



# ENGLISH LITERATURE

## Bridging Work

---

A significant focus in English Literature is the analysis of authorial methods and contexts and the effects created for readers – both contemporary and modern.

We have put together a selection of three text types and we would like you to analyse each one (guidance below) and answer the following question:

1. All 3 texts are opening chapters to novels that introduce striking settings and experiences that will be life changing. Annotate each opening for the methods – language, form, and structure that are used to introduce place, action, and character.
2. Research each author and decide on the main influences for their writing and the issues and themes that they explore in their work.
3. Choose one of the texts and write an essay that answers the following question: How does (choice of author) engage readers and explore ideas (this could be about character, place, or experiences) the opening chapter.

### Text 1: *Emma* by Jane Austen

Jane Austen began to write *Emma* in January of 1814 and finished it a little over a year later, in March of 1815. At the time of completion, Austen was thirty-nine years old. *Emma* was published at the end of 1815, with 2,000 copies being printed—563, more than a quarter, were still unsold after four years. She earned less than forty pounds from the book during her lifetime, though it earned more after her death. Austen died a year and a half after publication. [Source: [The Cambridge Companion To Jane Austen](#), Edited by Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster, Cambridge University Press, 1997.]

*Emma* was Austen's fourth published novel, and the last to appear before her death. Both *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* would be published posthumously. Though she published anonymously, her previous works were noticed by critics and literature lovers. One of her admirers was H.R.H. The Prince Regent. Through the prince's librarian, Austen was *invited* to dedicate one of her works to the prince, she complied to the royal command in the dedication of *Emma*—though her reluctance to do so is apparent in the wording of the dedication.

### Emma

#### Chapter 1

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.

She was the youngest of the two daughters of a most affectionate, indulgent father, and had, in consequence of her sister's marriage, been mistress of his house from a very early period.

Her mother had died too long ago for her to have more than an indistinct remembrance of her caresses, and her place had been supplied by an excellent woman as governess, who had fallen little short of a mother in affection.

Sixteen years had Miss Taylor been in Mr. Woodhouse's family, less as a governess than a friend, very fond of both daughters, but particularly of Emma. Between them it was more the intimacy of sisters. Even before Miss Taylor had ceased to hold the nominal office of governess, the mildness of her temper had hardly allowed her to impose any restraint; and the shadow of authority being now long passed away, they had been living together as friend and friend very mutually attached, and Emma doing just what she liked; highly esteeming Miss Taylor's judgment, but directed chiefly by her own.

The real evils indeed of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself; these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments. The danger, however, was at present so unperceived, that they did not by any means rank as misfortunes with her.

Sorrow came—a gentle sorrow—but not at all in the shape of any disagreeable consciousness.—Miss Taylor married. It was Miss Taylor's loss which first brought grief. It was on the wedding-day of this beloved friend that Emma first sat in mournful thought of any continuance. The wedding over and the bride-people gone, her father and herself were left to dine together, with no prospect of a third to cheer a long evening. Her father composed himself to sleep after dinner, as usual, and she had then only to sit and think of what she had lost. The event had every promise of happiness for her friend. Mr. Weston was a man of unexceptionable character, easy fortune, suitable age, and pleasant manners; and there was some satisfaction in considering with what self-denying, generous friendship she had always wished and promoted the match; but it was a black morning's work for her. The want of Miss Taylor would be felt every hour of every day. She recalled her past kindness—the kindness, the affection of sixteen years—how she had taught and how she had played with her from five years old—how she had devoted all her powers to attach and amuse her in health—and how nursed her through the various illnesses of childhood. A large debt of gratitude was owing here; but the intercourse of the last seven years, the equal footing and perfect unreserve which had soon followed Isabella's marriage on their being left to each other, was yet a dearer, tenderer recollection. It had been a friend and companion such as few possessed, intelligent, well-informed, useful, gentle, knowing all the ways of the family, interested in all its concerns, and peculiarly interested in herself, in every pleasure, every scheme of her's;—one to whom she could speak every thought as it arose, and who had such an affection for her as could never find fault.

How was she to bear the change?—It was true that her friend was going only half a mile from them; but Emma was aware that great must be the difference between a Mrs. Weston only half a mile from them, and a Miss Taylor in the house; and with all her advantages, natural and domestic, she was now in great danger of suffering from intellectual solitude. She dearly loved her father, but he was no companion for her. He could not meet her in conversation, rational or playful.

The evil of the actual disparity in their ages (and Mr. Woodhouse had not married early) was much increased by his constitution and habits; for having been a [valetudinarian](#) all his life, without activity of mind or body, he was a much older man in ways than in years; and though everywhere beloved for the friendliness of his heart and his amiable temper, his talents could not have recommended him at any time.

Her sister, though comparatively but little removed by matrimony, being settled in London, only sixteen miles off, was much beyond her daily reach; and many a long October and November evening must be struggled through at Hartfield, before Christmas brought the next visit from Isabella and her husband and their little children to fill the house and give her pleasant society again.

Highbury, the large and populous village almost amounting to a town, to which Hartfield, in spite of its separate lawn and shrubberies and name, did really belong, afforded her no equals. The Woodhouses were first in consequence there. All looked up to them. She had many

acquaintance in the place, for her father was universally civil, but not one among them who could be accepted in lieu of Miss Taylor for even half a day. It was a melancholy change; and Emma could not but sigh over it and wish for impossible things, till her father awoke, and made it necessary to be cheerful. His spirits required support. He was a nervous man, easily depressed; fond of every body that he was used to, and hating to part with them; hating change of every kind. Matrimony, as the origin of change, was always disagreeable; and he was by no means yet reconciled to his own daughter's marrying, nor could ever speak of her but with compassion, though it had been entirely a match of affection, when he was now obliged to part with Miss Taylor too; and from his habits of gentle selfishness and of being never able to suppose that other people could feel differently from himself, he was very much disposed to think Miss Taylor had done as sad a thing for herself as for them, and would have been a great deal happier if she had spent all the rest of her life at Hartfield. Emma smiled and chatted as cheerfully as she could, to keep him from such thoughts; but when tea came, it was impossible for him not to say exactly as he had said at dinner,

"Poor Miss Taylor!—I wish she were here again. What a pity it is that Mr. Weston ever thought of her!"

"I cannot agree with you, papa; you know I cannot. Mr. Weston is such a good-humoured, pleasant, excellent man, that he thoroughly deserves a good wife;—and you would not have had Miss Taylor live with us for ever and bear all my odd humours, when she might have a house of her own?"

"A house of her own!—but where is the advantage of a house of her own? This is three times as large.—And you have never any odd humours, my dear."

