

Dearest Meredith,

I have heard nothing from you in many months now, and can only imagine that perhaps were somewhat upset by my last missive so I am writing now to apologise, dearest M, and beg your forgiveness. Unfortunately, the wedding never came off (even though it almost did, only a week away, in fact, when everything went wrong) and you may have noticed I have a new address altogether, as I think I mentioned I had moved out of our lovely old no. 3 and in with Mrs Gibson in anticipation of the Big Day, So then when it all blew up, I found myself without a home. And also without a job as of course I handed in my notice with the Barretts and unfortunately took the opportunity of telling Ms B a few home truths (and not before time) whereupon she abused me with the worst language you have ever heard in your life, and in front of the children. So I have been through a very trying and difficult time. I have found employment now at a factory which makes soap. It is horrible, smelly work and I am up to my elbows in horse fat every day, so apologies if this letter smells a bit funny but even though I wash and scrub and douse myself with my leftover Eau de Cologne, I still seem to go about smelling like a dead horse. It is badly paid too, but I mustn't complain as at least I have a job.

So you are probably wondering what happened to Hugh. Well, it all began when a note came in the mail addressed to me. There was no stamp and the note was anonymous. It said simply several words, with a diagram, which were so coarse and vulgar I can not possibly repeat them but basically it implied that Hugh engaged in acts of an unspeakable kind with other men down in the park near the railway station. As I say, it even included a crude drawing in case I was in any doubt as to the meaning of the words. I tried to laugh it off and took it to be the act of a jealous woman (I even wondered if you had been involved, dearest M, though of course that would have been impossible) but when I happened to mention it to Hugh in passing, his reaction was so odd that I suddenly feared it might actually be true. He blushed and stammered and became rather angry with me, and then when I thought about how he has never ever tried to do anything beyond a peck on the cheek (or maybe on the lips if I moved my face quickly) and a cuddle on the sofa (although it was mostly me doing the cuddling), I became sufficiently anxious as to actually go so far as to follow him to choir practice one evening, whereupon I learned that in fact he spent most of the evening loitering in the bushes. So of course, I had no choice but to confront his mother on the subject and earned for my efforts a harsh slap across the face which resulted in some bruising, and some foul language, the like of which I have never heard in my life. I rushed to my room in tears and hid there till Hugh came home and heard his mother telling him that I was unfit for marriage so I burst out of the room and gave them both what-for. I threw my possessions into a suitcase and ran out and spent the night on the street till the next day I sought refuge in the Salvation Army hostel, where I ended up staying for almost 6 weeks till I finally obtained this job at the Rexona factory. Now I have found a room in the house of an older couple – it is a small room but has a pleasant aspect – unfortunately the husband is always creeping around trying to spy on me, obviously hoping to catch me in a state of undress. I would almost be flattered that any many would be interested in me (I have grown horribly thin and

everybody says I look tired) except he is at least 75 and has a sizable goitre on his neck which makes me feel ill, especially as they insist we have our meals together. I can not stand it too much longer, I don't think. How I wish I had my old room back at no. 3 (you always said I had the best room, with its lovely bay window) but a married couple with a baby have moved into it, so I don't suppose that will become vacant for a long time yet.

Now I have some sad news to pass on regarding Pusspuss. He has disappeared and has not been sighted for some time. I know you will be upset, dear Meredith, but I do hope you won't be angry with me as I have been through hell and back and simply couldn't bear any more grief. I did the best I could at the time, and honestly believed that Laura would care for him as well as anybody, and had no idea that she had been found dead in her bed some weeks after the event and by then, Pusspuss was long gone. I am so sorry to be the bearer of such sad news for you, and only hope you can find it in your heart to forgive me.

I also have to say that even though he was not a manly man, I was very much in love with Hugh and had fallen under his spell – everything he said was like Gospel to me and he kept me very much under his thumb. People tell me now that it was as if I was sleepwalking and have now woken up (very much like you were with you-know-who, till you realised his true nature). But I have come to my senses now, and humbly ask if you will forgive me for my unfeeling behaviour and take me back once again as,

You loyal friend,

Myra

Xoxox

P.S. I don't suppose your Uncle would like the two of us to look after him, would he? I HATE HATE HATE Hobart at the moment and would like nothing better than to live on a lonely island. I am hoping you haven't moved yet to another posting? (There are too many gossips here. People have nothing better to do with their time than sit about and laugh at other's misfortunes, as you would well understand, dear Meredith.)

P.P.S. I have started up on your jumper again and should be finished it soon. If you write back and let me know you are still at the same place, I will post it to you. It is looking very nice. I'm sure you will be pleased. If you still think the lavender washed you out, I was thinking of putting a bit of coral around the collar (a crocheted border perhaps, with a bow) which could give you a bit of a lift. You look lovely in coral, dear M.