

D O W N   W E S T

or

W H O S E   L I T T L E   B A B Y   A R E   Y O U ?

a play for television by Pamela Gems

CAST

IMOGEN

JEFF

DOLLY

TERRY

SAMANTHA

MRS. BELLAMY

MAN IN TRAIN

ANGELO

MAX

SARA

CHIEF

Submitted by:

Pamela Gems,  
~~MOONLIEA HOUSE,~~  
Ducie Cottage,  
Bembridge,  
Isle of Wight.

BEM 2835 & BAY 0196

DOWN WEST

or

WHOSE LITTLE BABY ARE YOU?

We see JEFF'S head and shoulders. He gives IMOGEN a perfunctory conjugal hug, hauls himself off her and pads off to the bathroom. IMOGEN, tired at the prospect of the day, and not having been in the mood anyway, turns over with a groan, her heavy hair obscuring her face. She blinks up blearily for a second, observing her husband.

IMOGEN: (VOICE OVER) Now he'll get dressed before washing!  
Oh!

Thwack. A huge, nappied bottom is thrust upon her. The baby wails.

MATTHEW: (EIGHT, STURDY AND LIQUID-EYED ... THE MIDDLE ONE)  
He's driving me MAD!

He stumps off.

IMOGEN: Matt ... get him off me ... God ...  
get him off!

The baby claws about.

MATTHEW: (FURIOUS) I don't want him in my room. He  
smells of piss and eats my drawings!

His face begins to crumple with self-pity. With a great effort IMOGEN hauls herself awake and rears up irritably from the crumpled bed.

IMOGEN: Matt ... just take him to Daddy will  
you!

JEFF: (OFF .. A ROAR) No!!

The baby, having slid off the low bed, has found JEFF'S wallet. He takes everything out and eats a five pound note. IMOGEN lies back, listening to MATT'S whine as he bangs on the bathroom door, slams and yells. JEFF is trying to sing "Must you Dance ... every Dance ... with the Same Partner Agai-in". His singing is terrible, really terrible. IMOGEN winces and grimaces. She relaxes consciously, breathing regularly and deeply. There is a spider on the ceiling. She watches fascinated as it gets a fly. She turns over for a last doze.

JOE: (The oldest boy, fourteen ... his head around the door)  
Mum ... tie!

IMOGEN: (Bleary) Why?

JOE: (Irritable) Where?

IMOGEN: What? Oh muck off and find it yourself.

To MATT, who is hanging in the doorway.

Matt, go and get Washed!

MATT: I can't. SHE'S in the bathroom.

HE APPROACHES THE BED, GIVING THE BABY A KICK ON THE WAY.

MATT: I love you.

IMOGEN: I know. Now go and wash ... hands,  
face, crutch, teeth .. knees if  
they're dirty.

He bares his teeth at her and walks off with a club foot,  
withering his arm monstrously. The spider is doing a good  
job with the fly.

IMOGEN: (VOICE OVER as we see her in the supermarket. She  
is holding a picture, a cardboard print of ferocious  
vulgarity ... they are propped up all over the place, on  
offer with some packets. Her friend DOLLY puts her chin  
over IMOGEN'S shoulder. A dark, sexually efficient woman).

Oh God!

DOLLY: 'Allow'!

IMOGEN doesn't turn her head but gestures with the picture.

IMOGEN: Ten shillings for this Crap! What's  
more the packets are smaller, there's  
no weight on them, and they're half  
empty, they must think we're morons!

DOLLY: Let's face it ... most of us are.  
Come and listen to the musak and  
drink some rotten coffo.

In the coffee bay DOLLY, elegant and long-legged, lights up. IMOGEN, alive and vulnerable, but an untidy mess, watches her sourly.

IMOGEN:                    You look as though you're in the middle of something.

DOLLY:                    Come on ... you've got all those kids what have I got?

IMOGEN:                    I must have been MAD! There must be more to life than bloody maintenance ... if I only had the guts it might happen.

DOLLY:                    What?

IMOGEN:                    Oh, I don't know.

DOLLY:                    Take a job.

IMOGEN:                    Who'd do the charring. Besides ... it isn't what I want.

DOLLY:                    You don't do so badly ... house, kids, cars, dogs ... Jeff ... you can't say you haven't got your share.

IMOGEN:                    (Getting up, irritable) That's the second time you've been on about "got". You never used to talk about "got" when we lived in Earls Court.

SHE GOES OFF IN A HUFF, AND STARTS SHOVING STUFF INTO HER WIRE BASKET, LEAVING DOLLY TO PAY. DOLLY GIVES HER A SHARP LOOK, REACTING TO HER LAST REMARK.

IN THE BODY OF THE SHOP DOLLY COMES UP WITH IMOGEN AND FIRMLY PUTS BACK THE STODGE IMOGEN HAS JUST CHOSEN.

DOLLY:                    Look ... waists are in ... that's out! If this romantic thing's going to overwhelm us all we might as well look like heroines!

IMOGEN:                    (As they queue for the checkout) One of these days you'll send yourself up so far there'll be nothing left but a faint green smell.

On the bus together. During the following they get up and alight.

IMOGEN: Hey, remember that whip round for Kitty when poor old Tom died -

DOLLY: And the Wainmans said they couldn't afford it - I know -

BOTH: They've just been to Greece!

IMOGEN: (Thoughtful) Not as bad as Dennis Brook .. (she imitates) .. "it's the principle of the thing .. if a man can't insure himself ..."

DOLLY: (Likewise) "Why should we pay?"

IMOGEN: (Likewise, as they alight and part, IMOGEN giving her typical backward wave) "... the State ..."

IMOGEN trudges off with her shopping, grinning and cheered up. She bumps into a middle-aged woman emerging from a shop, followed, at a run, by her daughter.

DAUGHTER: He's given me too much change!

IMOGEN has now passed them but hears the mother's reply.

MOTHER: That's good ... how much d'you get?

IMOGEN OPENS HER BACK DOOR. THE KITCHEN IS A DISTRESSED AREA. SHE BARELY HAS TIME TO REGISTER WHEN THE LAUNDRY CLOUTS HER ON THE HEAD.

IMOGEN: (To his back) Where's the dry cleaning?

BOY: (Without a backward look) Ah, you're never satisfied!

Mrs. Donovan, her daily, comes into the kitchen, puts the papers and letters on the table. She is in her coat and hat.

IMOGEN: Oh, did you go out for something?

DONOVAN: I haven't started.

They both survey the kitchen. Mrs. Donovan's demeanour is that of Alexander surveying a conquered foe on a battlefield. IMOGEN NODS DEFEAT. But Mrs. D. does not make to go. IMOGEN looks enquiry.

DONOVAN: You owe me 24 shillings for last week.

IMOGEN in the children's bedroom. She hauls the beds together sloppily, sweeps all the rubbish from the table into a natty plastic bin, and kicks the bricks under the table. The baby pokes his finger into the paints and eats them.

IMOGEN IN THE KITCHEN COOKING HIGH TEA, FOLLOWED BY JOE.

JOE: I've only just understood what ethics means myself ... what you have to do is refer to your own needs and desires and resist being cut to a pattern by parents and teachers -

IMOGEN: Look, could you stop for a minute and take Dolly's barbecue back, she wants it.