"How often we shall be going to see them, and they coming to see us!—We shall be always meeting! We must begin, we must go and pay wedding-visit very soon."

"My dear, how am I to get so far? Randalls is such a distance. I could not walk half so far."

"No, papa, nobody thought of your walking. We must go in the carriage to be sure."

"The carriage! But James will not like to put the horses to for such a little way;—and where are the poor horses to be while we are paying our visit?"

"They are to be put into Mr. Weston's stable, papa. You know we have settled all that already. We talked it all over with Mr. Weston last night. And as for James, you may be very sure he will always like going to Randalls, because of his daughter's being housemaid there. I only doubt whether he will ever take us anywhere else. That, was your doing, papa. You got Hannah that good place. Nobody thought of Hannah till you mentioned her—James is so obliged to you!"

"I am very glad I did think of her. It was very lucky, for I would not have had poor James think himself slighted upon any account; and I am sure she will make a very good servant; she is a civil, pretty-spoken girl; I have a great opinion of her. Whenever I see her, she always curtsies and asks me how I do, in a very pretty manner; and when you have had her here to do needlework, I observe she always turns the lock of the door the right way and never bangs it. I am sure she will be an excellent servant; and it will be a great comfort to poor Miss Taylor to have somebody about her that she is used to see. Whenever James goes over to see his daughter you know, she will be hearing of us. He will be able to tell her how we all are."

Emma spared no exertions to maintain this happier flow of ideas, and hoped, by the help of backgammon, to get her father tolerably through the evening, and be attacked by no regrets but her own. The backgammon-table was placed; but a visitor immediately afterwards walked in and made it unnecessary.

Mr. Knightley, a sensible man about seven or eight-and-thirty, was not only a very old and intimate friend of the family, but particularly connected with it as the elder brother of Isabella's husband. He lived about a mile from Highbury, was a frequent visitor and always welcome, and at this time more welcome than usual, as coming directly from their mutual [connections](#) in London. He had returned to a late dinner after some days absence, and now walked up to Hartfield to say that all were well in Brunswick-square. It was a happy circumstance and animated Mr. Woodhouse for some time. Mr. Knightley had a cheerful manner which always did him good; and his many inquiries after "poor Isabella" and her children were answered most satisfactorily. When this was over, Mr. Woodhouse gratefully observed,

"It is very kind of you, Mr. Knightley, to come out at this late hour to call upon us. I am afraid you must have had a shocking walk."

"Not at all, sir. It is a beautiful, moonlight night; and so mild that I must draw back from your great fire."

"But you must have found it very damp and dirty. I wish you may not catch cold."

"Dirty, sir! Look at my shoes. Not a speck on them."

"Well! that is quite surprising, for we have had a vast deal of rain here. It rained dreadfully hard for half an hour, while we were at breakfast. I wanted them to put off the wedding."

"By the bye—I have not wished you joy. Being pretty well aware of what sort of joy you must both be feeling, I have been in no hurry with my congratulations. But I hope it all went off tolerably well. How did you all behave? Who cried most?"

"Ah! poor Miss Taylor! 'Tis a sad business."

"Poor Mr. and Miss Woodhouse, if you please; but I cannot possibly say 'poor Miss Taylor.' I have a great regard for you and Emma; but when it comes to the question of dependence or independence!—At any rate, it must be better to have only one to please, than two."

"Especially when *one* of those two is such a fanciful, troublesome creature!" said Emma playfully. "That, is what you have in your head, I know—and what you would certainly say if my father were not by."

"I believe it is very true, my dear, indeed," said Mr. Woodhouse with a sigh. "I am afraid I am sometimes very fanciful and troublesome."

"My dearest papa! You do not think I could mean *you*, or suppose Mr. Knightley to mean *you*. What a horrible idea! Oh no! I meant only myself. Mr. Knightley loves to find fault with me you know—in a joke—it is all a joke. We always say what we like to one another."

Mr. Knightley, in fact, was one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them: and though this was not particularly agreeable to Emma herself, she knew it would be so much less so to her father, that she would not have him really suspect such a circumstance as her not being thought perfect by every body.

"Emma knows I never flatter her," said Mr. Knightley, "but I meant no reflection on any body. Miss Taylor has been used to have two persons to please; she will now have but one. The chances are that she must be a gainer."

"Well," said Emma, willing to let it pass—"you want to hear about the wedding, and I shall be happy to tell you, for we all behaved charmingly. Every body was punctual, every body in their best looks. Not a tear, and hardly a long face to be seen. Oh! no, we all felt that we were going to be only half a mile apart, and were sure of meeting every day."

"Dear Emma bears every thing so well," said her father. "But, Mr. Knightley, she is really very sorry to lose poor Miss Taylor, and I am sure she *will* miss her more than she thinks for."

Emma turned away her head, divided between tears and smiles.

"It is impossible that Emma should not miss such a companion," said Mr. Knightley. "We should not like her so well as we do, sir, if we could suppose it. But she knows how much the marriage is to Miss Taylor's advantage; she knows how very acceptable it must be at Miss Taylor's time of life to be settled in a home of her own, and how important to her to be secure of a comfortable provision, and therefore cannot allow herself to feel so much pain as pleasure. Every friend of Miss Taylor must be glad to have her so happily married."

"And you have forgotten one matter of joy to me," said Emma, "and a very considerable one—that I made the match myself. I made the match, you know, four years ago; and to have it take place, and be proved in the right, when so many people said Mr. Weston would never marry again, may comfort me for any thing."

Mr. Knightley shook his head at her. Her father fondly replied, "Ah! my dear, I wish you would not make matches and [foretel](#) things, for whatever you say always comes to pass. Pray do not make any more matches."

"I promise you to make none for myself, papa; but I must, indeed, for other people. It is the greatest amusement in the world! And after such success, you know!—Every body said that Mr. Weston would never marry again. Oh dear, no! Mr. Weston, who had been a widower so long, and who seemed so perfectly comfortable without a wife, so constantly occupied either in his business in town or among his friends here, always acceptable wherever he went, always cheerful—Mr. Weston need not spend a single evening in the year alone if he did not like it. Oh, no! Mr. Weston certainly would never marry again. Some people even talked of a promise to his wife on her death-bed, and others of the son and the uncle not letting him. All manner of solemn nonsense was talked on the subject, but I believed none of it. Ever since

the day (about four years ago) that Miss Taylor and I met with him in Broadway-lane, when, because it began to mizzle, he darted away with so much gallantry, and borrowed two umbrellas for us from Farmer Mitchell's, I made up my mind on the subject. I planned the match from that hour; and when such success has blessed me in this instance, dear papa, you cannot think that I shall leave off match-making."

