



Part Of The Family

Pamela Evans

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Chapter One

Behind the bow windows of the smart Kensington town house, with its white-painted stucco and shiny black railings, dinner was just beginning in the dining room. The menu was rather mundane this evening as the family was not entertaining – just Brown Windsor soup, best fillet of beef with a variety of vegetables, and baked plum pudding and custard.

‘Just think . . . in a few days’ time I shall no longer have to plough my lonely furrow as the sole female of the family,’ Meg Verne remarked lightly to her two sons as Dora, the maid, moved silently and nimbly among them with a silver ladle, pouring soup into china bowls.

‘You’re quite happy then, to be gaining a daughter, as they say?’ said Philip, her eldest, whose wedding was this coming Saturday.

‘You bet I am,’ replied Meg, whose full name was Marguerite. An attractive, vivacious woman in her late-thirties, she wore her tar-black hair waved softly back into a coiled knot, complementing her embroidered white blouse which was tucked into a floor-length skirt, her rigidly corseted shape curving dramatically beneath them. ‘At least it’ll help to create more of a balance in this male-dominated family.’

‘I’m glad you’re pleased . . . you hear such tales about mothers and daughters-in-law, don’t you?’ remarked Philip, who was tall with an athletic build and the same striking dark looks as his mother. ‘Sometimes there’s all out war between them, apparently.’

‘Yes, I gather some women have a problem letting go of their sons and I’ll probably shed a few tears at the church when I actually . . . er . . . hand you over to Emily,’ confessed Meg whose busy life wasn’t conducive to maternal possessiveness. ‘It is the end of an era, after all, but it’s the natural order of things . . . and I’m very fond of her.’

‘I should think you’ll be jolly glad to get rid of him, won’t you, Mother?’ teased younger brother Neville, who favoured the paternal genes and was as fair as his brother was dark.

‘Don’t listen to him, Philip,’ she protested mildly, her sloe eyes hinting at a smile. ‘I’ll miss you around the house, of course, but it isn’t as if you’re going far. You’ll only be around the corner in Cedar Square.’ She frowned, unfolding her starched white napkin and spreading it over her lap. ‘Not that I’ll make a habit of descending on you uninvited, naturally.’

‘Don’t be silly. You’ll be welcome at any time,’ Philip assured her.

‘Thank you, dear,’ she said graciously, though made a mental note to treat any such open invitation with caution.

‘You must be mad to want to get married so young,’ interrupted Neville, nibbling his bread roll as Dora served him.

‘I’m not that young.’

‘Good grief, you’re only two years older than I am.’

‘Men are later to mature than women, so they say,’ said Meg, ‘and some men may well be too young at twenty-two to

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settle down. But Philip knows his own mind.'

'A girl like Emily could talk a chap into anything,' said Neville, taking up his spoon as Dora moved away. 'She's got everything. She's beautiful, clever, and one of the snappiest dressers in London.'

'Sounds like you've got designs on her yourself,' laughed Philip. Speckled sunlight shafted through the lace curtains between the red velvet drapes and caught his black wavy hair.

They sat in a resplendent room with a vast expanse of polished floor. The wood panelling along one wall was hung with tapestries, the floral wallpaper offset a variety of paintings and wall plates, and the glossy dark wood furniture reflected light and movement in its gleaming surfaces. The air was fragrant with good food, polish, clean linen and the plump velvet-like blooms set amid lustrous green leaves in a blaze of colour inside the crystal rosebowl on the sideboard.

'You're quite safe, don't worry,' laughed Neville. 'She's gorgeous but definitely the marrying kind and that isn't on my agenda . . . and not likely to be for ages yet.' He grinned wickedly. 'Still, I expect you'll have a mistress tucked away before very long, eh, Phil?'

'That's a bit crass, isn't it, when a chap's about to celebrate his nuptials?' said his brother evenly.

'It's what married men do.'

'Oh, really Neville! It isn't clever to make such rash, uninformed generalisations,' his mother interrupted with asperity. If it had been her younger son about to embark upon matrimony, she really would be worried. As likeable as he was, even her biased maternal eye could detect a definite lack of maturity. Neville didn't have a fraction of his brother's

common sense. But then Philip was mature beyond his years; he'd always been the serious one. While he tended to be a little too conscientious and responsible, Neville just coasted through life without a care in the world. 'So let's have no more of that sort of talk in this house, if you please.'