JOE: (Shows exasperation at the interruption. He decides to be kind about it) Another thing ... why don't we go to the Proms?

IMOGEN: The Proms?

JOE: We're musically barbarians in this family -

IMOGEN: Your sleeve's in the butter ... will you do it?

JOE: I mean the sort of records you and Dad buy!

IMOGEN: We buy the records YOU want!

JOE: Mum ... lead! What else are you for?

This really stops IMOGEN. She looks surprised, enraged, then puzzled. He has a point ... what else is she for?

IMOGEN in the bath, relaxing. She is still pensive.

IMOGEN: (Voice over) Nymph, nymph, what  
are your beads?  
Green glass goblin, why do you stare  
at them?  
Give them me, give them me. No.  
Then I will howl all night in the  
reeds.  
Lie in the reeds and howl for them.  
Goblin, why do you love them so?  
They are better than fire or water,  
Better than voices of birds that sing.  
Better than any man's fair daughter.  
Those green glass beads on a silver  
ring.  
Hush, I stole them out of the moon.  
Give them me. No. Give them me,  
give them me. No.  
(She murmurs) .. no .. no .. no .. no  
.. no ..  
(AND JERKS UP. HER PRETTY 13 YEAR  
OLD DAUGHTER STANDS IN THE DOORWAY)

BIRRY: How long are you going to be?

IMOGEN: Ages. You can take Dolly's barbecue  
back. She wants it.

BIRRY: It's too far.

IMOGEN: No it's not.

BIRRY: I'm going out.

IMOGEN: Look ... Birry ... I'm tired ... it's  
been a hard day ... Mrs. Donovan  
walked out and Benny cut his foot on  
the dog ...

IMOGEN walking down the road, the little Jap barbecue  
thing under her arm.

IMOGEN swings into Dolly's place ... a mod. development of  
expensive houses and flats. She tries the front door and  
strides off around to the back, cocking a leg over the low  
mod. fence, and crossing the terrace to the sliding glass  
doors. She goes into the big main room.

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IMOGEN: Dolly ....

She pokes her nose into the kitchen and then into the bedroom. Where her husband is in bed with DOLLY.

IMOGEN'S FACE ... VERY CLOSE ... HER EYES WIDE OPEN.

IMOGEN'S VOICE OVER: Now ... now ... now it can happen ...

IMOGEN in her sitting room with her mother. IMOGEN is dressed for travelling in a dark two piece thing, smarter and shorter. Her heavy hair is coiled back ... she looks a handsome young matron. Her packed case and bag are ready.

MOTHER: If I'd known you wanted a change I could have come with you.

IMOGEN gives her an ironic look unobserved.

MOTHER: We could have gone to Majorca.

IMOGEN: I don't really feel like Majorca.

MOTHER: Well what about Torremolinos ... whatever do you want to go back to Boscombe for?

AT THE STATION. JEFF GETS IMOGEN'S TICKET, JOINS HER AND GIVES IT TO HER. HIS FACE IS SET.

JEFF: Why Boscombe?

They are walking across to the barrier.

IMOGEN: Sway, New Milton, Hinton Admiral, Christchurch, Pokesdown, Boscombe and Bournemouth. I fancy a trip down west.

JEFF: There's no need.

At the barrier she turns and faces him.

IMOGEN: I've told you, I'm going to ground. Back to my dirty youth.

They go through the barrier ... the man lets Jeff through.

JEFF: Couldn't you take it out of me back here?

Burdened by her bags, he has to scurry to keep up with her.

IMOGEN: (Turns on him) Yeah I know ... who's going to weed the dustbins, iron the plates and cook the washing up?

JEFF: I didn't mean that. I meant there's no need for you to go bolting off.

IMOGEN: Oh yes there is. Look, Jeff, there's no need to worry that I won't be back. I know I'm sunk ... I know that all right. I feel like somebody else, that's all. Him ... anybody ...

A man, passing, jerks round, surprised, and hurries on. IMOGEN pauses, and JEFF opens a door for her.

JEFF: (Handing up her bags) Will you be OK on your own?

IMOGEN: Yes.

JEFF: You can always come back early.

Despite her physical non co-operation he gets in and lifts her case onto the rack for her, turning to find her bending over her small bag. She is showing a lot of leg and he touches her.

JEFF: Love your skirt.

IMOGEN: (Very cool) It came in this length. The next size was too big on the shoulders.

She sits in the furthest corner from the door. He goes, fed up and unhappy. The train begins to move. She wants to get up and run to the window, to jump out. But she tightens up and stares ahead, despite tears. JEFF is left on the platform. He stands until the train is out of sight.

IMOGEN on the train, white and miserable, in the carriage alone.

The countryside ... England in midsummer, the suburbs thinning out.

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IMOGEN swaying, very uncomfortable, on a stool at the counter in the buffet car. She rocks back and forth, trying to finish her drink, eventually knocks it back and holds out her glass.

WAITER: Same again?

IMOGEN: Thanks.

She takes a bite from her sandwich and puts it straight down on its cellophane wrapper. The waiter brings the drink and jerks his head at the sandwich.

WAITER: Bloody awful, aren't they?

IMOGEN: (Voice over) I wonder if I could do it with him. (To waiter) Got anything cooked?

WAITER: Only me love.

IMOGEN: No hot bacon sandwiches?

WAITER: Pet, if we could, we would ... I could make a bomb if I could do this on a concession. They count the slices of bread you know ... at the end of the trip ... anything rather than make money ...

IMOGEN: Do they?  
(Voice over) I can't think of anybody I don't despise. Except the baby. Give him time.

She slips off the stool, and fumbles in her bag.

IMOGEN swaying along the train. In time to the points her voice goes "What's the point, what's the point, what's the point, what's the point".

She goes into the lavatory, looks at herself in the mirror. She is a bit drunk. She inspects her face with expression and then, with a jerk, lets her hair down. She licks her lips ... then her face crumples. She wrestles with the need to break down, the whisky is talking, but resists it, and throws up her head.

IMOGEN coming through an open carriage. She passes a man and looks down at him, insolent.

IMOGEN: (Approaching the door)  
(Voice over) They know I'm on the make. After all this time ...  
snap!

Behind her, taking his time, the man she has looked at gets up and follows her.

IMOGEN in the carriage. The man comes in and sits opposite her. She is startled but pleased. He is a bit old, but not bad. He flips out a cigarette and offers her one.

MAN: Gannfur?

IMOGEN: Sorry?

MAN: You going far?

IMOGEN: Boscombe ... near Bournemouth.

MAN: Oh.

He comes and sits beside her.

MAN: What would a little lady like you be doing going to Bournemouth?  
(He puts a hand on her leg ...  
plonk)

IMOGEN: Business.

A few moments later. She struggles out of his embrace and jumps up.

IMOGEN: Look, do you mind!

MAN: What's the matter, do you want it or not, I'm getting out at Haslemere ...

IMOGEN: You mean here? In the train?

He leans across, takes down her case ... she moves, involuntarily to stop him ... puts it across the door outside ... closes the door and pulls down the blind.

MAN: Look, if he comes by, he knows not to worry.

IMOGEN: You've done this before.

MAN: (Unbuttoning) Come on love, give us a hand ... undo your blouse buttons, that'll get me going!

