. But I'm not holy.

It's different for you. You're a great genius.

Oh, yes you are. You've got your work, your studies.

But do you know, Ba ?

Sometimes I wonder.

Are you completely satisfied ?

Is it enough just to correspond with Mr. Browning, for instance ?

Don't you sometimes wish that you could see him ?

If I could see and not be seen.

Why ?

Because at heart I'm as vain as a peacock.

He thinks my verse is stately and beautiful.

Probably thinks me the same.

It would be so humiliating to disillusion him.

Oh, don't be silly, Ba. You're very interesting and picturesque.

Isn't that how the guidebooks usually describe a ruin ?

Oh, Ba, I didn't mean it.

Of course.

Tell me, is your friend very nice ?

Surtees ?

Yes.

Oh, yes.

Oh, Ba, what are we to do ?

Ba, do you think it would be wiser

if we were never to see each other again ?

I think it might be wiser, dear.

Oh...

But at your age one shouldn't be too wise.

Oh, Ba.

Come in.

A gentleman just brought this, dear.

A gentleman ?

Yes. And he said he would wait for an answer.

Really ?

Who is it from ?

Henrietta !

A moment, dear.

Oh !

Oh, Ba, dear, whatever is it ?

Oh, really !

Please tell us, darling.

Why, Ba, you're blushing.

No wonder ! Listen to this.

"Dear Miss Barrett,

I am unable to restrain my impatience to meet you...

... and have taken it upon myself to select February 15th"...

that's today... .."for that important occasion.

And I am at this moment seated

in your front hall awaiting your permission to present myself."

Wait a moment, there's more.

"I might add that I shall continue to sit here until

you gratify the earnest desire that prompts my impertinent persistence.

Sincerely yours, Robert Browning."

Robert Browning !

Oh, Ba, I like this Mr. Browning. You must see him.

No, I can't. At least not today.

But you should. It can't do you any harm.

Why not ?

I don't feel up to it. Really I don't. Another time.

I shall go and see him myself

and I'll send him up.

No, Henrietta ! Stay here.

I can't see him. I really don't

feel that I could see him now.

Arabel, tell Mr. Browning that I am very sorry

but I'm not well enough to see him.

But Ba, that's not true. You can't send him away.

But I'd much rather not see him.

Oh, fie. You're not a silly schoolgirl, I'll bring him up myself.

Is my hair tidy ?

Yes, dear. You look quite nice.

Arabel, fix the covers.

Yes.

Flush, get down dear.

Arabel...

Yes, dear ?

No... yes. No, never mind.

Yes, dear.

Thank you.

Arabel !

Arabel, do I...

Yes, darling.

You do. Really.

Mr. Robert Browning.

Miss Barrett.

Dear Miss Barrett, at last.

At last !

How do you do, Mr. Browning ?

I've had to put off the pleasure
of meeting you much longer than I wished.

Yes, that is it.

I beg your pardon ?

That voice.

I've heard that voice a thousand times.

How strange.

I've not been at all well this winter and I...
Won't you take off your cape ?
Thank you.
Wonderful !
Wonderful !
You may think, Miss Barrett, that this is the first time that I've been
here,
but you're quite wrong, you know.
But...
Oh, yes, quite wrong.
I've seen this room more times than I can remember.
It's as familiar to me
as my own little study at home.
Before I came in
I knew just how your books were arranged.
Just how that tendril of ivy slanted across the window pane.
And those portraits of Homer and Chaucer are quite old friends.
No, really.
You know, I could never make out
who those other fellas were on the top of the wardrobe.
Oh, come, Mr. Browning. I can't believe that one of my friends
has bored you with a description of my poor little room.
I have pestered them for all the details I could possibly get.
And my imagination supplied the rest.
Directly after I read your brave and lovely verses
I was greedy for anything and everything I could get about you.
Oh, what they must have told you !
Oh, nothing they told me about you personally
had the slightest interest for me.
Because I knew it already. And better than they.
Oh, Mr. Browning. Do my writings give me so hopelessly away ?
Hopelessly, utterly, entirely. To me.
Of course I can't speak for the rest of the world.
I'm afraid it will be quite useless...
... my ever trying to play act with you.
Quite useless.
I shall always have to be just myself ?
Always.
But you, you're never yourself in any of your poems.
It's always somebody else speaking through you.
Yes, and shall I tell you why ?
I'm a very modest man.
I am. really !
We didn't question that, Mr. Browning.

So modest, I fully realize that if I wrote about myself
my poems would be intolerably dull.

Oh, but those poems.

With their glad and great-hearted acceptance of life.

You can't imagine what they mean to me.

Here I am shut in by these four walls and...

... and they troupe into my room,

those wonderful people of yours.

Out of every age and country and...

... and all so tingling with life.

No, you'll never begin to realize just...

... just how much I do owe you.

You really mean that ?

Of course you do, or you wouldn't say it.

You don't find me difficult, obscure ?

Many people do.

Surely not.

Yet, to me it's simple and easy as the rule of three.

And to you ?

No, not quite always.

Sometimes there are passages that...

I've marked one or two in your Sordello which rather puzzled me.

Ah, Sordello.

Somebody once called it a horror of great gothic.

I've done my best to forget it.

Here it is.

All right...

But then, a passage torn from its context...

All petals, no prickles...

No prickles like trickles...

Well ?

Well, Miss Barrett...

... when that passage was written,

only God and Robert Browning understood it.

Now, only God understands it.

What do you say ? Shall we lighten

this great darkness by pitching it on the fire ?

No, indeed, we shall do nothing of the kind.

Please give me back the book.

I love Sordello.

You would.

Of course you would. And shall I tell you why ?

Because it is a colossal failure

By a failure you mean an attempt.

Yes, you're right.
That's just why Sordello appeals to my very heart.
I too am always making colossal attempts.
And always failing.
But is not one such failure worth a hundred small successes ?
Oh, a thousand and more.
You think so too ?
But of course. I knew that.
Miss Barrett, you smiled when I told you
that your friends had no need to describe you because I knew you already.
But what you've just told me
about success and failure proves to me finally how right I was.
Tell me, did your fancy paint
my background with a very gloomy brush ?
The background possibly.
But the portrait of you I had painted with the true soul of you.
Ardent and lovely looking out of you.
Ardent and lovely.
Oh, Mr. Browning, you think you know me.
Too often impatient and rebellious.
Oh, what of it. I've no love for perfect patience under affliction.
My portrait is the portrait of a woman, not a saint.
I suppose people have told you that I...
... that I'm a dying woman.
We are all of us dying.
And you find me a very pitiful object ?
I find you as I pictured you.
Full of courage and gaiety.
And yet I'm not at all sure that my colors were too somber.
But...
No, no, listen to me.
Those colors are not yet dry.
They must be scraped off.
The whole background must be repainted.
And if only you will allow it,
I must have a hand in that splendid work.
But this is...
No, listen.
I'll get my brush in the sunrise, the sunset and the rainbow.
You say my verses have helped you but they are nothing.
It's I, I who am going to help you now.
We've come together at last,
and I don't intend to let you go again.
Give me your hand.