"I do not understand what you mean by 'success,'" said Mr. Knightley. "Success supposes endeavour. Your time has been properly and delicately spent, if you have been endeavouring for the last four years to bring about this marriage. A worthy employment for a young lady's mind! But if, which I rather imagine, your making the match, as you call it, means only your planning it, your saying to yourself one idle day, 'I think it would be a very good thing for Miss Taylor if Mr. Weston were to marry her,' and saying it again to yourself every now and then afterwards,—why do you talk of success? where is your merit?—what are you proud of?—you made a lucky guess; and *that* is all that can be said."

"And have you never known the pleasure and triumph of a lucky guess?—I pity you.—I thought you cleverer—for, depend upon it a lucky guess is never merely luck. There is always some talent in it. And as to my poor word 'success,' which you quarrel with, I do not know that I am so entirely without any claim to it. You have drawn two pretty pictures—but I think there may be a third—a something between the do-nothing and the do-all. If I had not promoted Mr. Weston's visits here, and given many little encouragements, and smoothed many little matters, it might not have come to any thing after all. I think you must know Hartfield enough to comprehend that."

"A straight-forward, open-hearted man, like Weston, and a rational unaffected woman, like Miss Taylor, may be safely left to manage their own concerns. You are more likely to have done harm to yourself, than good to them, by interference."

"Emma never thinks of herself, if she can do good to others;" rejoined Mr. Woodhouse, understanding but in part. "But, my dear, pray do not make any more matches, they are silly things, and break up one's family circle grievously."

"Only one more, papa; only for Mr. Elton. Poor Mr. Elton! You like Mr. Elton, papa,—I must look about for a wife for him. There is nobody in Highbury who deserves him—and he has been here a whole year, and has fitted up his house so comfortably that it would be a shame to have him single any longer—and I thought when he was joining their hands to-day, he looked so very much as if he would like to have the same kind office done for him! I think very well of Mr. Elton, and this is the only way I have of doing him a service."

"Mr. Elton is a very pretty young man, to be sure, and a very good young man, and I have a great regard for him. But if you want to shew him any attention, my dear, ask him to come and dine with us some day. That will be a much better thing. I dare say Mr. Knightley will be so kind as to meet him."

"With a great deal of pleasure, sir, at any time," said Mr. Knightley, laughing; "and I agree with you entirely that it will be a much better thing. Invite him to dinner, Emma, and help him to the best of the fish and the chicken, but leave him to chuse his own wife. Depend upon it, a man of six or seven-and-twenty can take care of himself."

## **Text 2: Enduring Love by Ian McEwan**

**Enduring Love is a 1997 novel by British writer Ian McEwan. The plot concerns two strangers who become perilously entangled after witnessing a deadly accident.**

The beginning is simple to mark. We were in sunlight under a turkey oak, partly protected from a strong, gusty wind. I was kneeling on the grass with a corkscrew in my hand, and Clarissa was passing me the bottle—a 1987 Daumas Gassac. This was the moment, this was the pinprick on the time map: I was stretching out my hand, and as the cool neck and the black foil touched my palm, we heard a man's shout. We turned to look across the field and saw the danger. Next thing, I was running toward it. The transformation was absolute: I don't recall dropping the corkscrew, or getting to my feet, or making a decision, or hearing the caution Clarissa called after me. What idiocy, to be racing into this story and its labyrinths, sprinting

away from our happiness among the fresh spring grasses by the oak. There was the shout again, and a child's cry, enfeebled by the wind that roared in the tall trees along the hedgerows. I ran faster. And there, suddenly, from different points around the field, four other men were converging on the scene, running like me.

I see us from two hundred feet up, through the eyes of the buzzard we had watched earlier, soaring, circling, and dipping in the tumult of currents: five men running silently toward the center of a hundred-acre field. I approached from the southeast, with the wind at my back. About two hundred yards to my left two men ran side by side. They were farm laborers who had been repairing the fence along the field's southern edge where it skirts the road. The same distance beyond them was the motorist, John Logan, whose car was banked on the grass verge with its door, or doors, wide open. Knowing what I know now, it's odd to evoke the figure of Jed Parry directly ahead of me, emerging from a line of beeches on the far side of the field a quarter of a mile away, running into the wind. To the buzzard, Parry and I were tiny forms, our white shirts brilliant against the green, rushing toward each other like lovers, innocent of the grief this entanglement would bring. The encounter that would unhinge us was minutes away, its enormity disguised from us not only by the barrier of time but by the colossus in the center of the field, which drew us in with the power of a terrible ratio that set fabulous magnitude against the puny human distress at its base.

What was Clarissa doing? She said she walked quickly toward the center of the field. I don't know how she resisted the urge to run. By the time it happened, the event I am about to describe--the fall--she had almost caught us up and was well placed as an observer, unencumbered by participation, by the ropes and the shouting, and by our fatal lack of cooperation. What I describe is shaped by what Clarissa saw too, by what we told each other in the time of obsessive reexamination that followed: the aftermath, an appropriate term for what happened in a field waiting for its early summer mowing. The aftermath, the second crop, the growth promoted by that first cut in May.

I'm holding back, delaying the information. I'm lingering in the prior moment because it was a time when other outcomes were still possible; the convergence of six figures in a flat green space has a comforting geometry from the buzzard's perspective, the knowable, limited plane of the snooker table. The initial conditions, the force and the direction of the force, define all the consequent pathways, all the angles of collision and return, and the glow of the overhead light bathes the field, the baize and all its moving bodies, in reassuring clarity. I think that while we were still converging, before we made contact, we were in a state of mathematical grace. I linger on our dispositions, the relative distances and the compass point--because as far as these occurrences were concerned, this was the last time I understood anything clearly at all. What were we running toward? I don't think any of us would ever know fully. But superficially the answer was a balloon. Not the nominal space that encloses a cartoon character's speech or thought, or, by analogy, the kind that's driven by mere hot air. It was an enormous balloon filled with helium, that elemental gas forged from hydrogen in the nuclear furnace of the stars, first step along the way in the generation of multiplicity and variety of matter in the universe, including our selves and all our thoughts.

We were running toward a catastrophe, which itself was a kind of furnace in whose heat identities and fates would buckle into new shapes. At the base of the balloon was a basket in which there was a boy, and by the basket, clinging to a rope, was a man in need of help.