'As you wish, Mother,' conceded Neville breezily.

She turned to Philip. 'Well, I suppose this will be the last time I shall have the job of seeing you off to anything before Emily takes over. So are you all ready for Saturday? You have the ring, you've collected your suit from the tailor . . .'

'Don't worry, everything's under control,' he assured her with an affectionate grin. His mother was a really good sort. He'd always been close to her, unlike his father with whom he'd never had any kind of rapport.

'At least I can let you go with an easy mind,' she said. 'Emily will probably make a better job of looking after you than I ever have.'

The daughter of a partner in a stockbroking firm with whom Meg's husband, Humphrey, had been at school, the bride-to-be was entirely suitable to join the Verne family. She and Philip had first met at the wedding of a family friend and the parents on both sides had been delighted when they'd hit it off. As Neville had just said, Emily was beautiful, clever and well turned out. The ideal wife for Philip, in fact. Meg's only slight reservation concerned the young woman's strange moods – times when she became extremely odd and very melancholic. Still, everyone had their little idiosyncrasies, she thought, and Philip didn't seem to mind. As he quite rightly pointed out, there were far worse faults than moodiness.

They were interrupted by the maid. 'Excuse me, madam,



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but will the master be eating at home this evening?’

Meg thought about this for a moment. ‘Yes, Dora, but I’m not quite sure what time he’ll be in. I shouldn’t think he’ll be too long.’

‘Right you are, madam,’ said the girl and walked neatly from the room, long black skirts rustling around her feet.

‘Did your father say why he was staying late at the factory?’ Meg asked, looking from one to the other of her sons.

‘No, he just said to tell you we were to start dinner without him,’ Philip informed her. ‘He had someone with him in his office when we left. An important customer, I think.’

‘Well, if he’s too late getting home, I shan’t see him before I go out,’ she murmured almost to herself.

‘Going anywhere nice?’ enquired Neville, out of duty rather than interest. He was far too engrossed in his own social life to be curious about his mother’s.

‘Just to visit a friend, dear,’ she said casually.

‘Oh, right,’ said Neville, whose thoughts had already moved on to his own arrangements for the evening. He and a group of friends were going to a newly opened nightclub in the West End where they played the new ragtime music and you could dance the ‘Bunny Hug’ and the ‘Turkey Trot’ until the small hours.

Unnoticed by Neville, a look had passed between Philip and his mother as she replied to Neville’s question, a slight nuance of her expression answering the query in Philip’s eyes.

Meg was a woman with a large appetite for altruism, a genuine philanthropist who thrived on working for the common good. Always happiest in the thick of things, she didn’t limit her contribution to committees for worthy causes but was

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personally involved in raising money for such lifelines as soup kitchens, shelters for the homeless and outings for poor families.

She unashamedly used her middle-class position to this end, organising social events to raise funds and often losing popularity with prosperous companions who preferred to shut their eyes to the poor and needy or blame them for their own poverty. She hoped she wasn't a glory-seeking do-gooder. She certainly tried not to be. Her motivation came from a genuine need to redress the balance in appreciation for the blessings that had been bestowed so liberally on herself and her family.

To those less fortunate, the Verne family must seem to be unfairly steeped in privilege, she was well aware. For as well as enjoying the considerable rewards of a successful family business, some accident of nature had tipped the biological scales in their favour and made them all exceptionally good-looking – a combination guaranteed, understandably, to inspire jealousy.

Although basically honest, there was one area of Meg's life in which she considered subterfuge to be a necessary expedient. If Humphrey knew what she really got up to when he thought she was out visiting friends, he'd demand that she withdraw her support, something that her belief in the cause ruled out.

Only Philip knew her secret. The dear boy was that rare breed of man who was in sympathy with the fight for women's suffrage. But then he'd always had a feeling for the oppressed – which womankind certainly was in this so-called modern age of 1910. It was incredible to someone of Meg's enlightened opinions that such a large proportion of the population was still blind to the injustice of depriving women of the right to vote.