I've more strength than is good for one man.
Up to now I've spent a little of that surplus energy
in creating imaginary men and women.
But there's still so much to give.
Mayn't I give it to you ?
Don't you feel in your life tingling and prickling
up your fingers and arms right into your heart and brain ?
Oh, please.
Mr. Browning, please let go of my hand.
Well ?
You're really rather an overwhelming person...
... and in sober truth I...
Don't tell me that you're afraid of me.
You're not.
It's life you're afraid of, and that shouldn't be.
Life ?
Yes.
When life becomes a series of electric shocks I...
Was it as bad as all that ?
Indeed yes.
Do you affect other people in that way ?
They've often told me so.
No wonder I hesitated
about meeting you, much as I wanted to.
You know, you'll laugh at me, Mr. Browning,
but when my sister told me you were downstairs...
... I was so panic stricken that I almost
sent a message down saying that I was too unwell to receive you.
I think I must have been quite
as nervous as you at that moment...
... and I'm anything but a nervous man as a rule.
But that moment was the climax of my life.
Up to now.
Miss Barrett, do you remember the first letter I ever wrote you ?
Yes, indeed. It was a wonderful letter.
You may have thought I dashed it off
in a fit white out right out enthusiasm over your poems...
... but I didn't.
I weighed every word of every sentence.
And of one sentence in particular.

This sentence:

And I love you, too.
Do you remember ?

Yes. I thought it was charmingly impulsive of you.
But there was nothing impulsive about it.
That sentence was as deeply felt
and anxiously thought over as any sentence I've ever written.
I hope I have many readers like you.
It's wonderful to think I may have good friends
all over the world whom I've never seen or heard of.
I'm not speaking of friendship but of love.
It's quite useless your trying to put aside the word with a smile and a
jest.
I said love and I mean love.
Really, Mr. Browning, I must ask you to...
I'm insanelly in love as any man alive.
In all these months
since I first read your poems I've been haunted by you.
And today you are the center of my life.
Mr. Browning...
If I were to take you seriously
it would have caused me the quick finish of a friendship which...
... promises to be very pleasant for both of us.
Why ?
You know very well that love
in the sense that you apparently use the word...
... has no place, and can have no place in my life.
Why ?
For many reasons, but let it suffice...
as I told you before...
... I am a dying woman.
I refuse to believe it.
If that were so, God would be cruel.
And I know that He's compassionate.
And life would be dark and evil, and I know that it's good.
You must never say such a thing again.
I forbid you to.
Forbid, Mr. Browning ?
Yes, forbid.
Isn't it only fair that if you forbid me to speak with you
as I fear and I accept your orders, as I must...
... that I should be allowed a little forbidding as well ?
Yes, but...
Dear Miss Barrett, what a splendid beginning to our friendship.
We've known each other a bare half hour
and yet we talk infinitely of art, and life, and death, and love.
We've ordered each other about and we've almost quarrelled.

Could anything be happier or more promising ?
With your permission, I'm going now.
I promised myself to make my first visit as short as possible.
Strangers are undoubtedly tiring.
Not that I am a stranger.
Still I could see that you're tired.
When may I call again ?
I don't quite know. Will next Wednesday suit you ?
Yes, I think so, but perhaps it would be better...
Next Wednesday.
At half past three again ?
yes, but I...
Au revoir, then.
Goodbye.
Au revoir.
Au revoir.
Thank you.
Splendid, splendid.
Really remarkable.
Once more, dear.
My dear Miss Barrett I congratulate you.
Now sit down.
You've done wonders, doctor.
The real healer is no one but Miss Barrett herself.
The will to live is better than a dozen physicians.
The will to live.
Mm. Yes.
Well now, Miss Barrett, about the future.
I fully agree with Dr. Chambers
that another winter in London must be avoided.
I see no reason against
your travelling South by October, say ?
Travelling South.
The Riviera, or better still, to Italy.
Italy ? Oh, Doctor, do you really mean it ?
Why not ?
I've taken the liberty to tell the doctor of the only real difficulty,
and he's quite prepared to deal with... him.
Quite, and drastically.
Oh, but I don't think it will be necessary.
Papa may not raise any objection at all.
It all depends on how he's feeling at the time.
Oh, fiddlesticks, my dear young lady...
... Mr. Barrett's feelings are neither here nor there.

What matters is his daughter's health and happiness.
And I intend to make it clear to him, quite clear.
What a beautiful day it is... I must be going, Miss Barrett.
Don't get up, don't get up.
I'm delighted with your improvement.
Delighted.
I'll put a little talk with your father.
Goodbye, Miss Barrett.
Goodbye, doctor.
Italy ! Italy ! Italy !
And you are coming too, Flush.
We'll see Rome together.
Rome, Venice and Naples.
See Naples and die...
Only I'm not going to die.
I'm not going to die.
Yes ?
Mr. Browning is here, Miss Ba.
You may ask him to come up.
Very good, miss.
No, wait.
Don't trouble, I'll go down.
Oh, Miss Ba. You won't think of it.
I shall not only think of it, but do it.
What's more, I shall do it alone.
You must let me help you. It's not safe.
You've not walked downstairs for years.
Let me alone, Wilson. I shall be quite all right.
I can do anything.
You see ?
Oh, Miss Ba.
Mr. Browning.
It is you !
Why this is magnificent.
Magnificent.
I... well I...
And I did it all alone.
I walked down those stairs alone. A hundred of them.
A hundred ?
Well, fifty.
This is only the first step.
In a little while you'll be able to drive, to walk in the park.
In the sun and fresh air.
Come, come sit down.

Oh, wonderful
Wonderful.
Here. Sit here in the sunlight.
Careful.
There we are.
There. Now, that's the setting I've dreamed for you.
The setting I'm going to keep you in.
Now tell me. Tell me quickly.
I've been in suspense all day.
You've seen the doctors. What did they say ?
Dr. Ford-Waterlow was quite taken out
of his grumpy self with astonishment over my improval.
Say that again.
Oh, must I, the whole sentence ?
I should like to see it in letters of fire
burning at me from each of these four walls.
This is the best moment I've had
since the day I gave myself permission to call on you.
How many years ago was that ?
Three months.
So... we've always been friends.
I've known you a lifetime, you know.
So he was almost taken out
of his grumpy self with delight, was he ?
Splendid. Of course I never once doubted
that you'd turn the corner some day.
I've told you so a hundred times.
And Italy ? Both doctors agreed about your wintering there ?
Yes.
This is wonderful. I'm quite off my head with excitement.
Unless, of course, papa should withhold his consent and...
Oh, that I just refuse to anticipate
When do they think you'll be fit for travel ?
The middle of October.
Unless there is a relapse.
Relapse ? Why, there isn't such a word.
October ?
That's extraordinary.
You know, October suits my own plans to perfection.
Your plans ?
Don't you remember my telling you
that had thought of wintering in Italy myself ?
Well, now I'm quite decided.
Oh, papa, isn't it wonderful ?