IMOGEN jumps up, her mouth open. She looks down at him, and her eyes crease with laughter.

IMOGEN: You've got a nerve!

MAN: (Off) Go on, surprise me.

IMOGEN: All right. I will.

Laughing, a little drunk, her eyes very bright, she begins to unbutton.

IMOGEN: (Sitting astride him) You're honest!

MAN: I'm not, you know.

The train has stopped. From over Imogen's shoulder as she leans from the window we see the man get out and walk off towards the barrier. He isn't much to look at with his mac on. IMOGEN leans further, but he does not look back. She cranes, her hair flying, looking younger and much more beautiful. When the train begins to move she flops back into her seat looking like an unmade bed.

IMOGEN: (Voice over) He didn't even say thank you!

IMOGEN: (Voice over) Why should he?

The centre of Bournemouth, looking towards the gardens. The shops ... children playing in the stream in the Pavilion gardens ... the neatly kept central roundabout with its plants and shrubs ... one or two major hotels, looking dated and respectable ... the Pavilion ... the promenade. The smaller, well-kept hotels on the East Cliff.

Further along, between Bournemouth and Boscombe are the smaller hotels and well-run boarding houses, mostly Edwardian ... ugly but self-respecting in mature trimmed gardens with large pines and mutilated shrubs. A local taxi approaches, passes and turns a corner, with the deliberate pace-pace Queen Mary, where the fare is a holidaymaker and a good tip is expected.

The car draws up outside a typical Boscombe hotel.

IMOGEN LOOKS OUT OF THE CAR WINDOW AT THE SMALL HOTEL.

IMOGEN:                                 Lovely!

The driver turns his head in surprise at her tone.

IMOGEN WALKS THROUGH THE HEAVY FRONT DOOR OF THE HOTEL. INSIDE THE FLOOR IS POLISHED AND VISITORS LETTERS AND CARDS ARE NEATLY ARRANGED ON THE HEAVY HALL TABLE. THERE ARE A FEW DISCREET ADS ON THE WALLS ANNOUNCING LOCAL ATTRACTIONS, A BASKET WEAVE CHAIR, A LARGE MONSTERA DELICIOSA AND A MODERN COATSTAND. MRS. BELLAMY, THE PROPRIETRESS AND OWNER EMERGES, PLEASANTLY ROUND, POST-MENOPAUSAL, WITH CORSETS, FALSE TEETH AND NEAT PERM. WE HEAR IMOGEN'S MURMUR "lovely" AND THEY ASCEND THE STAIRS. TWO RATHER DREARY, MIDDLE-AGED PEOPLE PAUSE ON THE LANDING TO LET THEM PASS. MRS. BELLAMY OPENS IMOGEN'S ROOM AND GESTURES HER TO ENTER.

IMOGEN'S BEDROOM HAS FLOWERED CURTAINS, BLOWING IN THE LIGHT WIND, JASPE LINO, A SHINY EIDERDOWN, A LLOYD LOOM CHAIR, A CELLULOSED WARDROBE, A BEDSIDE MAT, A SCUMBLER-ON PRINT OF PROVENCE AND ANOTHER DEPICTING A BOWL OF ANEMONES, A LOW RACK FOR HER SUITCASE AND A DRESSING TABLE WITH A TRIPLE MIRROR AND A LACE DOYLEY. IMOGEN SURVEYS THE ROOM WITH DEEP AFFECTION.

IMOGEN:                                 It's really splendid!

Imogen sitting, upright and sedate, at her table in the dining room, waiting for lunch. She sniffs, appreciative.

IMOGEN:                                 (Voice over) Cabbage!

Plate of meat and two veg ... close.

Followed by blancmage.

Followed by a small square of cheese and two dry biscuits.

Followed by a large cup of coffee, spilt a bit in the saucer, and with boiled milk skin floating on the top.

IMOGEN leaving the dining room.

MRS. BELLAMY: (At the door) Enjoy your lunch, Mrs. Butler?

IMOGEN: It was just what I felt like!

Mrs. Bellamy and Imogen emerge into the hall.

MRS. BELLAMY: ... and clock golf on the lawn. Do enjoy your walk Mrs. Butler ... tea is from four to five ... and there's a lovely view of the Isle of Wight from the loggia.

IMOGEN: Is there?

She sounds so fervent that Mrs. Bellamy smells a rat and gives her a quick stare. But no .. IMOGEN seems truly enthusiastic. With a smile she swings out of the door. And marches away with a big stride.

IMOGEN strolling, rather disconsolate, through the gardens, in her new suit and a pair of sandals. She pauses by a cage of squirrels.

IMOGEN IN A TELEPHONE BOX. WE HEAR RAPID PIPS.

IMOGEN: Hullo ... hullo, Mum, is that you? Yes ... yes thank you ... is everything all right? Oh. Is Ben all right? Yuh ... no ... I'm just having a nice walk ... the weather's .....

Her voice dies as we recede from her. She comes out of the box onto the Westover Road and walks off, slow and indecisive. Suddenly she pulls herself together, lifts her shoulders and begins to walk briskly, with a purpose.



Imogen at the hairdresser. The girl lifts her hair and they both look in the mirror, intense in concentration.

IMOGEN, emerging from the hairdresser. Her hair has been shaped into a long, loose bob. And she is very blonde .. We don't recognise her at first. She looks younger and sexier. She strides through the shopping crowds, pausing once to see her reflection in the window. She swings into a store.

IMOGEN, carrying a large paper bag, goes into the ladies in the garden. She emerges in a black dress with a polo neck, much cut away about the body. Over her shoulders is a pale poplin trench coat. Two middle-aged men, sitting with their wives, follow her with their eyes. She is pleased.

IMOGEN AT THE PAVILION TEA-DANCE. She sits alone, smoking, watching the middle-aged married couples, the younger women dancing together, and the generally odd assortment. One group of young people, giggling, try to dance mod style to the music, but succeed in looking as idiotic as everybody else.

IMOGEN pours herself some tea.

MAN: Would you care to dance?

IMOGEN dances with a little man who is obviously dancing school trained.

An old-fashioned waltz. IMOGEN spins round with a fat man, enjoying it.

THE SLOW FOXTROT. IMOGEN has the dancing man again ... he has her arm lifted up at an awkward angle.

ANOTHER QUICKSTEP. IMOGEN with a tall thin man who simply walks her round the floor, propelling her like a pram.

IMOGEN tangoes with the dancer. The music stops with a flourish, which he uses to the full, twiddling her round and bending her back over his arm.

The little dancer escorts IMOGEN to her table, bows slightly and pushes off. She sits gratefully.

IMOGEN: (Voice over) At least he's not trying to pick me up ... I think.

She looks around the room in dejection ... her eyes passing over the dismal throng.

(Voice over) Honestly ... what a selection ...

She puts her cigarettes in her bag and picks up her bill, about to leave. But something makes her turn her head ... she has the feeling that someone is looking at her. A dark, very greasy young man at the table behind her smiles. She puts down her bag.

(Voice over) Sorry I spoke.

He comes over and joins her, smiling. She looks him straight in the eye with a smile of total invitation.

IMOGEN: (Voice over) That ought to do it.