She was recalled to the present by the appearance of a tall,

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distinguished man with steely grey eyes and fair hair, turning white around the hairline. At forty-five, Humphrey Verne was still in excellent shape and cut an impressive figure in his dark business suit.

‘Sorry I’m late, my dear,’ he said, slipping into his place at the head of the table and addressing his wife at the other end. ‘I was held up by an important customer.’

‘That’s all right, Humphrey.’ She considered him for a moment. ‘You’re looking very pleased with yourself this evening. Has something nice happened?’

‘It certainly has! Royal patronage for the company to be precise,’ he said, beaming as Dora appeared with perfect timing to serve him. ‘We’ve been asked by a firm of royal couturiers to make the silk that will be used for some of the Coronation robes next year.’

‘Oh . . . how exciting,’ exclaimed his wife with enthusiasm.

‘Yes, indeed,’ he said, spreading his napkin over his lap.

‘Will it be the material that will be used for the actual Coronation robes that King George and Queen Mary will be wearing at the ceremony?’ she asked.

‘No, that’s being manufactured by a firm of silk weavers in Essex,’ he explained, his face unusually flushed. ‘We’re to make the silk to be used for the clothes that will be worn by some of the other royal guests.’

‘Well done, Humphrey.’ She turned to her sons who had both gone to work in the family silk-weaving business with their father after leaving boarding school. ‘Congratulations to you all . . . it’s a tremendous honour.’

‘It’ll certainly be a boost for the firm,’ said Philip, who was the production manager.

‘Indeed it will,’ agreed Neville, managing to inject a note of dutiful zeal into his tone. Work was far too dull for such a committed hedonist and he made an art form of avoiding it though officially supposed to be learning the business.

‘A few more silk-weaving firms could do with that sort of patronage,’ said Philip who was very concerned about the general state of the British silk-weaving trade which had been declining steadily since about the second half of the last century. The main reason for this worrying state of affairs was the fact that French woven silks were allowed into Britain free of duty, while British silks exported to France were subject to a duty of thirty per cent. With cheaper French silks flooding into the country, many British manufacturers found it hard to compete.

‘Never mind about other firms,’ snapped Humphrey, frowning darkly at his son. ‘This is our moment of glory.’

‘I’m not denying it,’ said Philip. ‘But we’re a large, old established company, we’ll survive even without this . . . unlike some of the smaller struggling silk mills.’

‘Huh! I suppose you’d rather we turn the job down and recommend it goes to a more needy firm,’ said Humphrey sarcastically, over-reacting as usual to anything Philip said.

‘Of course not,’ he retorted. ‘I was merely making an observation. We all know that if the government doesn’t do something about duty free imports, silk-weaving will die out altogether in Britain eventually.’

‘That’s a gross exaggeration,’ said Humphrey sternly, shooting his eldest son a withering glare. ‘Trust you to spoil the good news by looking on the black side.’

‘You know how strongly Philip feels about cheap foreign

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silks pouring on to the market, dear,' put in Meg in an effort to dampen the animosity that flared up at the slightest provocation between these two. If only Humphrey would try not to make his feelings for Philip so obvious.

'None of us is happy about it but this is hardly the moment . . .'

'All right, Father,' interjected Philip in a conciliatory manner to stop this escalating into a major row which would upset everyone. He was angry with himself for letting his father's hostility affect him. After a lifetime of being on the receiving end of it, he really ought to have total immunity. 'My timing wasn't very good. I didn't mean to pour cold water on your exciting news. I'm sorry.'

'Oh, right. Apology accepted,' grunted Humphrey with thinly veiled reluctance. He thanked the maid for his soup, and, as though forcing an interest, said to Philip, 'So . . . are you all set for the big day on Saturday?'

'Yes, all ready.'

'That's the stuff.' He turned his attention to Neville. 'How about you, young man, are you going to make a good job of being his best man?'

'Rather,' said Neville.

Only the totally insensitive could fail to notice Humphrey's different attitude towards his younger son. Philip had accepted long ago that Neville was the apple of their father's eye. Philip didn't mind that. What did upset him was the fact that he himself felt no sort of bond with his father at all. Despite his very best endeavours to penetrate the barrier between them, Humphrey remained cold and aloof.