Even without the balloon the day would have been marked for memory, though in the most pleasurable of ways, for this was a reunion after a separation of six weeks, the longest Clarissa and I had spent apart in our seven years. On the way out to Heathrow I had made a detour into Covent Garden and found a semilegal place to park, near Carluccio's. I went in and put together a picnic whose centerpiece was a great ball of mozzarella, which the assistant fished out of an earthenware vat with a wooden claw. I also bought black olives, mixed salad, and focaccia. Then I hurried up Long Acre to Bertram Rota's to take delivery of Clarissa's birthday present. Apart from the flat and our car, it was the most expensive single item I had ever bought. The rarity of this little book seemed to give off a heat I could feel through the thick brown wrapping paper as I walked back up the street.

Forty minutes later I was scanning the screens for arrival information. The Boston flight had only just landed and I guessed I had a half-hour wait. If one ever wanted proof of Darwin's contention that the many expressions of emotion in humans are universal, genetically

inscribed, then a few minutes by the arrivals gate in Heathrow's Terminal Four should suffice. I saw the same joy, the same uncontrollable smile, in the faces of a Nigerian earth mama, a thin-lipped Scottish granny, and a pale, correct Japanese businessman as they wheeled their trolleys in and recognized a figure in the expectant crowd. Observing human variety can give pleasure, but so too can human sameness. I kept hearing the same sighing sound on a downward note, often breathed through a name as two people pressed forward to go into their embrace. Was it a major second or a minor third, or somewhere in between? Pa-pa! Yolanta! Ho-bi! Nz-e! There was also a rising note, crooned into the solemn, wary faces of babies by long-absent fathers or grandparents, cajoling, beseeching an immediate return of love. Han-nah? Tom-ee? Let me in!

The variety was in the private dramas: a father and a teenage son, Turkish perhaps, stood in a long silent clinch, forgiving each other, or mourning a loss, oblivious to the baggage trolleys jamming around them; identical twins, women in their fifties, greeted each other with clear distaste, just touching hands and kissing without making contact; a small American boy, hoisted onto the shoulders of a father he did not recognize, screamed to be put down, provoking a fit of temper in his tired mother.

But mostly it was smiles and hugs, and in thirty-five minutes I experienced more than fifty theatrical happy endings, each one with the appearance of being slightly less well acted than the one before, until I began to feel emotionally exhausted and suspected that even the children were being insincere. I was just wondering how convincing I myself could be now in greeting Clarissa when she tapped me on the shoulder, having missed me in the crowd and circled round. Immediately my detachment vanished, and I called out her name, in tune with all the rest.

Less than an hour later we were parked by a track that ran through beech woods in the Chiltern Hills, near Christmas Common. While Clarissa changed her shoes I loaded a backpack with our picnic. We set off down our path arm in arm, still elated by our reunion; what was familiar about her--the size and feel of her hand, the warmth and tranquillity in her voice, the Celt's pale skin and green eyes--was also novel, gleaming in an alien light, reminding me of our very first meetings and the months we spent falling in love. Or, I imagined, I was another man, my own sexual competitor, come to steal her from me. When I told her, she laughed and said I was the world's most complicated simpleton, and it was while we stopped to kiss and wondered aloud whether we should not have driven straight home to bed that we glimpsed through the fresh foliage the helium balloon drifting dreamily across the wooded valley to our west. Neither the man nor the boy was visible to us. I remember thinking, but not saying, that it was a precarious form of transport when the wind rather than the pilot set the course. Then I thought that perhaps this was the very nature of its attraction. And instantly the idea went out of my mind.

We went through College Wood toward Pishill, stopping to admire the new greenery on the beeches. Each leaf seemed to glow with an internal light. We talked about the purity of this color, the beech leaf in spring, and how looking at it cleared the mind. As we walked into the wood the wind began to get up and the branches creaked like rusted machinery. We knew this route well. This was surely the finest landscape within an hour of central London. I loved the pitch and roll of the fields and their scatterings of chalk and flint, and the paths that dipped across them to sink into the darkness of the beech stands, certain neglected, badly drained valleys where thick iridescent mosses covered the rotting tree trunks and where you occasionally glimpsed a muntjak blundering through the undergrowth.

For much of the time as we walked westward we were talking about Clarissa's research--John Keats dying in Rome in the house at the foot of the Spanish Steps where he lodged with his friend, Joseph Severn. Was it possible there were still three or four unpublished letters of Keats's in existence? Might one of them be addressed to Fanny Brawne? Clarissa had reason to think so and had spent part of a sabbatical term traveling around Spain and Portugal, visiting houses known to Fanny Brawne and to Keats's sister Fanny. Now she was back from Boston, where she had been working in the Houghton Library at Harvard, trying to trace correspondence from Severn's remote family connections. Keats's last known letter was written almost three months before he died, to his old friend Charles Brown. It's rather stately in tone and typical in throwing out, almost as parenthesis, a brilliant description of artistic creation: "the knowledge of contrast, feeling for light and shade, all that information (primitive

sense) necessary for a poem, are great enemies to the recovery of the stomach." It's the one with the famous farewell, so piercing in its reticence and courtesy: "I can scarcely bid you goodbye, even in a letter. I always made an awkward bow. God bless you! John Keats." But all the biographies agree that Keats was in remission from tuberculosis when he wrote this letter, and remained so for a further ten days. He visited the villa Borghese and strolled down the Corso. He listened with pleasure to Severn playing Haydn, he mischievously tipped his dinner out the window in protest at the quality of the cooking, and he even thought about starting a poem. If letters existed from this period, why would Severn or, more likely, Brown have wanted to suppress them? Clarissa thought she had found the answer in a couple of references in correspondence between distant relations of Brown's written in the 1840s, but she needed more evidence, different sources.

"He knew he'd never see Fanny again," Clarissa said. "He wrote to Brown and said that to see her name written would be more than he could bear. But he never stopped thinking about her. He was strong enough those days in December, and he loved her so much. It's easy to imagine him writing a letter he never intended to send."

I squeezed her hand and said nothing. I knew little about Keats or his poetry, but I thought it possible that in his hopeless situation, he would not have wanted to write precisely because he loved her so much. Lately I'd had the idea that Clarissa's interest in these hypothetical letters had something to do with our own situation, and with her conviction that love that did not find its expression in a letter was not perfect. In the months after we met and before we bought the apartment, she had written me some beauties, passionately abstract in their exploration of the ways our love was different from and superior to any that had ever existed. Perhaps that's the essence of a love letter, to celebrate the unique. I had tried to match hers, but all that sincerity would permit me were the facts, and they seemed miraculous enough to me: a beautiful woman loved and wanted to be loved by a large, clumsy, balding fellow who could hardly believe his luck.