In the waiter's room. He lies on the bed in his vest, watching IMOGEN dress, smiling when she catches his eye. Efficiently she makes the last tidying gestures and comes over to the bed ... putting out her hand in farewell. His face crumples.

WAITER: You don't want to give me anything?

IMOGEN turns in astonishment. He smiles, beseeching and ill at ease.

IMOGEN: You mean, pay you?

He shrugs and sulks.

WAITER: But you are old!

IMOGEN: Oh ... I'm so sorry, I didn't realise ... yes of course. Would ... would ... ah ... (she fishes in her purse, but she has spent almost all the money in her bag) ... how much do you want?

WAITER: Whatever you like.

IMOGEN: The trouble is ... I've only got about two pounds. Could I give you a chequ

WAITER: (Defeated) It don't matter.

IMOGEN: (Strident with embarrassment)  
Of course it does ... look ...

She holds out the two pounds ... he takes it, his face averted.

WAITER: You go now.

But she sits on the bed.

IMOGEN: Angelo, don't be upset. You're very nice, honestly. (A thought strikes her). Are you saving up for something special?

WAITER: (A sad wail) I want to go home!

IMOGEN: (Embracing his shoulders) Of course you do! Look, I'll see what I've got left!

She empties her purse. He sits up, pleased and excited.

IMOGEN: Ten, twelve, sixteen and six, seventeen and tenpence. I tell you what, why don't you have this ... (taking off her watch) ... I've never liked it. Look, it's solid gold ... you could get at least a fiver for it.

WAITER: (Frightened) No I don't want.

IMOGEN: Well ... (Poking about in her bag) ... there's my Green Shield stamps ... I keep meaning to clean them out ...

He is quite pleased with those.

WAITER: Thank you very much.

From under his mattress he takes out a grubby book and starts to stick them in.

IMOGEN: What about this key ring ... look!

She demonstrates the little mechanical toy. His face lights up and she drops it in his hand. Pleased, he becomes ardent again.

WAITER: If you like ... ?

IMOGEN: No, not now. Tomorrow perhaps.  
 WAITER: You will come?  
 IMOGEN: Perhaps.

She leaves Angelo to assess his new treasures.

Imogen walking on the cliff top, the wind lifting her hair.  
 Imogen at the cinema, an empty matinee. She laughs alone.

Imogen on the beach in a swimsuit, sunbathing between  
 tufted hillocks of seagrass. She is spread-eagled,  
 inviting the sun.

IMOGEN: (Murmurs) Please sun ... let it  
 happen. Please ...

Imogen, hunched in her new trenchcoat, in the corner of one  
 of the promenade shelters. It is raining.

IMOGEN: So where's the Prince? (Voice over)  
 Her eyes fall on the elderly deck chair man, stacking up  
 his chairs, grumpy and depressed in the rain.

IMOGEN at dinner at the hotel. She is wearing a simple  
 sleeveless black dress cut extremely low in front.  
 Mrs. Bellamy, doing her rounds, pauses. Her expression  
 at the exposure of so much flesh ... Imogen is not thin ...  
 is akin to one who has just trodden in dogs mess.

MRS. BELLAMY: Everything all right, Mrs. Butler?

IMOGEN: Yes thank you.

MRS. BELLAMY: (Her eyes gleaming with hate)  
 Where are you going this evening?

IMOGEN: Oh, I'm playing bridge with friends.

MRS. BELLAMY, worsted, sneers and walks on.

IMOGEN strolling through the gardens, on the pickup. Two  
 men give her the eye and pass on. She strolls, enjoying  
 the evening ... the people, the feeling of pregnancy, of  
 weekend. Young groups of girls make for the dance at the  
 Pavilion.

IMOGEN sitting on a low wall in the gardens, smoking. A woman, about her own age, walks by; and gives her the eye. Then a well set up man approaches, with a springer spaniel. He has quite an air, and looks at her appreciatively as he passes. She slips off the wall.

IMOGEN strolling behind the man.

Fewer people. IMOGEN is quite close to the man. He pauses and turns and she approaches him. He smiles.

MAN: Look I'm terribly sorry but I've got a nice little wife waiting for me at home.  
Some other time perhaps ...

IMOGEN: Yes of course ... goodnight.

MAN: (With a friendly salute)  
Goodnight ... Godbless.

Outside the big cinema in the Westover Road a queue has formed. IMOGEN saunters along, and joins the end of the queue, attracted by a heavy young man with a fin de siecle moustache. But his girl joins him and IMOGEN drifts away.

IMOGEN IN A PUB. She drinks slowly, alone, with the hubbub of noise and laughter around her. Finishing her drink, there is nothing to do but leave.

At the Pavilion dance, in the cloakroom. IMOGEN pauses at the mirror, as chattering groups of girls come in and out.

GIRL: (To her friend) What you think Midge?

SECOND GIRL: If you don't, Bunny will.

GIRL: Oh I can't be bothered.

On the dance floor the noise is terrific. But IMOGEN is out of it. The place is full of kids, having a good time. She makes her way through the crowd and out to the coat bar.

SHE RUNS DOWN THE STEPS OF THE PAVILION AND ACROSS THE FORECOURT TILL THERE IS ONLY THE RHYTHM OF THE BASS IN EARSHOT. A BUS IS COMING AND SHE RUNS AND JUMPS ON.

On the bus. IMOGEN is breathless.

IMOGEN: (To the conductor)  
Oh ... all the way please.

IMOGEN on the bus. She looks at the shops at the bus trundles along.

At the terminus IMOGEN gets off, and wanders up the street, gazing into shop windows. She pauses at a pub ... there is the sound of noise and laughter inside ... but changes her mind and walks on.

IMOGEN, walking through suburbs.

IMOGEN, walking through a park. A young couple are kissing on a bench.

IMOGEN walking. She looks at her watch under a light. It is late. She quickens her step and makes for the next bus stop ... a little ahead of her. She stands alone, looking from time to time for a bus. Then a man, young and tall, walks up, and queues behind her. At first she does not look at him. Then she turns, suddenly, and looks up at him. She must like the look of him because she continues to stare up at him. He jerks his head sideways, and he takes her arm as they walk, with quickening steps up a side road. A little way along there is an alley. They turn into it.

IMOGEN is up against the wall. The man is a dark shadow; They are embracing.

The bus stop is empty. Then IMOGEN and the man emerge from the alley. He pauses for a moment while she adjusts something and they stroll down together. At this moment the bus comes and IMOGEN quickens her step and jumps on first. She walks up to the front seat ... there is no-one else on the bus. The man gets on and sits two seats behind her on the same side. IMOGEN looks shocked ... rather dazed. The man, young and tough, doesn't give a damn. The next stop but one he gets off.

IMOGEN'S face shows anguish as she half turns, conscious of his leaving. She slumps. Then cannot resist peering out of the window. But he is gone.

IMOGEN enters her room. She takes off her coat throws her bag on the bed and sits at the dressing table. She takes off her earrings and they fall onto the glass-topped surface with a crack. She surveys herself in the mirror.

IMOGEN:                   (Voice over) That's that.  
 Tomorrow's Saturday ... go home  
 on Sunday ... end of act.

Suddenly the windows rattle violently and a fierce gust of wind blows open one of the casements so that it bangs again and again. Sand blows in. IMOGEN struggles with the window and manages to shut it. She looks in surprise at the sand on the dressing table. There is even a small shell, spoon-shaped and opalescent. She tidies her hair with a quick hand and picks up the shell, her face soft.