I walked downstairs.
So I observe.
A miracle, sir.
Nothing more or less than a miracle.
Did your doctors authorize this amazing imprudence ?
No, papa.
I should not have been surprised if they had.
Aren't you proud of me, papa ?
I thought there should be dancing in the streets.
A general holiday.
Mr. Browning, my daughter's health
has been my main concern for many years...
You'll permit me to remind you that
I'm much better informed on the subject than an outsider ?
I shall carry you to your room.
Oh, no, papa.
I don't need you, really.
Surely, Mr. Barrett...
Mr. Browning, I must say goodbye.
Thank you for calling.
Elizabeth.
Elizabeth.
You can't do it.
Elizabeth.
There, my child.
I'm all right, papa.
I could have done this.
You ought to rest to regain your strength.
All this talk and activity is most harmful.
I'd appreciate it if you tried to get a little sleep.
Papa.
Well ?
I'm all right, really I am.
Dr. Ford-Waterlow said I was. Didn't he tell you ?
Dr. Ford-Waterlow talked,
if I may say so, a great deal of nonsense.
But papa...
I'm naturally more than gratified at your improvement,
I'm delighted, of course, my poor child,
but it's unlikely you'll ever be a normal woman.
But I do feel so much better.
Perhaps it's the wonderful weather we've been having.
I always thrive in warmth, sunshine...
Rubbish ! Last time it was sweltering

and you've never been worse than then.
No, to my mind there is
only one whom we have to thank...
... though this doctor whatsisname
would probably sneer if I mentioned him.
Him ?
I mean Almighty God.
That's all I have to say at present.
Papa.
What is it ?
Didn't he tell you that I should avoid spending next winter in England ?
Well...
And that he thinks
I should be able to travel to Italy in October ?
If you...
So !
... it's out at last.
And how long has this precious plot been hatching, may I ask ?
You've discussed your plans
with all your friends and relatives, I suppose...
... with this Browning fellow too.
And I, I alone am left out of my favorite daughter's confidence.
Treated like a cypher, insultant.
Insultant ?
I'm cut to the heart that you,
the only one of my children whom I trusted implicitly...
... should be capable of such underhand conduct.
No, papa. No !
If returning health must bring
with it such a sad change of character,
I should be driven to wish
that you were once more lying helpless on this sofa.
There's nothing more to be said.
But there is more to be said.
And I must beg you to listen, papa.
How many years have I lain here ?
Five, six ? It's hard to remember,
each year seemed like ten to me.
And all that time I've had nothing
to look forward to or hope for but death.
Death ?
Yes, death !
I was born with a large capacity for happiness.
You remember me as a little girl.

And then when life brought me a little happiness
and much pain I was often impatient for the end.

Elizabeth !

Then this miracle happened.

Day by day I'm better able to take and enjoy
such good things that everyone has a right to.
Able to meet my friends, to breathe the open air,
to feel the sun and see the grass and flowers beneath the sky.
When Dr. Chambers first spoke to me about Italy...

I put the idea from me.

It seemed too impossibly wonderful

But as I grew stronger, it came over me as a revelation
that Italy wasn't an impossibility at all.

That nothing stood in my way of going.

That I really had a right to go.

Right ?

Yes, every right !

In my eagerness, I may have acted mistakenly, stupidly, tactlessly...
... but to call my conduct underhanded, deceitful is more than unkind.
It's unjust.

Cruel.

Self, self, self.

No thought, no consideration for anyone but yourself.

For anything but your pleasure.

Didn't it ever once occur to you
that all through the long dark months...
that you propose to enjoy yourself in Italy
your father would be left here utterly alone ?

No.

Utterly alone.

Your brothers and sisters
might as well be shadows for all the companionship they afford me.
And you, oh my child, don't think that I haven't noticed
that you too are slowly drawing away from your father.

That's not true.

It is true. New life, new interests, new pleasures, new friends...
... and little by little I'm being pushed into the background.
I who used to be your whole world, I who loved you...
... who love you.

But papa...

No, there's nothing more to be said.

You want my consent for this Italian trot.

I shall neither give it nor uphold it.

If you go I hope you will sometimes

spare a thought for your father.
Think of him at night, stealing alone
in this empty room which once held all he loved.
Think of him kneeling alone
by the empty sofa imploring the good Shepherd to have...
Who's that ?
I shall come to you again
when you've had time to consider the wisdom of my words.
Well, Flush...
It seems we aren't going to Italy.
Cousin Elizabeth.
Hello, dear.
I brought Harry to see you.
This is my fianc, my dear, dear Harry.
Mr. Bevan, Miss Elizabeth Barrett.
Delighted, Miss Barrett. Charmed.
No, no, Harry. You must take her hand.
Such a little hand, so frail, so spiritual.
Yes. And a hand that pens so much that is noble and eloquent.
Oh, thank you.
I am honored, Miss Barrett.
So nice of you to come.
Thank you.
We'll only stay a minute.
I trust you're not too weary
of being congratulated upon the prize you've won.
Thank you, Miss Barrett. A prize indeed.
Dear Ba. And doesn't Henrietta look lovely ?
She'll be quite the prettiest of my bridesmaids.
Indeed I'm afraid she'll draw all eyes from the little bride.
At any rate, all the gentlemen's.
Oh, Bella, dear...
If I hadn't spoken to Uncle Edward myself
I should never have had her for a bridesmaid.
Yes, my dear, you certainly have a way with you.
Spoken to papa ? I like that.
While you sat on his knees and stroked his whiskers.
And why not ?
Isn't he my uncle ?
And besides that, I think he's most frightfully thrilling.
I adore that stern and gloomy type of gentlemen.
Oh, come, come, my pet.
And I must tell you, Ba, how much I adore your poems.
It's best when dear Harry reads them.