We stopped to watch the buzzard as we were approaching Maidensgrove. The balloon may have recrossed our path while we were in the woods that cover the valleys around the nature reserve. By the early afternoon we were on the Ridgeway Path, walking north along the line of the escarpment. Then we struck out along one of those broad fingers of land that project westward from the Chilterns into the rich farmland below. Across the Vale of Oxford we could make out the outlines of the Cotswold Hills and beyond them, perhaps, the Brecon Beacons rising in a faint blue mass. Our plan had been to picnic right out on the end, where the view was best, but the wind was too strong by now. We went back across the field and sheltered among the oaks along the northern side. And it was because of these trees that we did not see the balloon's descent. Later I wondered why it had not been blown miles away. Later still I discovered that the wind at five hundred feet was not the same that day as the wind at ground level.

The Keats conversation faded as we unpacked our lunch. Clarissa pulled the bottle from the bag and held it by its base as she offered it to me. As I have said, the neck touched my palm as we heard the shout. It was a baritone, on a rising note of fear. It marked the beginning and, of course, an end. At that moment a chapter--no, a whole stage--of my life closed. Had I known, and had there been a spare second or two, I might have allowed myself a little nostalgia. We were seven years into a childless marriage of love. Clarissa Mellon was also in love with another man, but with his two hundredth birthday coming up, he was little trouble. In fact, he helped in the combative exchanges that were part of our equilibrium, our way of talking about work. We lived in an art deco apartment block in North London with a below-average share of worries--a money shortage for a year or so, an unsubstantiated cancer scare, the divorces and illnesses of friends, Clarissa's irritation with my occasional and manic bouts of dissatisfaction with my kind of work--but there was nothing that threatened our free and intimate existence.

What we saw when we stood from our picnic was this: a huge gray balloon, the size of a house, the shape of a teardrop, had come down in the field. The pilot must have been halfway out of the passenger basket as it touched the ground. His leg had become entangled in a rope that was attached to an anchor. Now, as the wind gusted and pushed and lifted the balloon toward the escarpment, he was being half dragged, half carried across the field. In the basket was a child, a boy of about ten. In a sudden lull, the man was on his feet, clutching at the



basket, or at the boy. Then there was another gust, and the pilot was on his back, bumping over the rough ground, trying to dig his feet in for purchase or lunging for the anchor behind him in order to secure it in the earth. Even if he had been able, he would not have dared disentangle himself from the anchor rope. He needed his weight to keep the balloon on the ground, and the wind could have snatched the rope from his hands.

As I ran I heard him shouting at the boy, urging him to leap clear of the basket. But the boy was tossed from one side to another as the balloon lurched across the field. He regained his balance and got a leg over the edge of the basket. The balloon rose and fell, thumping into a hummock, and the boy dropped backward out of sight. Then he was up again, arms stretched out toward the man and shouting something in return--words or inarticulate fear, I couldn't tell. I must have been a hundred yards away when the situation came under control. The wind had dropped; the man was on his feet, bending over the anchor as he drove it into the ground. He had unlooped the rope from his leg. For some reason--complacency, exhaustion, or simply because he was doing what he was told--the boy remained where he was. The towering balloon wavered and tilted and tugged, but the beast was tamed. I slowed my pace, though I did not stop. As the man straightened, he saw us--or at least the farmworkers and me--and he waved us on. He still needed help, but I was glad to slow to a brisk walk. The farm laborers were also walking now. One of them was coughing loudly. But the man with the car, John Logan, knew something we didn't and kept on running. As for Jed Parry, my view of him was blocked by the balloon that lay between us.

The wind renewed its rage in the treetops just before I felt its force on my back. Then it struck the balloon, which ceased its innocent, comical wagging and was suddenly stilled. Its only motion was a shimmer of strain that rippled out across its ridged surface as the contained energy accumulated. It broke free, the anchor flew up in a spray of dirt, and balloon and basket rose ten feet in the air. The boy was thrown back, out of sight. The pilot had the rope in his hands and was lifted two feet clear off the ground. If Logan had not reached him and taken hold of one of the many dangling lines, the balloon would have carried the boy away. Instead, both men were now being pulled across the field, and the farmworkers and I were running again.

I got there before them. When I took a rope, the basket was above head height. The boy inside it was screaming. Despite the wind, I caught the smell of urine. Jed Parry was on a rope seconds after me, and the two farmworkers, Joseph Lacey and Toby Greene, caught hold just after him. Greene was having a coughing fit, but he kept his grip. The pilot was shouting instructions at us, but too frantically, and no one was listening. He had been struggling too long, and now he was exhausted and emotionally out of control. With five of us on the lines the balloon was secured. We simply had to keep steady on our feet and pull hand over hand to bring the basket down, and this, despite whatever the pilot was shouting, was what we began to do.

By this time we were standing on the escarpment. The ground dropped away sharply at a gradient of about twenty-five percent and then leveled out into a gentle slope toward the bottom. In winter this is a favorite tobogganing spot for local kids. We were all talking at once. Two of us, myself and the motorist, wanted to walk the balloon away from the edge. Someone thought the priority was to get the boy out. Someone else was calling for the balloon to be pulled down so that we could anchor it firmly. I saw no contradiction, for we could be pulling the balloon down as we moved back into the field. But the second opinion was prevailing. The pilot had a fourth idea, but no one knew or cared what it was.

I should make something clear. There may have been a vague communality of purpose, but we were never a team. There was no chance, no time. Coincidences of time and place, a predisposition to help, had brought us together under the balloon. No one was in charge--or everyone was, and we were in a shouting match. The pilot, red-faced, bawling, and sweating, we ignored. Incompetence came off him like heat. But we were beginning to bawl our own instructions too. I know that if I had been uncontested leader, the tragedy would not have happened. Later I heard some of the others say the same thing about themselves. But there was not time, no opportunity for force of character to show. Any leader, any firm plan, would have been preferable to none. No human society, from the hunter-gatherer to the postindustrial, has come to the attention of anthropologists that did not have its leaders and the led; and no emergency was ever dealt with effectively by democratic process.

It was not so difficult to bring the passenger basket down low enough for us to see inside. We had a new problem. The boy was curled up on the floor. His arms covered his face and he was gripping his hair tightly. "What's his name?" we said to the red-faced man.

"Harry."

"Harry!" we shouted. "Come on, Harry. Harry! Take my hand, Harry. Get out of there, Harry!" But Harry curled up tighter. He flinched each time we said his name. Our words were like stones thrown down at his body. He was in paralysis of will, a state known as learned helplessness, often noted in laboratory animals subjected to unusual stress; all impulses to problem-solving disappear, all instinct for survival drains away. We pulled the basket down to the ground and managed to keep it there, and we were just leaning in to try and lift the boy out when the pilot shouldered us aside and attempted to climb in. He said later that he told us what he was trying to do. We heard nothing for our own shouting and swearing. What he was doing seemed ridiculous, but his intentions, it turned out, were completely sensible. He wanted to deflate the balloon by pulling a cord that was tangled in the basket.