IMOGEN:                   How strange!  
 (Voice over) I used to keep shells  
 like this in old De Reszke tins ...  
 they were oval and pale green and I  
 used to wonder why granddads  
 cigarettes weren't oval ... gran  
 used to save the tins for me and  
 then I would go down to the beach  
 and look for shells, but only those  
 worn down to little mother of pearl  
 bowls ... like this ....

She suddenly looks up ... puzzled.

IMOGEN:                   But we're quarter of a mile from  
 the sea!

Disturbed, she puts down the shell and begins to prepare for bed. She takes off her dress and hangs it in the wardrobe. There is another dress there, a dress she has not worn. It is made of soft chiffon gauze, with many floating bits and pieces and a close waist and full skirt ... more like a costume. She pauses and touches it.

IMOGEN:                   What a waste of money ... when on  
 earth did I think I was going to  
 wear you?

But she takes the dress out, on its hanger, to look at it ... even taking a turn with it, so that the skirt flies out. This brings her against the dressing table ... and she picks up the shell again, still holding the dress against her. She drops the shell and puts on the dress. Her actions are slower, a little dreamy. She looks at herself in the long wardrobe mirror.

IMOGEN:

(Her eyes shining)

I look like a Princess.

She makes as if to take it off. The shell lies on the dressing table. Then she changes her mind. She will wear it ... if only for a turn round the block. She combs her hair and puts perfume on her arms in swift dedication. From the wardrobe she takes a pair of small jewelled slippers ... still in tissue paper ... and slips them on. She bends to the dressing table mirror and puts some salve on her lips quickly, picking up the shell absently as she turns to look at the result in the long mirror.

The windows rattle with another gust of wind and there is a low rumble of thunder. IMOGEN is taken with a sudden giddiness and sways a little, putting her clenched hand ... holding the shell, to her head. Her eyes widen as she regains herself ... and gazes at her reflection, her eyes very wide.

IMOGEN:

(Voice over)

Perhaps I'm going to be murdered.

IMOGEN running along the road, by a long privet hedge, making her way to the beach.

IMOGEN running down the zig-zag path from the clifftop to the beach below.

Seen from the top of the cliff she runs away, diagonally across the beach to the sea.

On the beach she skips in the waves, the dress lifting. The sandals are kicked off in a flurry of sand in our faces ... the dress falls with a flurry.

IMOGEN walks down the beach and into the water. As it reaches her waist she turns over lazily into the sea and swims on her back ... and then over again ... idly in the gentle sea.

The dress lies. A man's arm stretches and picks it up. At first we can't see the man very well. He is young, straight and well set up, in jeans and shirt. Then, in the breaking moonlight we see his face. He has a close cap of curly hair, and a strange face, with enormously long eyes which seem to reach from temple to temple.



He holds the dress in one hand, lifts it slightly ... then looks out to sea. His eyes glitter with a faintly frightening strangeness. But it could be subjective ... a handsome boy seen by moonlight.

GIRL'S VOICE: (Off ... with an echo, as if from a cave) Terry! Terry, what you doin' ... I'm cowl!

He drops to his haunches, crouching over IMOGEN'S things as if on guard.

GIRL'S VOICE: Terr-ry!

He gets up slowly ... in response. Again we see the gleaming eyes. He smiles, in gentle triumph.

The terrace of the Bournemouth Pavilion, in mid-morning sunshine. Most of the tables are taken, and coffee is being served. Children play on the steps, and the adjacent water gardens look pretty in the sunshine.

IMOGEN is sitting alone, looking relaxed and handsome, drinking coffee. Her hair is up. She looks about her, assessing the men at the different tables. They aren't up to much. The last one ... balding, and chewing away at a doughnut, is particularly unrewarding.

IMOGEN: (Voice over) Never mind ... I've gone off it ... I've been there ... up against a wall with a man I'll never recognise and I don't give a damn.

She looks about idly ... feeling relaxed and content.

IMOGEN: (Voice over) You can have it ... if you really show you want it.

She drinks. What I'd really like at the moment is a good game of chess.

There is a splash and a shriek. She turns. Below her, in the water garden, a young man is splashing about in the fountain. He is wet through, and very beautiful. Samantha, his little dark girl friend, hops about, extending a hand to him.

SAMANTHA: Terry ... get out ... you're wet through ... Terry you cow!

As he splashes her. He plays about with an infective gaiety. The people on the terrace watch, held, smiling and laughing. A middle-aged woman nudges her friend ... Terry is very handsome. The manageress appears from within, neat in a white overall. She approaches ... pauses and watches, and then softens ... even giggles. Discreetly she disappears. The boy looks up at IMOGEN, the sun lighting him. He smiles, and climbs the rockery ... extending his hand. Imogen leans over the wall and gives him her hand and he vaults onto the terrace, showering her with water. It is the boy on the beach. His strange, vital face glows at her. She too is held. He smiles.

TERRY: Hullo.

IMOGEN: You're wet.

He laughs and lifts a chair from the next table and sits beside her in one movement. Samantha finds her way round, by the wide steps.

IMOGEN: Coffee?

TERRY: No money.

IMOGEN: I'll pay.

They sit across from each other, smiling.  
Samantha approaches.

IMOGEN: (To the girl)  
Do you want some coffee?

The girl's face is wary.

Later. Terry and the girl are eating baked beans and cakes.

IMOGEN: Where are you making for?

The girl looks furtive ... the boy shrugs.

TERRY: Anywhere. Don't you want to eat.

IMOGEN: No thanks.

SHE IS SMOKING. He gestures at her cigarette.

TERRY: You shouldn't do that.

IMOGEN: I know. It stops me from getting fat.

TERRY: You are fat.

IMOGEN: Oh stop it.

TERRY: How old are you then?

IMOGEN: Mind your own business.  
I'm thirty-three.

GIRL: He fancies an old woman, don't you Terry?

TERRY: Why not?

IMOGEN: My son's nearly as old as you.

TERRY: (Idly, playing with a fork)  
How many you got?

IMOGEN: Four ... girl and three boys.

TERRY: How old's the youngest?

IMOGEN: Nine months.

TERRY: Did you feed him yourself?

IMOGEN: (Very startled)  
Yes I did as a matter of fact.

TERRY: I thought you were a bit big.

He has turned the conversation, but we get the impression that there is something serious on his mind ... something else.

GIRL: Terry, give us a fag.

TERRY: We haven't got many.

GIRL: Oh come on.

TERRY: (To IMOGEN) You know the best way with pot ... through a pipe ... cooler ... thoughts of Mao.

IMOGEN: I know.

GIRL: (Scathing) Yeah.

IMOGEN: (Stubbing out her cigarette)  
I invented pot. And sex.

TERRY: Yeah, I should think breasts like that would get you quite a long way.

IMOGEN lifts her head in a giggling laugh. He watches her, when she is not looking at him, with an eerie intensity; as one might watch an animal in a zoo.

IMOGEN:                   You're having me on! You must learn not to be so unkind.

Now He is startled. He is perturbed.

TERRY:                   Unkind? No ... I'm not unkind ... I wasn't being unkind!

IMOGEN gets up, and smiles at him, picking up the bill.