Fortunately, it hadn't caused trouble between himself and

Neville. His brother was a bit of a chump at times but he didn't have a malicious bone in his body. And, credit to him, he never tried to capitalise on their father's favouritism. In fact, Philip got the impression that he was rather embarrassed by it.

Inevitably, the conversation drifted back to the line of business in which the Verne family had been involved since the seventeenth century. At that time Humphrey's Huguenot ancestors had fled to England from France, after persecution in their own country, and set up in business in London's Spitalfields.

Eventually most of the silk community in East London had begun to move out of the capital in search of cheaper premises, many of them settling in Essex. Philip's grandfather, however, had considered it beneficial to stay in London and had set up a factory in a poor area of North Kensington. That shabby district was vastly different to fashionable South Kensington where Humphrey and his family now lived in leafy Eden Crescent, even though the two areas were geographically adjacent. Humphrey Verne had taken over the firm from his father when Philip was just a small boy.

'The workers will be tickled pink about the royal order too,' Meg was saying. 'Even apart from the glory, it will make them feel more secure in their jobs.'

'They're going to have to work damned hard though,' pronounced Humphrey firmly, 'because we'll still have our regular customers to please.'

'Our workers won't object to that. In the majority they're a fairly diligent lot,' began Philip.

'They get good treatment from us, that's why,' interrupted Humphrey. 'You look after your workers and they'll pay you

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back in loyalty. The reason we don't suffer from the discontent that is so common lately among the working classes is because we give our people a fair deal.'

'Exactly,' agreed Philip. 'As I was about to say, they're a good crowd . . . apart from a few trouble makers.'

'Some people will always find an excuse to make trouble,' growled Humphrey.

'A few certainly will,' agreed Philip, thinking of one of their workers in particular who was a very disruptive influence indeed.

'I reckon I must be the only woman in London who'll be mother to both the bride and the groom at the same wedding,' declared Polly Carter that same evening to her family who were gathered around the scrubbed wooden table in the kitchen of their small rented house in North Kensington for a meal of faggots and pease pudding, bread and margarine and plenty of strong tea.

'How's that then, Ma?' asked her eldest son, Stan, who was the bridegroom in question.

'Wake up, Stan, you're slow on the uptake tonight,' said Lizzie Smith who was to marry him this coming Saturday. 'Because your mum's been a mother to me as well as you since my parents died, of course.'

'Oh, yeah,' he said absently, brushing an insistent bluebottle away from his face with an enormous hand. 'I wasn't really payin' attention. I've other things on my mind.'

'Such as?' Lizzie wanted to know, greenish-brown eyes shining with interest.

'Well . . . I was talking to the maintenance man on the way out of the factory tonight. Apparently he was workin' in the

corridor outside the guvnor's office this afternoon, fixing the gaslight.' He took a large swallow of tea, vivid blue eyes peering at them all over the rim of the mug. 'Anyway, he reckons he heard someone in there talking to the boss about an order for material for the royals for the Coronation next year.'

'Ooh, how terrific!' enthused the exuberant Lizzie, concealing her disappointment that her fiance was not sharing her happy anticipation of their forthcoming wedding which currently filled her thoughts.

'I dunno so much about that,' said Stan, a sudden burst of fury suffusing his face so that it matched his wild red hair. 'There'll be plenty of slave-driving goin' on, you can bet your life on it. Well, I won't have it! I'll get everyone out on strike if they try to pull a fast one. They'll get a good price on this job, so we'll have to make sure they give us a decent rate and pay overtime for those people who aren't on piece work: labourers, overlookers and so on.'

'It's quite an honour for the firm though, isn't it?' remarked Lizzie.

'They'll soon turn honour into dough to line their pockets,' declared Stan hotly. 'Ruddy capitalists with their posh house in the south of the borough. Honestly, they might as well be on another planet, it's so different there from the conditions their workers have to put up with round here.'

'Oh, no, don't start all that again, Stan,' protested Lizzie for there was no stopping him once he got on to politics and his precious socialism. 'The Vernes'll see to it that we do all right out of this royal job.'

'They better had too or I'll be on to the union sharpish!'