He reads so beautifully.
And he too adores your poems.
Which ought to please you, as he's dreadfully critical.
Not at all, not at all.
Dear Harry is so frightfully earnest.
Yes ?
Excuse me, Miss Elizabeth. Mr. Browning is downstairs.
Oh...
Ask him to wait, please.
Oh, no, dear cousin. Ask him to come right up.
We have to go downstairs and have tea with Uncle Edward.
And besides, we wouldn't dream of interrupting your tte--tte.
Isn't it thrilling, Harry ? Mr. Browning, a poet.
And Elizabeth a poet. Isn't that a coincidence ?
So quaint, my pet, quaint.
Ask Mr. Browning to come up now, Wilson.
Yes, and I'm quite sure that the tea is ready.
Arivederci, dearest Ba.
May I come soon again ?
Yes. Come whenever you like, Bella dear.
Next time I shall want you all to myself.
Without Harry.
But why must I be excluded ?
Because I keep the lids to tell dear Ba
about a certain big, big man who might easily
grow convinced if he heard me.
Oh, come, come, my pet.
It has been a pleasure, Miss Barrett.
Nice of you to come and see me.
Not at all. I have long been looking forward
to the honor of meeting you.
Good day.
Au revoir, darling.
Auf wiedersehen.
Good day.
Oh, Mr. Browning. I'm so thrilled to see you.
It is Mr. Browning, isn't it ?
It must be because I've often heard
him called the handsomest poet in England.
Of course you don't know poor little me.
Nevertheless, madam, I thank you.
Isn't he wonderful ?
Isn't he divine ?
The loveliest little shivers are running right down my back.

Come, come, my pet.
I've been unable to think of anything else.
What about Italy ? Have you asked him yet ?
I'm not to go to Italy.
In spite of the fact that both doctors...
The doctors may have proposed, but the decision lies elsewhere.
But didn't they make it clear to him
that this may mean all the difference between life and death ?
I believe Dr. Ford-Waterlow spoke very forcibly and...
In heaven's name...
It's rather hard to explain to someone
who doesn't know all the circumstances.
Papa is very devoted to me...
Devoted ?
Very devoted to me.
He depends a great deal on my companionship.
My brothers and sisters, they don't...
Devoted !
Miss Barrett, may I speak plainly ?
Oh, do you think you'd better ?
I know more or less how you feel but...
Very well.
I shall say nothing.
You tell me he's devoted to you.
I don't understand.
I don't understand a devotion
that demands favors as if they were rights.
I don't understand a devotion
that spends itself in petty tyrannies and gross bullying.
I don't understand a devotion
that grudges you any ray of light and glimpse of happiness.
Doesn't even stop at risking
your life to gratify its colossal selfishness.
Devotion !
Give me good, sound,
honest hatred other than devotion like that.
Mr. Browning, I must ask you...
Forgive me but I won't be silent any longer.
Even before I met you I knew
that sickness wasn't the only shadow on your life.
And all these months I felt
that other shadow deepen and I have stood by and looked on.
But I'm done with pretense from today on.
It's not just your comfort and happiness which are at stake now.

It's your very life.
And I forbid you to play with your life.
And I have the right to forbid you.
No, please don't say any more.
The right. At our first meeting you forbade me to speak of love.
But I knew well enough, we both knew,
that I was to be much more than just your friend.
Even before I passed that door I loved you.
And I've gone on loving you.
And I shall love you to the end.
And beyond.
You know that.
You've always known it.
Yes.
Yes, I've always known it.
And now, for pity's sake,
for pity's sake, leave me.
If my father had the least suspicion that you were more than a friend,
both our lives would be made unbearable.
I love you and I shall never leave you.
And I love you, Robert.
And yet you ask me
to take my marching orders and go out of your life.
Yes, Robert. But what have I to give you ?
I have so little of all that love asks for.
I should have refused to see you again after our first meeting.
For I loved you then
though I would have denied it even to myself.
I love you.
Oh, Robert.
Do you know what you've done for me ?
I could have laughed when Dr. Chambers said
that I'd heal myself by wanting to live.
Oh, I wanted to live eagerly, desperately, passionately,
but only because life meant you.
You, the sight of your face,
the sound of your voice and the touch of your hand.
Oh, and so much more than that.
Because of you the air once more was sweet to breathe.
And all the world was good and green again.
And with those words singing in my ears,
I am to turn my back on you and go.
Yes, Robert. For how is it to end ?
What have we to look forward to and...

I love you.
And I want you for my wife.
Robert, I can't marry you.
How can I with...
Not today or tomorrow. Not this year perhaps, or next.
Perhaps not for years to come.
I may never be able to marry you.
But what then ? If you remain to the last
beyond my reach, I shall die proud and happy...
... in having spent a lifetime fighting
to gain the richest prize a man was ever offered...
No, no, no.
Robert, if we were to say goodbye today...
... we should have nothing but beautiful memories
of each other to last to the end of our lives.
Is it you who are speaking ?
What do you mean ?
Here's life.
Life offering us the best that life can give.
And you dare not grasp at it
for fear that it will turn to dust in your hand.
I don't know you, I never thought you were a coward.
A coward ?
Yes, Robert, I'm a coward.
A coward through and through.
But it's not myself that am afraid.
I know that, my dear.
What's another disaster, great or small,
to me who have known it would disaster all my life ?
But you're a fighter. You were born for victory and triumph.
Oh, what if disaster came to you through me ?
Yes. A fighter. But I'm sick of fighting alone.
I need a comrade in arms to fight beside me.
But not one already wounded in the battle.
Wounded but not defeated. Undaunted. Unbroken.
What finer comrade could a man ask for ?
But Robert...
No, no.
But Robert.
No.
Dear Uncle Edward, don't you think
that your attitude about love and marriage...
I repeat that I do not care to discuss that subject.
Of course, dear Uncle Edward. Of course.

You aren't angry with me, are you ?
Certainly not, child.
Then why that gloomy frown ?
Sit down.
There.
There. All gone.
Oh, come, come, my pet.
If my children were as bright and open and affectionate as you are...
I should be a much happier man.
You mustn't say such things or they'll hate me.
You're a very charming little person.
Anything wrong in that ?
I didn't say so.
What's that scent you've got on ?
Scent ? Me ?
Don't you like it ?
I abominate scent as a rule, but yours is different.
Nice ?
It's delicate and subtle.
Still, I'd prefer you not to use it.
Why ?
Never mind.
Oh, uncle, you're a darling.
You call me bright, and open, and affectionate...
... charming, and fragrant. All within a few minutes.
You may kiss me.
You know who's upstairs, Uncle Edward ?
Mr. Robert Browning, the poet.
Isn't that thrilling ?
I see nothing particularly thrilling in it.
Mr. Browning's respect for my daughter's intellect
seems to justify continuation of their friendship ?
Oh, yes. Such a nice intellectual friendship.
Two poets.
My, my, wouldn't it be frightfully interesting
if only dear Flush could speak ?
Not as interesting as if you could keep silent.
Oh, I'm just joking. And besides, I know that in his great big heart
Uncle Edward is really on the side of romance.
In the part of true love and all that.
What do you mean ?
If you could just have seen her face light up
when Mr. Browning's name was announced.
Bella, you...