IMOGEN:                   I'm off. Well - I hope you get wherever you're going.

He gets up, indecisive, as if to follow her. Imogen gestures him down and the girl wails in protest, her mouth full of doughnut. From the cashdesk, IMOGEN gives them a wave. At the table, Terry looks at the girl, then at IMOGEN, as if comparing them.

GIRL:                    We haven't got much time you know.

He nods, abstracted.

From the central bus station a single decker tour bus emerges, marked Swanage.

The bus, on the road.

The bus again. As it passes we see that IMOGEN is one of the passengers.

On the road a group of young people in strange dress plods ... the bus approaches and passes them.

In the bus. Making a downhill bend, the bus passes two more young people ... wearing long robes. IMOGEN cranes to see them.

Swanage. The passengers disembark, IMOGEN among them.

IMOGEN wandering about the town. It is pretty and she is enjoying herself.

IMOGEN in the square ... where there is a low water trough ... beautiful. She dips her hand in the water.

IMOGEN walking down a narrow street, steeply sloping. The boy appears above her. His face shows great excitement at the sight of her and he leaps down, a tremendous jump, and blocks her path. She screams.

BOY: Found you! And it's the third time!

IMOGEN: You make the most extraordinary entrances!

TERRY: (Laughing with excitement)  
Three times!

IMOGEN: What? I don't understand ...

TERRY: I've seen you three times!

IMOGEN: No ... you're blocked ... twice ... in the fountain and now.

TERRY: Three. I saw you last night. You walked into the sea and you left silk on the beach.

IMOGEN'S mouth opens but she can't say anything.

TERRY: But you don't understand, do you?

IMOGEN: Oh, I understand that you saw me!

TERRY: Three times. That's important ... if you believe in it ...

She looks enquiry.

Three is an extremely good number.

IMOGEN: Is it?

TERRY: Yes. If you believe in it.

IMOGEN: (Beginning to walk down to the road)  
Oh I didn't say I didn't.

TERRY: (Pauses, behind her) Are you coming

IMOGEN:                   Where?

TERRY:                    Oh, it's not far.    You'll like it.

The girl, off, calls "Terry!".

IMOGEN smiles and shakes her head slightly, and turns away, walking downhill ... waving a hand in farewell. There is a flash of lightning ... IMOGEN is startled. The thunder cracks, almost at the same time, and the heavens open.

The girl's voice can be heard "Terr.r.y!".

The boy's alarming eyes look up ... at the source of the call ... and then at IMOGEN, receding. Another flash, and the thunder ... the rain is blinding. His face shows sudden decision. He slips his hand into his jacket and takes out his knife. He flicks it open.

The boy, in a few swift paces, reaches IMOGEN, breathing harshly. She turns and he reaches out, slices off a lock of hair leaving a jagged gap at one side. Her eyes widen with fear.

The boy gazes down at her, his eyes glowing. He is like a god descended from the skies.

TERRY:                    Now you'll have to come!

The rain falls afresh in a cloudburst, wetting them both to the skin. Their hair streaks their faces. He clutches her to him triumphantly. She is overwhelmed by the moment. She looks up at him and he embraces her fiercely.

The girl's voice is a dying wail: "Ter-ryyyy!".

A long country road ... a slow hill. IMOGEN AND TERRY have left the girl a little way behind.

IMOGEN and TERRY, pausing for the girl to catch up.

IMOGEN:                   Why do we have to walk?    Can't we take a bus?

TERRY:                    It's better to walk.

As she approaches they move on again.

At the approach to a village the three have stopped. They hitch a car, but it passes. The girl looks tired and fed up and picks at her shoe.

In a car, roomy and old. The driver, late-middle-aged, has a comfortable set; his neck is unimaginative. TERRY, sitting in the front, has turned round to talk to IMOGEN.

DRIVER: Not very settled, is it?

TERRY: (Intense, to IMOGEN) Why not?

IMOGEN: Look ... I'm not your scene, you ... it's weird.

GIRL: Oh, he can't leave it alone, that's your trouble!

TERRY: (To the driver) She'll do it for a Mars Bar you know.

The driver swerves wildly.

IMOGEN and TERRY, walking. The girl is lagging, some distance behind. The boy pauses as a thought strikes him.

TERRY: You're not a journalist, are you?

IMOGEN: No. Why, do I look like one?

TERRY: (Looking at her) No. (THEY walk) What are you doing then ... all on your own ...

IMOGEN: Oh ... nothing. I ... walked out - came away.

TERRY: (Jerked up, sharp) What - left your kids?

IMOGEN: Only for ten days!

His concern makes her smile. She smiles and frowns at him ... it is so unusual ... his relief is so marked.

TERRY: Ohh! ... you're on Holiday!

IMOGEN: Yuh. (THEY WALK) I couldn't stand ... the greed and spite ... of human beings ... any longer.

TERRY: Yes. I mean, I know what you mean. Very dangerous species, the human race.

IMOGEN: You know, I've really tried, this last twelve, fourteen years ... oh, just for a Little tolerance, a little less greed ... a Sharing, in the home. But so much natural greed and pride and vanity ... I'm beat.

TERRY: No.

IMOGEN: What?

TERRY: No. There is something.

IMOGEN: What do you mean?

He stops, and puts a hand on her arm.

TERRY: You can change the world.

They look at each other. His strange eyes glitter.

IMOGEN: There's something very funny about you.

TERRY: You're not frightened, are you?

IMOGEN: Well ... partly. I feel ... keyed up ... and anyhow ... thrown about ...

TERRY: (Walking on, with a young lope)  
Try not to be frightened.

She hesitates ... he turns, and she catches up with him. They trudge on. Some way behind the girl is flagging. A motor bike passes her, driven by a young rocker in leathers and skidlid. It slows to a halt and she runs, limping towards it. They exchange a phrase and she gets on.



The bike tears off, in pursuit of the others. But before it reaches them, on the long straight road, it takes a turning to the right. The rider turns his head and the girl grins.

The farmhouse, seen from a low hill to the north. It is pleasant, simple, isolated. In the foreground a girl and boy in arcadian clothes pass and descend the hill to the farm. It is late afternoon, and silent.

The farmhouse ... closer. Signs of great activity. Young people leave and enter the house with flowers and wood. There are several tents and shelters pitched close-by and others under the hedge dividing the grassy yard from the fields. A girl emerges from a path by the side of the house carrying large, leafy branches. She walks to the field, opening the gate. In the field flowers and leaves are strewn in an enormous rough circle on the ground. Several other girls are already there. The atmosphere is simple, festive and religious.

Terry and Imogen have left the road. They have crossed a sloping field to a wide stream. He leaps, and helps her across. She jumps into his arms.

TERRY: Tired?

She smiles and shakes her head.

At the farmhouse. A boy in fatigues enters, carrying a large bedding roll. Now we see the main central room, with a wide, wooden staircase leading up in a generous curve. There is a big trestle table, and at it sits a thin, dark intense girl, surrounded by papers, pamphlets, cups and stuff. Her clothing is hieratic. Close by, similarly dressed helpers open up a wooden crate of canned beans and carry them through to the kitchen. From the pile of food brought in they sort and carry loaves, and fruit.