"Yer great pillock!" Lacey shouted. "Help us reach the lad out."

I heard what was coming two seconds before it reached us. It was as though an express train were traversing the treetops, hurtling toward us. An airy, whining, whooshing sound grew to full volume in half a second. At the inquest, the Met office figures for wind speeds that day were part of the evidence, and there were some gusts, it was said, of seventy miles an hour. This must have been one, but before I let it reach us, let me freeze the frame--there's a security in stillness--to describe our circle.

To my right the ground dropped away. Immediately to my left was John Logan, a family doctor from Oxford, forty-two years old, married to a historian, with two children. He was not the youngest of our group, but he was the fittest. He played tennis to county level and belonged to a mountaineering club. He had done a stint with a mountain rescue team in the western Highlands. Logan was a mild, reticent man, apparently, otherwise he might have been able to force himself usefully on us as a leader. To his left was Joseph Lacey, sixty-three, farm laborer, odd-job man, captain of his local bowls team. He lived with his wife in Watlington, a small town at the foot of the escarpment. On his left was his mate, Toby Greene, fifty-eight, also a farm laborer, unmarried, living with his mother at Russell's Water. Both men worked for the Stonor estate. Greene was the one with the smoker's cough. Next around the circle, trying to get into the basket, was the pilot, James Gadd, fifty-five, an executive in a small advertising company who lived in Reading with his wife and one of their grownup children, who was mentally handicapped. At the inquest, Gadd was found to have breached half a dozen basic safety procedures, which the coroner listed tonelessly. Gadd's ballooning license was withdrawn. The boy in the basket was Harry Gadd, his grandson, ten years old, from Camberwell, London. Facing me, with the ground sloping away to his left, was Jed Parry. He was twenty-eight, unemployed, living on an inheritance in Hampstead.

This was the crew. As far as we were concerned, the pilot had abdicated his authority. We were breathless, excited, determined on our separate plans, while the boy was beyond participating in his own survival. He lay in a heap, blocking out the world with his forearms. Lacey, Greene, and I were attempting to fish him out, and now Gadd was climbing over the top of us. Logan and Parry were calling out their own suggestions. Gadd had placed one foot by his grandson's head and Greene was cussing him when it happened. A mighty fist socked the balloon in two rapid blows, one-two, the second more vicious than the first. And the first was vicious. It jerked Gadd right out of the basket onto the ground, and it lifted the balloon five feet or so, straight into the air. Gadd's considerable weight was removed from the equation. The rope ran through my grip, scorching my palms, but I managed to keep hold, with two feet of line spare. The others kept hold too. The basket was right above our heads now, and we stood with arms upraised like Sunday bell ringers. Into our amazed silence, before the shouting could resume, the second punch came and knocked the balloon up and westward. Suddenly we were treading the air with all our weight in the grip of our fists.

Those one or two ungrounded seconds occupy as much space in memory as might a long journey up an uncharted river. My first impulse was to hang on in order to keep the balloon weighted down. The child was incapable, and was about to be borne away. Two miles to the west were high-voltage power lines. A child alone and needing help. It was my duty to hang on, and I thought we would all do the same.

Almost simultaneous with the desire to stay on the rope and save the boy, barely a neuronal pulse later, came other thoughts, in which fear and instant calculations of logarithmic complexity were fused. We were rising, and the ground was dropping away as the balloon was pushed westward. I knew I had to get my legs and feet locked around the rope. But the end of the line barely reached below my waist, and my grip was slipping. My legs flailed in the empty air. Every fraction of a second that passed increased the drop, and the point must come when to let go would be impossible or fatal. And compared with me, Harry was safe, curled up in the basket. The balloon might well come down safely at the bottom of the hill. And perhaps my impulse to hang on was nothing more than a continuation of what I had been attempting moments before, simply a failure to adjust quickly.

And again, less than one adrenally incensed heartbeat later, another variable was added to the equation: someone let go, and the balloon and its hangers-on lurched upward another several feet.

I didn't know, nor have I ever discovered, who let go first. I'm not prepared to accept that it was me. But everyone claims not to have been first. What is certain is that if we had not broken ranks, our collective weight would have brought the balloon to earth a quarter of the way down the slope as the gust subsided a few seconds later. But as I've said, there was no team, there was no plan, no agreement to be broken. No failure. So can we accept that it was right, every man for himself? Were we all happy afterward that this was a reasonable course? We never had that comfort, for there was a deeper covenant, ancient and automatic, written in our nature. Cooperation--the basis of our earliest hunting successes, the force behind our evolving capacity for language, the glue of our social cohesion. Our misery in the aftermath was proof that we knew we had failed ourselves. But letting go was in our nature too. Selfishness is also written on our hearts. This is our mammalian conflict: what to give to the others and what to keep for yourself. Treading that line, keeping the others in check and being kept in check by them, is what we call morality. Hanging a few feet above the Chilterns escarpment, our crew enacted morality's ancient, irresolvable dilemma: us, or me.

Someone said me, and then there was nothing to be gained by saying us. Mostly, we are good when it makes sense. A good society is one that makes sense of being good. Suddenly, hanging there below the basket, we were a bad society, we were disintegrating. Suddenly the sensible choice was to look out for yourself. The child was not my child, and I was not going to die for it. The moment I glimpsed a body falling away--but whose?--and I felt the balloon lurch upward, the matter was settled; altruism had no place. Being good made no sense. I let go and fell, I reckon, about twelve feet I landed heavily on my side; I got away with a bruised thigh. Around me--before or after, I'm not so sure--bodies were thumping to the ground. Jed Parry was unhurt. Toby Greene broke his ankle. Joseph Lacey, the oldest, who had done his National Service with a paratroop regiment, did no more than wind himself.

By the time I got to my feet, the balloon was fifty yards away and one man was still dangling by his rope. In John Logan, husband, father, doctor, and mountain rescue worker, the flame of altruism must have burned a little stronger. It didn't need much. When four of us let go, the balloon, with six hundred pounds shed, must have surged upward. A delay of one second would have been enough to close his options. When I stood up and saw him, he was a hundred feet up and rising, just where the ground itself was falling. He wasn't struggling, he wasn't kicking or trying to claw his way up. He hung perfectly still along the line of the rope, all his energies concentrated in his weakening grip. He was already a tiny figure, almost black against the sky. There was no sight of the boy. The balloon and its basket lifted away and westward, and the smaller Logan became, the more terrible it was, so terrible it was funny, it was a stunt, a joke, a cartoon, and a frightened laugh heaved out of my chest. For this was preposterous, the kind of thing that happened to Bugs Bunny or Tom or Jerry, and for an instant I thought it wasn't true, and that only I could see right through the joke, and that my utter disbelief would set reality straight and see Dr. Logan safely to the ground.