Isn't it beautiful ?
Yes, miss, them wisteria is most certainly beautiful.
Isn't it though.
Oh, is that Mr. Browning over there ?
Shouldn't be at all surprised, miss.
Miss Barrett, I believe.
How do you do, Mr. Browning ?
How do you do ?
How do you do, Flush ?
Wilson ?
Isn't this a coincidence ?
We were just enjoying the beautiful wisteria
But it's much more exquisite over there.
I'm afraid, however, you shall have to go on foot.
Miss Ba, you mustn't.
Miss Wilson, I'm perfectly able to walk any distance.
If you would care to go with me...
Yes, thank you.
Wilson, would you wait here ?
And you too, Flush, dear.
Miss Ba, what would the master say ?
When my father returns to town
I shall be very pleased to tell him myself.
Shall we ?
Greatest of pleasure.
You'll pardon us, Flush.
Oh, it's so beautiful.
I'm delighted that you like it.
You can't imagine the difficulty I had
in getting that particular tree to grow that particular position.
And as for the sunlight, well, my dear, you won't believe the trouble I
have with the sun.
It just won't stay still a minute.
So you got the sun to stay there just for me.
Oh, it was nothing at all, I assure you.
Wait until after we're married.
Please, Robert. Not today.
Let's just have today as a day of nonconsequential subjects.
Agreed.
Now, in here we have some very rare specimens.
The choicest and most exotic beauties in the floral kingdom.
For instance,
... here we have the Orchidaceae Stictophyllum.
How exquisite.

Here, by a curious coincidence, we have two chairs.
Also very rare.
And here, my dear, you have a man who loves you.
Also very rare.
Very.
Has it got any feathers ?
No !
A tiger ?
No. No.
A dragon ?
No.
Think of something you're more afraid of
than anything else in the world.
Hm. Is is a gggg..girl.
I know ! It's papa !
Yes !
Listen, Ba.
Do you remember that, Ba ?
Yes, dear.
You wrote the words and I always loved it.
Yes, dear.
Let BBBBa play it.
I haven't played it in years.
My arm, madame.
Make way for the prima donna.
I'll turn the pages for you.
Oh, you're making me nervous.
Henrietta, dear, you should really play this.
No, darling, you play it.
Oh, I don't think I seem to remember it.
Wilt thou have my hand to lie along with thine...
... to lie along with thine ?
As a little stone in a running stream...
... it seems to lie and pine.
Now drop the poor pale hand, Dear,
... unfit to plight with thine.
Wilt thou have my hand to lie along with thine...
... to lie alone with thine ?
That's lovely, Ba.
Look at Henrietta, she's cccrying.
I just think it's so lovely seeing Ba sing again.
Bless you, dear.
Sing it again, Ba.
Yes, do.

I will if you all join me. Will you ?

Yes.

Wilt thou have my hand to lie along with thine...

... to lie along with thine ?

As a little stone in a running stream...

... it seems to lie and pine.

Now drop the poor pale hand, Dear,

... unfit to plight with thine.

Wilt thou have my hand to lie along with thine...

... to lie alone with thine ?

Good heavens, you'll be a success.

No...

Come on, let's have another game.

Its my turn to go out.

Beg your pardon, Miss Elizabeth.

This letter's just come. Special letter just brought.

It's from papa.

But he was to return tomorrow.

Perhaps he's been detained.

Do you think so ?

Oh.

What is it ?

"This is to let you know that

we shall be leaving London within a fortnight...

I've taken a furnished house at Bookham in Surrey,

six miles from the nearest railroad station...

You will benefit by the country air

and complete seclusion of your new surroundings."

Hurry up, aren't you ready yet ?

Oh, poor Henrietta.

We mustn't let her know.

Poor Surtees Cook.

"I have thought for some time now

that your present feverishly restless mode of living in London will, if continued...

... affect you harmfully both physically and morally..."

... my feverishly restless mode of living...

... no wonder he doesn't describe me as a recklessly dissipated woman..

"You will inform your brothers and sisters of my decision

and tell them that I decline absolutely to discuss it when I return home."

He doesn't say when.

Oh, Ba, you poor darling.

He made my going to Italy impossible

and now we are to be cut off from any little pleasures we find here.

I see that he finishes up with the characteristic touch of humor.

Humor ?

He signs himself "your loving papa".

You see what this means ?

Yes.

Perhaps better than you do.

Oh, you're wrong. You don't know papa as I do.

He's growing jealous of my life here.

My pleasures and my friends...

and I'm slowly and surely to be parted from them.

Oh, Robert, it will soon be made impossible for me to see you at all.

This precious letter of your father's

means a great deal more than you as yet haven't been able to grasp.

Great deal more ?

It means that you will be in Italy before the month is out.

Italy ?

Yes. And with me.

Robert !

It means we must be married at once.

Do you know what you're saying ?

Yes, I know what I'm saying and I repeat it.

We must be married at once.

Oh, Robert. It's no use deceiving ourselves.

It's not only papa who stands between us.

It's I.

It's I.

However stronger

I may become I shall always remain an invalid.

Oh, Robert, as your wife, dear,

I should be haunted day and night by...

by thoughts of all the glorious things

you would have done but for me.

Freedom, adventure...

... and passionate love. I...

... I could never really satisfy.

No. No, listen.

Oh, Robert.

I should be haunted by the ghosts of your unborn children.

When I read that letter my world seemed to fall to pieces.

But now I thank God that it came while I was still free.

I have the strength to shake hands and say goodbye.

On the whole I think this will be our best plan of campaign.

We'll meet at Marylebone Church on Saturday

and be married quietly some time in the morning.

I'll see about the license at once and interview the vicar.

Robert !

The packet leaves the Royal Pier on Saturdays at midnight.

We must catch the 8 o'clock express at Vauxhall.

It arrives at Southampton at 11.

Dear.

Come along, come along.

And I always thought that papa

was the most overbearing man in the world.

And yet you've known me for quite some time now.

I know, darling, but I mustn't give way.

I mustn't, I daren't.

There's one other thing, my darling.

You can't possibly travel without a maid.

Do you think Wilson would be willing to come abroad with us ?

Robert...

Have you ever thought that

my strenght may break down in the journey ?

Yes.

So as I were to die on your hands.

Are you afraid, Ba ?

Afraid,

You know I'd rather die with you beside me

than live a hundred lives without you.

But how would you feel if I were to die like that ?

And what would the world say of you ?

I should be branded as a little better than a murderer.

What I should feel, I leave you to imagine.

And yet you ask me to come with you ?