In the kitchen. It is large, and like the illustration from a book of fairytales, with wooden furniture and benches, a large table with the platters and clumsy utensils laid ready for a big feast, a wood fire with a cauldron, a black cat, three legged stools and everything simple and childlike. A boy tends the fire, one girl tends the pot, and others take bread from the ovens, shell nuts and arrange bowls of fruit. There are hens under foot and one lays an egg, which is put in the bowl with the others.

Back in the main room a dark man stands by the desk. He is a little older than the others, very handsome, with the same strange eyes as Terry. Nearby are two young men and a girl, who have been helping. The girl carries a small baby. The girl at the desk consults her list, watched by the others.

FIRST BOY: No sign of Terry?

OLDER MAN: Not yet.

SECOND BOY: How many possibles?

SARA: (AT THE DESK) Five ... including Catherine.  
(She indicates the girl with the baby)

CATHERINE: I'd rather not. (She pleads)  
Ursula's not three months old yet.

SECOND BOY: How old's Taffrail?

CATHERINE: A year.

MAX: (OLDER MAN) Mmmm.

There is an air of sober contemplation. Catherine shows anxiety.

SARA: (Rather laddish type) There are some more people to come.

FIRST BOY: (His arm about Catherine's shoulder)  
What about Sasha ... she's had an abortion.

SECOND BOY: (Quick) I don't think she will.

MAX: You mean she's frightened?

SECOND BOY: Yup.

Max grimaces in sad anguish. Sara, who seems to have a thing for him, is stung.

SARA: If only I weren't Useless!

MAX: We'll wait for Terry. It's very much his thing.

There is a murmur of agreement. Sara and Max exchange a glance of excitement. There is obviously something special about Terry.

IMOGEN and TERRY are climbing down a bank covered in thicket. Her hair is falling down.

In the kitchen the activity waxes. The table is almost laid and is beautiful. From the kitchen we see the main, heavy door swing open. Is it Terry? But it is a young bearded man and a young girl with pale long hair.

In the main room the group at the table look up, interested.

BEARDED BOY: (Canadian) Hi. This is Caroline.

CAROLINE: (Looking about, wide-eyed) Hullo.

A murmur of greeting. Sara ticks them off her list.

SARA: Have you got bed rolls?

BOY: Yuh ... and a tent.

SARA: Good.

They all look at Caroline.

SARA: Oh Caroline ... this is Cathie,  
Roy ... Benedict ... and this  
Ursula ...

Caroline smiles down at the baby, shyly. They watch her.

CATHERINE: Do you like them?

CAROLINE: What?

CATHERINE: Babies.

CAROLINE: Oh ... yes ... I think so.

CATHERINE: You haven't any of your own?

CAROLINE: Oh no!

MAX: Abortions?

CAROLINE: Me? No! Why?

MAX: Oh, nothing special ... we need someone who's had a child.

(Faint) Oh ...

CAROLINE:

She's a virgin. I thought you wanted a virgin.

BEARDED BOY:

(Kindly) It'll probably come in for something.

SARA:

She makes a note against Caroline's name. Caroline shows alarm.

CAROLINE:

It isn't that I don't like men. I've got a very difficult hymen.

BEN:

I shouldn't worry about it. (He looks politely ready to be helpful).

IMOGEN and TERRY approaching the house. It is downhill and they are moving fast down the path, through short grazing. IMOGEN, with the destination in view, looks alive, even excited.

IMOGEN:

(Almost laughing in curiosity and anticipation) I was beginning to wonder where the hell we were making for!

TERRY:

(Making his arms like a monster) In the pines, where the sun never shines!

IMOGEN:

I can smell baked beans!!

She runs down the path, and he runs after her, catching her at the stone flags before the house.

In the farmhouse. The door is thrown open and TERRY and IMOGEN are in the doorway. TERRY'S arrival stops everything. People come out of the kitchen, their eyes wide. There are murmurs of "It's Terry ... Terry's come ..."

IMOGEN is astonished. She gazes round, eyes shining, hair blown about, looking round and comely. They all stare at her. Mildly she accepts the stares. Max looks excited.

TERRY: This is Imogen.  
SARA: (After a pause) How old is she?  
TERRY: Thirty-three.  
MAX: How many children?  
TERRY: Four.  
SARA: How old is the youngest?  
IMOGEN: Nine months.

THERE IS A STILL SILENCE.

TERRY: (To Max) We met three times.

MAX gleams. TERRY walks to the table, throws IMOGEN'S lock of hair on the table. There is a whisper of excitement.

SARA: Is she willing?

TERRY shrugs with a smile.

IMOGEN: Willing? Willing for what?

TERRY: (To Max) We've only just met.

MAX: Tell us a bit about yourself, Imogen.

IMOGEN: What do you want to know?

MAX: Background ... education.

IMOGEN: I took a double first in zoology and anthropology. I don't work because of the children ...

MAX: But you've been trained in scientific method.

IMOGEN: Some. My husband lectures in Chemistry.

MAX: Good.

IMOGEN: Is it a party? I mean - what are you -

SARA: It's a celebration.

MAX: We're expecting visitors.

IMOGEN: Visitors?

TERRY: I'll take Imogen upstairs to rest.

IMOGEN: What sort of visitors?

MAX: (Laughing) Flying saucers!  
Don't you believe in them?

IMOGEN: (Laughing) You mean little green men  
from outer space? No, not really.

TERRY: She has an open mind.  
He takes her by the arm to escort her upstairs.

IMOGEN: (Breaking away, intrigued. She  
approaches Max) What's it all about?

MAX picks up the lock of hair on the table and shakes it  
slightly. IMOGEN reels and puts her hand to her head,  
overwhelmed with dizziness.

TERRY: It's been a long way. You're tired.  
He assists her upstairs. There is an excited buzz from  
the watchers.

MAX: (Softly) Perfect.  
Sara tears up her list. She looks upstairs envious.

IMOGEN and TERRY approach an enormous oak, studded door,  
upstairs. He opens the door and they enter. Her eyes  
widen in astonishment. The room is beautiful, as in a  
fairytale. There is a gilded and draped tester bed,  
little decorated footstools, a chair in the shape of a  
swan, huge Chinese bowls full of lilies on low wooden  
stands, a table with enormous seashells, and two  
spaniel puppies. There is a large, live bonsai tree,  
a fireplace with a velvet chair and a white cat,  
several Victorian dolls; and several jam-jars crammed  
untidily with moon-daisies. IMOGEN turns to TERRY, her  
mouth and eyes wide open.

TERRY:                                 We want you to feel at home.

She walks about in a daze, pausing to stare at him. She picks up a book and opens it. The flyleaf reads: To Imogen, Happy Christmas from Aunt Phyllis and Uncle Bill, 1946. She puts down the book, frightened. On a low hammock chair are the dolls.

IMOGEN:                                 (Low)     These are my dolls. This is Cynthia. I cut her hair off.

She notices several old De Reszke tins, oval shaped, on the table with the shells. She picks up one of the tins.

IMOGEN:                                 My grandfather smoked these. Gran used to give me the empty tins and I used to take them down to the beach ...

She wrenches off the lid and tips out the sand. Inside are several bowl-shaped shells, worn to mother-of-pearl.

IMOGEN:                                 I'm ill. It MUST be in my mind! Terry ... please help me.