I don't know whether the others were standing or sprawling. Toby Greene was probably doubled up over his ankle. But I do remember the silence into which I laughed. No exclamations, no shouted instructions as before. Mute helplessness. He was two hundred yards away now, and perhaps three hundred feet above the ground. Our silence was a kind of acceptance, a death warrant. Or it was horrified shame, because the wind had dropped, and barely stirred against our backs. He had been on the rope so long that I began to think he

might stay there until the balloon drifted down or the boy came to his senses and found the valve that released the gas, or until some beam, or god, or some other impossible cartoon thing, came and gathered him up. Even as I had that hope, we saw him slip down right to the end of the rope. And still he hung there. For two seconds, three, four. And then he let go. Even then, there was a fraction of time when he barely fell, and I still thought there was a chance that a freak physical law, a furious thermal, some phenomenon no more astonishing than the one we were witnessing, would intervene and bear him up. We watched him drop. You could see the acceleration. No forgiveness, no special dispensation for flesh, or bravery, or kindness. Only ruthless gravity. And from somewhere, perhaps from him, perhaps from some indifferent crow, a thin squawk cut through the stilled air. He fell as he had hung, a stiff little black stick. I've never seen such a terrible thing as that falling man.

### **Text 3 Captain Corelli's Mandolin by Louis de Bernieres**

**Captain Corelli's Mandolin by Louis de Bernieres** is a 1994<sup>1</sup> novel by the British writer Louis de Bernières, set on the Greek island of Cephalonia during the Italian and German occupation of the Second World War.

The main characters are Antonio Corelli, an Italian army captain, and Pelagia, the daughter of the local physician, Dr Iannis. An important event in the novel is the massacre of Italian troops by the Germans in September 1943—the Italian Acqui Division had refused to surrender and had fought the Germans for nine days before running out of ammunition. Some 1,500 Italian soldiers died in the fighting; 5,000 were massacred after surrendering, and the rest were shipped to Germany, of whom 3,000 drowned when the ship carrying them hit a mine.

CHAPTER ONE August 1940:

The Doctor and his Daughter Dr Iannis had enjoyed a satisfactory day in which none of his patients had died or got any worse. He had removed a tooth, attended the surprisingly easy birth of a lamb, and had performed a successful, though minor, operation.

He had been called to the house of old man Stamatis, who was suffering from earache. After gazing into the dark, hairy hole of the old man's ear, the doctor had cleaned up the inside of the ear using a matchstick, cotton wool and alcohol. He was aware that old man Stamatis had been deaf in that ear since childhood, but was nevertheless surprised when the tip of the matchstick touched something hard, something that had no excuse for its presence there. He took the old man to the window, where the light was better, and stared down into the ear again; then with his long matchstick he pushed the grey hairs to one side. There was something round inside. He scratched its surface and saw a pea. It was undoubtedly a pea; it was light green and slightly lined. Dr Iannis considered the problem for some moments, then requested a small fishhook and a light hammer.

The old man and his wife looked at each other with the single thought that the doctor must have lost his mind. 'What does this have to do with my earache?' asked Stamatis suspiciously. But the hook and hammer were fetched, and the doctor carefully placed the straightened hook into the hairy hole and raised the hammer. There was a terrible scream.

'Oh, oh, the fishhook will enter his brain. May God protect us!' cried the old wife, hiding her head in her hands.

This speech caused the doctor to pause and consider the possibility that the hammer might only drive the pea further into the ear. 'Change of plan,' he announced, and gave instructions that Stamatis should lie on his side till evening with his ear filled with warm water. He returned at six o'clock, hooked the softened pea successfully without the aid of a hammer, small or otherwise, and pulled it out. Stamatis clapped his hand to his ear and exclaimed, 'It's cold in there. My God, it's loud. I mean everything is loud!'

'Your deafness is cured,' announced Dr Iannis. 'A very satisfactory operation, I think.' Shortly afterwards he walked home with a fat chicken under each arm, and an ancient pea wrapped up in his handkerchief.

The doctor was now left with an entire evening in which to write his 'New History of Cephallonia', a project which he had begun at least a dozen times. He seemed unable to achieve objectivity and so had never been satisfied with the result. He sat down and wrote:

'The ancient, half-forgotten island of Cephallonia rises from the Ionian Sea, its rocks and red earth heavy with the heat of the sun and the weight of memory. In the stories of ancient Greece, the island played its part and had its gods - among them Poseidon, the god of the Sea and Apollo, the god of the Sun. Yes, once this island, with its brilliant light, its transparent waters, was an island filled with gods. But today Cephallonia has become a factory that breeds babies for export. There are more Cephallonians abroad or at sea than there are at home. There is no industry here that keeps families together, there is not enough agricultural land, there are not enough fish in the ocean. Our men go abroad and return here to die. The only good thing about it is that only the beautiful women find husbands among the men who are left, and consequently we have the most beautiful women in all of Greece...'

The doctor refilled his pipe and read this through. He listened to Pelagia moving about in the kitchen, preparing the evening meal. He read what he had written about beautiful women and remembered his wife, who had died from lung disease despite all his efforts and who had been as lovely as his daughter was now. 'This island betrays its own people,' he wrote, then seized the sheet of paper and threw it forcefully into the corner of the room. This was not good enough. Why could he not write like a writer of histories? Why could he not write without passion, without anger at the many betrayals and oppressions that the island had suffered in the past? He went outside for a breath of fresh air, returning indoors just in time to catch Pelagia's little goat eating his writings with a look of satisfaction on its face. He tore the paper from the animal's mouth, chased it outside, then marched into the kitchen. 'That unpleasant

animal of yours has eaten everything I've written tonight,' he exclaimed crossly. 'Any more incidents like this, and it'll end up on our plates.'

Pelagia looked up at her father and smiled. 'We'll be eating at about ten o'clock.'

'Did you hear what I said? No more goats inside the house.' Pelagia paused in her slicing of a tomato, brushed her hair from her face and replied, 'You're as fond of him as I am.'

Dr Iannis turned away, defeated. It was an annoying thing when a daughter spoke cheekily to him and reminded him of her mother at the same time. He returned to his table, took the title page, 'A New History of Cephallonia', and crossed out the first two words, writing instead, 'A Personal'. Now he could express his opinions as freely and unpleasantly as he wished.