Yes.

I'm prepared to risk your life and much more than mine.

Get you out of that dreadful house

and into the sunshine, and to have you...

... for my wife.

You love me like that ?

I love you like that.

Robert.

Yes, dear.

Will you...

will you give me a little time ?

Time is short, my dear.

Yes, I know.

Your father is expected back...

Not till next week

You shall know before then.

You promise me that ?

I promise.

Oh, Miss Ba, I was that worried about you.

Out in the rain and everything.

Rain ? Oh, yes.

Quite a shower.

The sun's shining and lovely now.

Contrary thing.

Oh, is anything wrong, miss ?

Wrong ?

No, no.

Ba ! Oh, Ba, you must see him at once, you simply must.

Him ?

He's in full regimentals. He's just been to St James

to receive whatever you call it,

... his adjunctancy or something, from Queen Victoria herself.

Oh, he's wonderful, he's gorgeous.

I'm talking about Captain Cook, you know.

Yes, so I've gathered.

Darling, I'm swooning out now.

I've just been out and I'm quite tired.

But some other time will do just as well.

No, no. I told you, he's in full uniform.

Oh, he's just on the landing outside.

Please see him, Ba.

All right darling, bring him in.

Come up, Surtees.

Careful or you'll wreck yourself.

There.

Attention !

March !

Captain Surtees Cook, Ba.

My sister Elizabeth.

Your servant, Miss Barrett.

Captain Cook.

Twice honored in one day, you know.

First by Her Majesty, then by you, Miss Bartett.

Really, I don't know what I've done to deserve it.

That's right, you've just come from the palace, haven't you ?

I've never seen the Queen.

Tell me, what is she like ?

Very little lady, mam.

But royal every inch of her.

Surtees, you haven't got your sword on.
Not etiquette, as I told you, to wear it indoors.
Oh, bother. I shall get it. I want Ba to see you in full war paint.
Where did you leave it ?
Well, it's in the hall.
I'll fetch it.
No, look here, Miss Barrett doesn't want to...
But indeed I do, Captain Cook.
I don't think I've ever seen
an officer in full war paint before.
Indeed ?
Won't you sit down.
Oh, yes, Wilson, I think you'd better take Flush out.
He always gets so excited
when there are a few people in the room.
Oh, yes, of course.
Miss Barrett...
Yes ?
Miss Barrett...
Yes, Captain Cook ?
I say, Miss Barrett...
You want to tell me something about Henrietta, don't you ?
Just so, Miss Barrett, just so. Exactly.
You know, Miss Barrett, you know...
Yes, Captain Cook, I know.
And believe me, you have my heartfelt sympathy.
Thank you, oh, thank you, it's more than I deserve.
Thank you, Miss Barrett.
Never was such a girl, you know. Henrietta, I mean.
I don't know what I've done to deserve it.
Captain Cook...
Did he tell you something while I was out of the room ?
Don't tell me he really managed to get it out.
Well, perhaps not quite...
Well, still you know, like most ladies, quick in the uptake.
Yes, I understood.
Listen, my dear. Don't ever let anything
keep you from doing what you think in your heart is right.
Remember that.
Quite aware I'm not much of a match, Miss Barrett.
Poor man you know.
Surtees, let me buckle on your sword.
Oh, I say...
Ba thinks that poets are the flower of manhood,

a certain poet at any rate.

I mean to show her that she's mistaken.

You've got it wrong, you know.

I have ?

The sword hangs from the left hip, you know.

Why ?

Well, it's sort of...

Papa !

You're back sooner than I expected, papa.

I don't think I have the privilege of this gentleman's acquaintance.

Captain Cook, may I introduce my father.

Papa, Captain Surtees Cook.

Your servant, sir.

Captain Cook is a great friend of George and Octavius.

Indeed.

My sons are very rarely at home at this hour of the day.

The fact is, sir, I was just passing the house and...

... I thought I'd look in, you know,

in the off chance of finding one of them in and all that.

I see.

Captain Cook has just come from Buckingham Palace.

And Henrietta thought I should like

to see him in all the splendor of his regimentals.

Indeed.

Nothing much to look at, of course, sir, but...

ladies like a bit of color and I thought...

By Jove, it must be getting late...

It is 19 and a half minutes past twelve.

By Jove, it's high time that I was moving.

Goodbye, Miss Barrett.

Goodbye, Captain.

Goodbye, Miss Henrietta.

I'll see you out.

Your servant, sir.

I'm seeing Captain Cook to the door.

The servants will attend to that.

This house is fast becoming a rendez-vous for half London.

This was the first time I had the pleasure of meeting Captain Cook.

Indeed, but I infer from what I saw as I came into the room ...

... that Henrietta's acquaintance

has a somewhat longer standing, or am I mistaken ?

I've known Captain Cook for some time now.

Oh, since when has it been your custom to buckle on his accoutrement ?

I'd never seen him in full uniform before.

And I think it improbable that you will see him in full uniform or otherwise in the future.

But papa...

Captain Cook to be forbidden to visit us because I helped him on with his sword....

You received my letter ?

Yes, papa.

What has just happened

fully confirms me in the wisdom of my decision.

Fortunately our new home is so far from town

that your London friends are not likely to trouble us.

Our new home ? I don't understand.

Are we leaving Wimpole Street ?

I have taken a house in Bookham in Surrey.

Why ?

I am not in the habit of accounting

for my actions to anyone, least of all to my children.

But one thing I've the right to ask you, papa.

Is Captain Cook to be forbidden the house because of what just happened ?

I understood you to say Captain Cook was George's friend and Octavius'.

Yes, and my friend too.

Ah... come here.

Yes, papa ?

Come here !

What is this man to you ?

I told you, he's a friend of ours.

What is he to you ?

A friend.

Is that all ?

Yes.

You liar !

Papa !

Papa, let me go.

What is this man to you ? Answer me.

Please, papa, please.

Answer me !

No. No.

Answer me !

He's... he's...

Oh, papa, I love him !

Ah...

Oh, you... you... you...

You... you... !

Papa ! Papa !

Let her go ! I won't have it !

Let her go at once.

You and this filthiness !

I've known that Henrietta loved Captain Cook
for some time and I've given her all my strength.

You dare to tell me !

Yes !

I would have given her
all my help too if I had it to give.

I'll deal with you later.

Get up !

Papa, listen to me, please...

I'm not a bad girl, I swear to you I'm not.

I know I've deceived you, I'm sorry.

I love him. I love him.

He's a good man. It can't be wrong to love him.

I want love. I can't live without love.

Papa, remember how you loved mama and she loved you
and you'll understand and pity me...

Get up !

Sit there !

How long has this been going on ?

Do you hear me ? How long have you been carrying on with this fellow ?