'Calm down,' said brother Bobby, an easy-going type who

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could never understand why Stan expended so much energy in anger about things that might never happen. ‘The Vernes are all right as guvnors go.’

‘Stan’s right,’ grunted Luke, the most moody and taciturn of the four Carter brothers. ‘They’ll want blood out of us to meet this order.’

‘I don’t think the Vernes are bad to work for,’ said the youngest Carter, seventeen-year-old Roy, a gentle, thoughtful boy who usually managed to see the best in everyone.

‘You’re lucky to have someone like Stan to worry about his workmates, and he’s right to be concerned that you get your fair dues out of this royal job,’ said Polly, turning to her husband and adding, ‘Aint that right, Will?’

Deeply immersed in thoughts of a few extra quid to be made in addition to what he earned as a labourer on the railway, by selling some dodgy gear for a bloke he’d met in a pub, the man who went under the misnomer of ‘head-of-the-house’ had to be nudged and have the question repeated.

‘Oh, yeah, luv, whatever you say,’ he replied, because the only route to a comfortable life for him was to agree with his wife regardless of his true opinions. Polly was a good woman but a very domineering one who took a dim view of opposition from anyone, and simply wouldn’t tolerate it from her nearest and dearest. Will didn’t really object – he needed someone like her beside him to take control. Raising four sons needed constant strength of character and the ability to exert discipline. Since Polly outshone him in both departments he was happy to stand aside and let her rule the roost.

‘Well, speaking personally,’ said Lizzie, changing the subject rather than disagree with the woman to whom she owed

so much, 'I'm going to have better things to do with my time while I'm away on honeymoon than to worry about what's going on at the factory!'

Their raucous laughter brought colour to her cheeks. 'Honestly, you lot have one track minds,' she said, rolling her eyes and tutting, her face bright with lighthearted indignance.

'Yeah, stop embarrassing the girl,' said Bobby who was her favourite among her future brothers-in-law. He and Lizzie were both eighteen and as children had rarely been apart. It had been the awe-inspiring Stan, however, with his broad shoulders and charismatic personality, who had stolen Lizzie's heart as she entered her teens.

'All taken in good fun though, eh, Liz?' said Will.

'There's not much choice in this house, is there?' she grinned. A slim, pretty girl with straight, corn-coloured hair, she was wearing a cotton blouse and long floral skirt that made her perspire and wonder why shorter clothes couldn't be worn by women in summer. And as for her damned corsets, they were about as comfortable to wear as concrete and ought to be abolished in her opinion.

'Aren't you going to stand up for your future wife then, Stan?' suggested Roy lightheartedly. Being the youngest of this exuberant crowd, he was usually on the receiving end of teasing and family jokes.

'If she can't defend herself against you lot by now, she's making a mistake in marrying me,' laughed Stan, who loved Lizzie but in rather a vague sort of way. Romance, and everything else for that matter, took second place to the role of champion of the working classes which was becoming almost an obsession with him.



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‘Don’t worry, Lizzie, you and me’ll stick together against all these men,’ said Polly with affectionate levity. ‘We’re completely outnumbered. Gawd knows what I’d have done if you hadn’t come into the family to give me a bit of feminine support.’

Until ten years ago Lizzie had lived next door to the Carters in scruffy Thorn Street. Aunt Polly, as she’d always called her then, had been her mother’s closest friend. When Lizzie had been orphaned by the influenza epidemic of 1900 that had claimed so many lives, Polly and Will had taken her in to save her from an institution. As she’d grown up, Lizzie had come to realise how hard it must have been for them to have coped with another mouth to feed. The boys had been financially dependent on their parents then so money had been short.

Things were better now in that respect. Lizzie and all four Carter brothers worked at Verne’s Silk Mill, and handed over money for their keep to Polly every Friday. But Lizzie tried never to forget her debt to them, especially Polly whose kindness had been her salvation in those dark days. The Carter family had made a bewildered little girl feel as though she belonged with them from that very first moment, the four boys cramming into one bedroom without complaint so she could have the tiny attic room to sleep in.

Surrounded by this warm and caring atmosphere, the tragedy had gradually receded and she’d become the daughter Polly had always wanted. On Saturday she would legally become a Carter. This meant a lot to her for she loved them all dearly, with the exception of Luke.