When Pelagia heard from a neighbour that a strongman was giving a performance in the village square, she put away her broom and hurried to join the group of curious islanders that had gathered there. Megalo Velisarios, famous all over the islands of Ionia as one of the strongest men who had ever lived, was jumping up and down in time to the clapping of hands. On each of his outstretched arms sat a full-grown man. One of them held on tightly to his body while the other calmly smoked a cigarette. On Velisarios's head sat an anxious little girl of about six years, who was making matters more complicated by holding her hands firmly across his eyes.

'Lemoni!' he roared. 'Take your hands from my eyes and hold on to my hair, or I'll have to stop.'

Lemoni was too frightened to move her hands and Megalo Velisarios stopped. With one graceful movement he threw both men to their feet, lifted Lemoni from his head, threw her high into the air and caught her, kissed her dramatically upon the tip of her nose and set her down. Raising himself to his full height, he cried, 'I will lift anything that it takes three men to lift.'

The village priest, Father Arsenios, chose just this moment to walk with a self-important expression across the square on his way to the church. He lacked respect, not because he was completely round but because he was greedy for both money and food and was much too interested in women.

'Lift Father Arsenios,' someone called.

'Impossible,' called another.

Father Arsenios quite suddenly found himself grasped around his chest and lifted up on to the wall. He sat there speechless with surprise, his mouth opening and closing like a fish, and a guilty silence descended. Pelagia felt her heart overflow with pity for the poor man. She stepped forward and extended a hand to help him down, and the priest walked off without a word. Pelagia now spoke sharply to Velisarios. She was only seventeen but she was proud and knew her own mind, and her position as the doctor's daughter meant that even the men were forced to respect her. 'You shouldn't have done that, Velisarios,' she said. 'It was cruel and horrible. You must apologize.'

He looked down at her from his great height. This was without doubt a difficult situation. He thought of lifting her above his head. '

We want to see the cannon,' called an old lady, and others in the crowd echoed her.

Velisarios was immensely proud of his ability to raise the old Turkish cannon, which had the date 1739 on it and was much too heavy for anyone else to lift. He looked down at Pelagia and said, 'I'll apologize later, pretty one,' then announced, 'Good people of the village, to see the cannon, you must bring me your old nails, your broken pots, and the stones of the streets. Find me these things while I pack the gun with powder.'

People ran off eagerly in all directions to seek out these objects, and the cannon was soon prepared for the great explosion. 'I will fire the gun down the road,' said Velisarios when all was made ready. 'Everybody out of the way now.'

With a theatrical expression, the enormous man put a match to the cannon and lifted it to his waist. Silence fell. Breaths were held. There was a great roar as the old pots and nails burst from the gun... and then a long, low cry of pain. There was a moment of confusion and hesitation. People looked around at each other to see who had been hit, and Velisarios dropped his cannon and ran forward to a young man lying in the dust.

Mandras later thanked Velisarios for firing at him as he came round the bend at the entrance to the village. But at the time he greatly disliked being carried in the arms of the strongman to the doctor's house and he did not enjoy having a bent nail removed from his shoulder. What he thanked Megalo Velisarios for was that in the doctor's house he first set eyes on Pelagia. There was a moment when he became aware that he was being bandaged, that a young woman's long hair was brushing against his face. He opened his eyes and found himself gazing into a pair of anxious eyes. 'At that moment,' he liked to say later, 'I recognized my future wife.'

Dr Iannis put on a fresh shirt in readiness for his daily visit to the kapheneion, and stepped out into the yard. He was entirely unsurprised to see Mandras there, talking to Pelagia. The young fisherman's face went red when he saw him. 'Oh, good evening, doctor. I've brought you some fish,' he said.

The doctor twisted his mouth and pretended to sigh. 'Mandras,' he said, 'you know perfectly well that I know perfectly well that you have only come here to flirt with Pelagia.'

'Flirt?' repeated the young man, attempting to appear both innocent and shocked.

'Yes. Flirt. Yesterday you brought us another fish and then flirted with Pelagia for an hour. Well, you'd better get on with it.'

'Then I have your permission to talk to your daughter?'

Talk, talk, talk,' said Dr Iannis, waving his hands, and he set off for the kapheneion.

'Your dad's a funny fellow,' Mandras said to Pelagia.

'There's nothing wrong with my father,' she exclaimed, 'and anyone who says there is gets a broom in the face.' She pushed the broom at him and he caught it and twisted it out of her grasp. 'Give it back,' she said laughing.

'I'll give it back... in return for a kiss.' Pelagia gave the young man a flirtatious smile.

At the kapheneion, the doctor collected his tiny cup of coffee and sat next to Kokolios, as he always did. The coffee shop was full of the usual characters: the Communist Kokolios, with his splendid moustache; old man Stamatis; Father Arsenios, round and sweating. 'What's the news of the war?' Kokolios asked.

The doctor twisted the ends of his moustache and said, 'Germany is taking everything, the Italians are behaving like fools, the French have run away, the Americans have been playing ball games, the British have been drinking tea, the Russians have been sitting on their hands. Thank God we are out of it. Why don't we turn on the radio?'

'The large British radio in the corner of the room was switched on, its whistles reduced to a minimum by moving it around. Just then, Pelagia appeared at the door, gesturing urgently, greatly embarrassed by her presence in the menonly kapheneion. The doctor raised his eyes to the ceiling, put his pipe in his pocket and went to the door.

'What is it, girl?'

'It's Mandras, he's fallen out of a tree on to a pot.'

The doctor shook his head in disbelief and allowed his daughter to hurry him home. There, he made Mandras lie on the kitchen table while he removed tiny pieces of the broken pot from the young man's muscular back.

'You're a fool,' he told his patient.

'I know, doctor,' said Mandras, biting his lip as another piece came out.

'Stop being so polite. I know what you're planning. Are you going to ask her to marry you or not?'

'Not yet, doctor. Everyone says there's going to be a war, and I don't want to leave a widow. You know how people treat a widow.'

'Quite right,' said the doctor and wondered, as he wiped away a spot of blood, whether his body had ever been as beautiful as this young fool's.

It was several hours before he returned to the kapheneion. When he entered, he knew immediately that something was wrong. Warlike music came from the radio and Dr Iannis was astonished to see that the faces of several of the men were shiny with tears. 'What's going on?' he asked.

'Those Italian pigs have sunk one of our ships at Tinos. And they fired on the harbour there. It was full of people. On a holy day too.'

The doctor put his hands to his face and felt his own tears fighting to appear. He was possessed by a feeling of helpless anger. He did not stop to question whether war with Italy was inevitable. Although he did not believe in God he found himself saying, 'Come on boys, we're all going to the church.' The men of the kapheneion rose and followed him.