I've known Captain Cook for over a year.

You've been with him often ?

Yes,

Alone ?

Yes.

Where ?

We met in the park, and...

In here ?

Yes.

Here and alone ?

Have you been with him in this house alone ?

Yes.

So clandestine meetings under my own roof
and abetted by one whom I beleived to be holy, chaste and good...

How dare you, papa.

Now listen to me.

Unless you give me your solemn word that you will neither...

... see nor have any communication with this man again,

... you will leave my house at once

as you are with nothing but the clothes you have on.

Once outside my doors,

you can go to perdition any way you please.
But you will never be admitted again as long as I live.
I think you know I never go back on my word.
You have your choice. Take it.
Is it nothing to you
that I shall hate you for this to the end of my life ?
Less than nothing.
Will you give me your word neither to see
nor to have any communication with this man again ?
I have no choice.
Elizabeth, give me your Bible.
My Bible belonged to mama.
I can't have it used for such a purpose.
Give me your Bible.
No.
You refuse ?
Yes.
Come here.
Place your hand upon the Book.
Repeat after me.
I give you my solemn word...
... that I shall neither see
nor have any communication with Captain Cook again.
I give you my solemn word that I will neither see...
nor have any communication with Captain Cook again.
You will now go your room
and remain there until you have my permission to leave it.
Henrietta.
Henrietta.
Do you remember what I told you ?
Just what did that mean ?
I was reminding Henrietta what I told her a short time ago.
I begged her to fight for her happiness.
You dare !
Yes, yes !
For years I've crushed down my doubts.
I tried to persuade myself that in spite of all you loved us.
But at last I've been forced to face the truth.
You're like a shadow over our lives.
I command you to be silent.
I won't stand by and see you wreck her life if I can save it.
You may be too strong for me, but at least I'll try.
I'll try...
Elizabeth !

You might have had the love of all your children.

But instead you have fear.

Fear and hatred.

Elizabeth !

Hatred, I tell you. Hatred and mine too. Hatred.

It will be hard for me to forget what you have said.

I shall leave you under my extreme displeasure.

When you have repented your wickedness

and are ready to ask for God's forgiveness,

... and mine, you may send for me.

Come in.

Wilson, shut the door, please.

Wilson...

Are you my friend ?

Your friend ?

Yes, I'm very much in need of friendship and help at the moment.

Oh, I'm that fond of you

I'd do anything to help you, miss Ba.

Good.

I'm going to marry Mr. Browning.

Marry ?

Shhh.

Does he know ?

No, and he mustn't. Nobody must.

I should just think not indeed.

Oh, Miss Ba.

I'm that glad.

After we're married we're going to Italy.

And Mr. Browning would like to know if you'll come with us.

To Italy ?

Yes. Will you come ?

Well, miss, I don't see as how I can help meself.

Not that I hold to foreign parts, I don't, but...

husband or no husband,

you'd never get to Italy alive without me.

Thank you, Wilson.

Now, I want you to take a letter right to Mr. Browning.

You'll have to take a cab at once.

A cab ?

Yes, go and get all your things.

I'll have this finished by the time you're ready.

Hurry !

But Miss Ba...

... is it to be at once ?

No, probably not for a month or so.

Be quick, though.

Yes, miss.

But Miss Ba...

If it's not to be for a month...

Yes, Wilson, I know I'm absurd...

but I made up this courage.

Besides, I believe Mr. Browning will be glad to get my letter.

Oh, I'm sure he will, miss.

Miss Wilson, has anything happened ?

What is it ?

Miss Ba sent this for you, sir.

Oh.

Oh, it's all right, sir.

Wilson, I...

I was afraid that... perhaps...

If you don't mind, sir...

I think it's splendid.

Oh, thank you, Wilson, thank you.

Thank you, Wilson.

If you don't mind, sir.

Wilson, I knew she'd do it.

I had no right to be afraid.

I wasn't really afraid.

Oh, no, sir.

Wilson, do you realize that you are the bearer

of the greatest good tidings since

they brought the good news from ----- ?

You wait here, Wilson.

I'm going upstairs and tell the good news to my mother.

I'm going to tell it to everybody.

Oh I wouldn't do that, sir.

You wait here and then we'll go back

together in triumph to Wimpole Street.

Perhaps we'd better have music, a band or something.

You're not to do that, sir.

The master's come home.

What's that ?

Mr. Barrett, sir. He came home.

Oh, Miss Ba.

Shhh.

Oh, Miss Ba, you can't imagine...

What did he say ?

Well, miss, he's a most unusual man.

There he stood giving me orders.
Telling me what you and me was to do.
Really, miss, I don't know what your married life is going to be like.
Wilson, was he pleased when he read the letter ?
He was that pleased, miss.
What did he say, how did he look ?
I want to know everything.
Well, miss... He couldn't say a word at first.
He seemd all kind of choked up, like...
Oh, Wilson.
Wilson, he was happy that I...
Yes, miss, he was that happy. You should have seen his face.
And then he started running
around with timetables and those things.
And he says you are to wear
your ordinary travelling clothes to the church.
Church ?
Yes, miss, you're going to be married tonight.
But, Wilson. That's absurd.
Tonight ? How can we ?
I don't know. But we're going to.
He's going to get a vicar and a special license.
And as soon as we're finished packing,
we're to meet him at the church.
So I might just as well start packing.
But Wilson, how can we ?
Don't ask me, ask him.
What dresses are you going to pack, miss ?
Wilson, do you want to drive me mad. You know we can't.
He says you can.
Oh, miss. There's a lot I'd give to be here...
... when the master finds out you've gone and got married.
Don't Wilson, don't. The very thought terrifies me.
Wilson, put back those things and give me time to think.
You know it's out of the question.
I'm not prepared and I...
Wilson ! Put back those things.
Oh, miss, you did give me a turn.
Be quiet.
Ba !
What on earth is the matter ?
Why, nothing.
Nothing. It's just...
... it's all been so upsetting.

I don't believe that's all.

Look at Wilson.

You've startled us.

Wilson, will you come back in a little while ?

Is there something you want to say to me, dear ?

Yes.

Papa threatened to turn me out of the house unless I swore on the Bible not to write or see Surtees.

Well, I'm going to break that Bible oath.

Are you, dear ?

Yes, and I shall glory in breaking it.

I shall see Surtees every day when we leave.

And when we're in the country I shall write to him.

And if papa asks me, I'll go out of my way to lie to him.

I see. Why do you tell me this ?

Because I want you to say

that I'm a wicked, deceitful, perjured, loose woman...

... so that I can fling the words back in your face.

Oh, Ba.

Ba, darling, I didn't mean that.

I'm not myself.

I'm all love and hate.

I don't know which is the worse torture.