Mentally distancing herself from the strident voices as they

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all fought to be heard, she glanced around the familiar room. Cooking smells permeated everything and were tinged with a hint of carbolic. A steamy emanation from the local laundry drifted in on the sooty air through the open sash windows, across which yellowing net curtains guarded the family's privacy.

It was a long room with a hideous black-leaded range at one end and a chipped dresser at the other. The dresser was a homely muddle of cheap ornaments, old newspapers, socks for darning, ash trays, cigarettes, matches and various other incidentals of everyday living. There was a sink with a single water tap and a tin bath hanging on a nail on the wall. The latter was taken down on family bathnight, filled with water heated in pans on the range and used in front of it by them all in turn. The rest of the house comprised a parlour, two bedrooms and an attic room. The lavatory was in the back yard.

In meditative mood, Lizzie observed her surrogate family. First there was Polly, a warmhearted but redoubtable lady of large proportions with bright red hair which sprang from its bun at the back of her neck and flew about in wispy curls. She had a shiny round face and bright blue eyes that were startling against her white freckled skin. She was wearing a well-worn white blouse with the sleeves rolled up and a black skirt with a pinafore tied around the waist. Her age was no secret – they all knew she would be forty next year – the boys enjoyed teasing her about it.

Then there was Stan who was the light of Lizzie's life. At twenty-one he was a great bear of a man, tall and muscular with the same colouring as his mother. He was not handsome

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in the classical way – his face was too chunky, being square and solid-jawed with a snub nose and broad mouth – but he had a raw magnetism that Lizzie found irresistible and she loved every bit of him from the top of his thick springy hair to his size eleven feet.

Sitting next to Stan was Roy, still a spotty pubescent with endless limbs and a bristly thatch of flame-coloured hair.

Bobby was, without doubt, the good-looking one of the family. He had the same colouring as his father as well as his clear-cut features, light brown laughing eyes and mop of chestnut hair. Bobby's dazzling smile, sportsman's build and gift of the gab made him well fancied by the girls at the factory even though he was going out on a regular basis with Lizzie's best friend, June.

A year younger than Stan was Luke, a saturnine individual and the only member of the family with whom Lizzie wasn't at ease. He had mousy brown hair and piercing grey eyes that unnerved her. Even now that she was an adult, she tried never to be alone with him, the memory of his cruel childish tricks still too vivid. She shivered at the recollection of the assortment of creatures he'd used to persecute her. Huge black spiders had been slipped down her back to crawl wildly among her underclothes. Slugs and earthworms had greeted her when she'd got into bed. Every so often a dead mouse would be in her shoe when she'd put her foot into it. He'd even placed a poor deceased sparrow between her bedsheets once.

Then there had been that awful time he'd tied her to the iron bedstead by her hair and stolen her knickers. She could still feel the agony of her locks pulling against her scalp as she

struggled to get free, but even more painful was the humiliation of having her privacy so cruelly violated.

Although he'd made his dislike of her obvious through these heinous acts, he'd never actually told her why he resented her being in their family, and she'd never told anyone what he did to her when no one else was around. She'd longed to snitch on him but to do so would have seemed like a betrayal of the others, somehow, his being a part of their family and their being so good to her. Thankfully he'd eventually grown out of such puerile pranks, but she'd never quite been able to lose her fear of him.

Now her attention was drawn by the wedding talk.

'What are the arrangements for Saturday, then?' Will was asking. 'I mean, Stan and Lizzie can't both go to the church from here, can they? It wouldn't be right.'

'I've told you a dozen times, Will Carter,' said Polly with mild impatience, 'Stan's staying with his mate, Arthur Brown, on Friday night and going straight to the church from his place. It's unlucky for the bride and groom to see each other the night before the wedding anyway. Don't you ever listen?'

'Course I do,' he retorted. 'But I can't be expected to remember everythin' that's said in this house since you lot never stop jabbering!'

The meal was over and they were lingering over a final cup of tea amid clouds of cigarette smoke when there was a knock at the front door.

'I'll go,' offered Lizzie. 'It'll probably be June.'

'Will she have come to see you or Bobby?' Polly idly wondered.

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‘Me, I should think,’ said Lizzie, scraping her chair back on the quarry-tiled floor, and rising. ‘She said she’d probably pop over for a chat about Saturday. You know, with her being my bridesmaid.’

‘It isn’t my night to see June anyway,’ declared Bobby, on the defensive. ‘I’m going out with me mates in a minute.’

‘I don’t know what you and June find to talk about, Lizzie,’ remarked Stan in a jovial manner. ‘You walk to and from work together, you eat your sandwiches at dinner-time together, and you still find plenty to rabbit about of an evenin’.’

‘That’s what friends do, isn’t it? Anyway, I’ve never seen you and Arthur lost for words.’

‘You can chatter till your teeth fall out for all I care,’ he said casually. ‘I’m off out to a party meeting when I’ve finished this cuppa tea anyway.’

‘Again?’ queried Lizzie lightly.

‘Yes, again.’

‘Some girls have other women as rivals,’ she said jokingly. ‘With me it’s politics.’

‘Not complainin’, are you?’ grinned Stan, leaping up and blocking her way as she went to open the kitchen door to the hall. He swept her into his arms and kissed her thoroughly while the family observed them matter-of-factly.

‘No, Stan, I’m not complaining,’ said Lizzie breathlessly when he released her, then she hurried from the room to answer the door.

‘Ah, it does you good to see ’em together like that, dunnit?’ said Polly.

‘I don’t know so much about that. I think it’ll be a bloomin’ good job when you two are married and in your own place,’

the long-suffering Will remarked mildly to Stan. 'All this canoodling about the house gets on my nerves. If it isn't you and Lizzie, it's Bobby and that girl of his.'

'Go on! You'll miss us when we move out, Dad,' said Stan with a booming laugh. 'We keep you young and remind you of what you and Mum used to get up to.'

Strange how children always think in the past tense as regards parents and that sort of thing, thought Polly, as she and Will exchanged a private look.

June lived with her family in a house opposite the Carters' in Thorn Street, and had been Lizzie's soulmate ever since either of them could remember. A short, dark-eyed girl with a plump round face and a mass of black hair, she was only slightly less outgoing than Lizzie.

'Have you heard the news?' she burst out excitedly as she and Lizzie trekked down the hall to the nucleus of the house where the Carter family still sat.

'What news is that?'

'Well, there's a rumour going around that we're gonna be working on cloth for the royals . . . for the Coronation next year,' June informed her brightly.

'Oh, yeah, Stan's heard something about that too.'

'Must be true then. I mean, with him being in the know with the union and that.'

'He got it from the maintenance man, apparently.'

'Oh. Well, I expect they'll tell us officially tomorrow.'

'Course they will . . . if it's true,' agreed Lizzie as they approached the kitchen door. 'But please, June, can we talk about my wedding on Saturday? It *is* supposed to be the most



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important day of my life, after all. Anyway, we'll have quite enough of work tomorrow.'

'Ugh, don't remind me! Wedding talk is much more fun.'

In human society, family (from Latin: familia) is a group of people related either by consanguinity (by recognized birth) or affinity (by marriage or other relationship). The purpose of families is to maintain the well-being of its members and of society. Ideally, families would offer predictability, structure, and safety as members mature and participate in the community. In most societies, it is within families that children acquire socialization for life outside the family. Additionally, as the Would Theyâ€™re part of family be correct? No - not at all. Not in this context. The family is a concept: typically the phrase is only used as above or by the senior adults of a household (lesser adults and children would usually refer to "my family") but includes all those related by blood and marriage in the household. When I say, "The family are as bellicose as ever." or "The family is well but I have a cold" I am referring to my wife and two sons. Theyâ€™re part of the family so they want them to look nice. = Theyâ€™re part of the family [that their owner is also pa...Â Theyâ€™re part of their family so they want them to look nice."? On the other hand, you can just read the explanation of why we say, "the family" and what we mean by it. S. Smailer. At Part of the Family Pet Memorial Centre, our caring and professional Pet-Loss Specialists have the unique opportunity to help families celebrate the lives of their pets. We are here to help you bring closure and to celebrate the meaning and joy that your pet brought to your life. We understand the heartache of the loss of a pet.