Oh, my dear. You think I don't understand, but I do.

I do.

And I implore you, dear, never lose hope.

Never lose courage. Never.

The master.

Ba, there is something.

You're as white as a sheet.

What is it ? Is there anything I can do ?

No, no. Don't speak, don't ask me anything.

You know nothing, you understand ? Nothing, nothing.

What's the matter with that woman ?

Wilson ?

Yes. And you.

Nothing, papa.

Where have you been ?

Nowhere.

Where are you going ?

To Aunt Hedley's.

Is that the truth ?

Yes.

Remember your oath.

Yes.

Are you going to keep it ?

Yes.

I want to speak to your sister. You may go.

Do you know why I've come back ?

No, papa.

Because I cannot bear to be estranged from you.

You should have come to me to beg

my forgiveness for your wicked and cruel words.

But in spite of my sense of right

and justice and duty I had to come to you.

And I despise myself for coming.

I despise myself, I hate myself...

Oh, no, no, no.

Oh, papa, can't you see,

won't you ever see that strength may be weakness ?

And that your sense of justice,

duty and right are all mistaken and wrong ?

It's been my heavy cross that those whom I was given to guide and rule
have always fought against the right which I knew to be the right.

And was in duty bound to impose upon them, even you.

Even your mother

My mother ?

Yes, your mother.

You, my eldest child, were born of love and only love.

But the others, long before they came,

love died out and fear took its place.

No, no...

Fear. And all because I saw the right and did it.

Not that she ever opposed me ever once.

Oh, dear God, what she must have suffered.

Ba, my dear, don't, don't.

I shouldn't have spoken about it.

Take your hands from your face.

Don't look at me like that. You don't understand, how should you ?

You know nothing of the brutal tyranny of the senses and how

even the strongest and best are driven by it to hell.

Would you have abetted your sister...

Henrietta's in love !

You dare speak of it in the same breath ?

Her, love ?

You ignorant little fool,

what do you know about love ?

Love. Desire.

It's time a little reality were brought into your dream of life.

I won't listen to you.

You must ! You shall !

Do you suppose I should have guarded my house
like a dragon from this so-called love...

... if I hadn't known from my own life
all it entails of degradation and remorse ?

With the help of God and through years
of tormenting abstinence I strangled it in myself...

... and so long as I have breath in my body
I'll keep it away from those I was given to protect.

Do you understand me ?

Yes.

I understand you.

I understand you.

Very well.

This has been a painful necessity
but I had to speak plainly lest your very innocence...

... should smirch the purity I'm utterly
resolved to maintain in my household.

You're cold as ice. Why are you trembling ?

I shall never forget what you have said.

For the love of heaven, my darling,
don't let this raise any further barrier between us.

I cannot play the coward's part
and take the easier way and shirk my duty.

I'd rather be hated by the whole world
than gain love that way.

Oh, papa, you don't know how I pity you.

Pity ?

I don't want your pity.

If ever I should lose you or your love...

My darling, in our new home
we shall draw close to each other again.

Nothing and no one can come between us,
my child, my darling.

You want me to be happy.

The only happiness I shall ever know is all yours to give or take.
You must look up to me and depend on me and lean on me.

You must share your thoughts with me,
your hopes, your fears, your prayers...

I can't bear it, I can't bear any more.

Let me go papa. Please, let me go !

Forgive me, my dear, I was carried away.

Shall I leave you now ?

Please.

Shall I see you again tonight ?

Not tonight.

I shall pray for you.

Pray for me tonight ?

Yes.

Pray for me tonight if you will.

Did he find anything out ?

Wilson, I'm going. I must.

Now, at once.

Oh, Miss Ba, what's happened ? But we haven't packed.

Well, we must go without.

But we won't have as much as a nightgown.

We can buy them.

Miss Ba...

I can't stay here, Wilson.

I'm frightened. I'm frightened.

Fetch your cloak and bonnet.

But, Miss Ba, if he did catch us...

He can't stop me. I don't belong to him anymore.

He could kill me, but he can't stop me.

Oh, Miss Ba, I daren't just now. I daren't.

Let's go to the other room.

Oh, we can't do that.

Wilson, I must. That's all I know. I must go.

To Robert.

But, miss Ba...

Wilson, until today I've never really known my father.

I've even hoped I might confide in him,

but now I know t would be hopeless.

He'd crush me as he crushed my mother.

Oh, miss Ba...

He's cruel, Wilson, cruel and pitiless and I'm afraid.

If you want to draw back

you needn't ever reproach yourself.

But I must go to Mr. Browning now.

I'll fetch my cloak and bonnet at once, miss.

Wilson.

Oh, miss Ba.

They're all down to dinner now, miss.

The master's just gone in.

All right, Wilson.

Come, Flush.

Henrietta !

I'm going to call Arabel, papa.

Take your place and be seated without her.

Almighty Father, giver of all good gifts...

... who of thy thy divine providence

has provided thy unworthy servants...

... with all things necessary to their bodily sustenance.

Grant, we beseech thee, spiritual grace...

... that we may enjoy it in

quietness of spirit as proof of thy bounty...

... and render unto Thee

most humble and hearty thank. Amen

Amen.

For heaven's sake, what is it ?

Tell us at once !

She's gone. To be married.

What do you mean ?

Arabel !

Arabel, pull yourself together at once !

Where's Ba ? Answer me, where's Ba ?

She's gone. She left this note. Read it.

It's true.

It's true.

She sends us her love

and will write to all of us from Italy.

Italy.

Look !

This letter is for papa.

Papa.

What's to be done ?

Someone must give him Ba's letter.

Let me. I should love to.

What is the meaning of this ?

Who was making that hideous noise ?

Where is Elizabeth ?

You hear me.

Where is your sister ?

She left you this letter.

Left me ?

What do you mean ?

She left a letter for Arabel.

And this for you.

Oh, papa, you must forgive her.

Not for her sake, but for yours.

I thought I hated you, but I don't.

I pity you.

And if you have any pity for yourself, forgive her.

Elizabeth.

Yes, yes, her dog.

Yes, I'll have her dog.

Octavius.

Yes, sir.

Her dog must be destroyed at once.

What ?

You will take it to the vet tonight.

Do you understand me ? Tonight.

Do you understand me ?

Heavens, I don't see what the ppp...poor little beast has done.

Do you understand me ?

In her letter, Ba writes that she has taken Flush with her.

For as much as Robert and Elizabeth

have consented together in holy wedlock...

... and have witnessed the same before God and this company...

... I pronounce that they be man and wife together.

In the name of the Father,

and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost...

Amen.

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost...

Bless, preserve and keep

that ye may so live together in this life...

... that in the world to come

ye may have life everlasting.

Amen.