TERRY:                                 I love you.

She looks at him uncomprehending. And turns away ... he, too must be part of the illness, the dream. She sees the moon daisies.

IMOGEN:                                 (Her voice beginning to slur)  
Those don't belong here ...

TERRY anticipates her faint and catches her as she falls. He takes her through an inner door where there is a pool. He lays her on the rush and flower-strewn floor and begins to undress her.

IMOGEN in the pool ... her head resting on flowers. She is dreamy and relaxed.

IMOGEN:                                 (Voice over)  
Either I'm dead ... or it's a dream ... or I'm ill. (She lifts a flower to her nose) I can Smell!

There is an ominous rumble of thunder.

And I can hear! And I wanted it  
to happen.

IMOGEN: ... I wanted it to happen!

IMOGEN ~~in the bedroom.~~ She is wearing a simple white  
dress and flowers in her hair. She turns as Terry  
enters with a drink in a glass.

IMOGEN: What is it?

TERRY: Midsummer night.

IMOGEN: Is it? So it is ... I'd  
forgotten. No thanks.

He laughs, and drinks some himself. She takes it warily  
and sips.

TERRY: I know you don't like ice.

IMOGEN: Is there anything you don't know?

He does not reply, but clasps her shoulder reassuringly.  
She won't be reassured.

IMOGEN: Terry - what's happening?

TERRY: Trust me.

IMOGEN: I'm too old for that. Why should  
I, why won't you tell me?

TERRY: You may say no.

IMOGEN: Well, ask me.

TERRY: Not yet. I want to show you off.  
You're my girl. Are you?

IMOGEN: I'm dead, aren't I?

TERRY: No. You're alive.

He kisses her.

IMOGEN: (Whispers) Who are you?

TERRY: Call me a travelling man.



He kisses her. She remains under his spell for a long moment. But her mind rebels.

IMOGEN: Why is everyone so young ... is it some sort of sect ... religious thing?

She looks out of the window, where there is bustling activity ... people moving to and fro, chatter and doors banging.

IMOGEN: What are they doing?

TERRY: Questions. They're young.  
They're - preparing.

IMOGEN: But preparing for what? Why are all my things here ... my flowers from the kitchen table ... my books ... my dolls, my shells ... Uncle Norman's puppies ... that's Annie and Chum, I recognise them! What are they all doing here? What do you want me for?

TERRY: There's nothing to be afraid of ... trust me!

IMOGEN: I'm terrified!

TERRY: There's no need ... look, I'm with you.

IMOGEN: But you're part of it, and there's something funny about you ... your eyes are funny and you smell of bark and sort of metal ...

TERRY: (Looking down at her, his face alive with love and approbation) Good ... wonderful ... you have a good brain!

IMOGEN: And what do you want it for ... you've already invaded my mind ... I'm some sort of victim ... do you think I don't know ... why am I wearing all this ... what's it for? WHO'S celebrating WHAT?

She burst into hysterical sobbing.

Look, I'm just an ordinary woman ...  
I have children ... please let me  
go home ...

TERRY: But you wanted it to happen.  
She looks at him, her face tear-stained.

Do you really want to miss all the  
fun? It's the most exciting thing  
that's ever happened.

She gazes at him, licking a tear from her upper lip.

HE drops, kneeling before her and kisses her feet tenderly.  
He looks up at her.

TERRY: Imogen. You're beautiful.

IMOGEN: What do you want?

TERRY: The same as any other man.

IMOGEN: Oh, that's not all! I'm afraid  
you want to hurt me ... do you?

TERRY: No more than I can help.

IMOGEN: That's no answer.

She turns away. She begins to shake with fright.  
He holds her.

TERRY: Imogen ... hold on to yourself.  
Consult your mind.

IMOGEN: (Flares) How can I?

She scoops up the sand and shells and shows him ... hand  
extended.

TERRY: Then trust me.

IMOGEN: (Turning away ... in a low voice)  
I'm not willing. You've told me  
nothing.

TERRY: I can't do more than choose you.  
You must wait.

IMOGEN: You mean you're prepared to let me  
suffer.

TERRY: Perhaps I'm suffering too.

IMOGEN: You? How? What do you suffer?

TERRY: Disappointment.

He looks at her steadily, and her hysteria goes. She braces up.

IMOGEN: What do you want me to do?

TERRY: Just ... be with me ... till we meet the others.

IMOGEN: And then what?

TERRY: It's nearly midnight.

IMOGEN: Don't leave me.

TERRY: Look, I shan't leave your side.

He takes her hand and entwines it in his own. He gestures her to the window.

IMOGEN: I'm still lonely.

He pulls her towards the window. There he kisses her.

TERRY: Do you want it?

He takes out his knife, and slowly cuts off a lock of her hair, on the other side, and tucks it into his trousers. He cannot help a small smile of triumph. She makes to speak but he puts his hand to her mouth.

TERRY: Sssh.

Far off a church clock strikes twelve. In the sky a cigar-shaped object approaches, glowing. It comes closer and closer. There are excited sounds from below. IMOGEN gazes out of the window like a child, clutching Terry, who watches, matter-of-fact.

TERRY: Sostrama, mutko, incraveh, timur, chorateh, rahwi, vintros ...

The light invades the room. IMOGEN screams.

TERRY: (Stern) Stop it ... pull yourself together.

He grasps her firmly and leads her to the door.

TERRY and IMOGEN descend the stairs. The main room is empty ... everyone is outside.

Outside the house TERRY leads IMOGEN towards the field ... people fall back for them.

As they approach the gate the glow lights their faces. IMOGEN'S face shows shock and she falters, but TERRY leads her forward.

In the field the glowing object has come to rest.

IMOGEN, led by TERRY, seems dazed as they approach the object.

Around the object, young people sit on their haunches, their hands clasped in ritual welcome, elbows and hands held close to the body, with the hands clenched ... expressing childlike wonder as much as a greeting.

Suddenly a stream of light descends from the object ... IMOGEN jerks up. TERRY leads her and they ascend this path, followed by the others and disappear into the glow. On the ground Caroline faints, unnoticed.

The door of the spaceship folds in, like the slow-motion pictures of a plant unfolding. A man stands there. He is very beautiful, with the same strange wide eyes. He is young, but mature, with heavy neck muscles and a large bald head. He wears no clothes but is decorated with small patterns on his body and face.

SPACEMEN: Terry! Watcher cock!

TERRY is now supporting IMOGEN, who is very, very frightened.

TERRY: (A happy smile) Safe and sound.

TERRY and IMOGEN pass the threshold, followed by Max and Sara, and the others in an orderly queue. MAX pulls off his wig. He too is bald and obviously one of them.

In the space ship. The young are sitting about on low clouds. There is no apparatus but several low pots of plants, bearing flower or fruit. Several small animals gambol and there is an intricate layout of miniature fountains. There are a number of spacemen and women, and several young space boys and girls ... the latter very well behaved and in attendance on their elders. One spacewoman hands round dishes of long, narrow, three-cornered cigarettes which are smoked through the nostril. One or two of the earth people light up with bravura, having smoked them before. They are self-igniting, with a small popping sound.

CHIEF MARTIAN: (To TERRY, but smiling at IMOGEN with such deep kindness that she responds)  
I see that you have found your specimen. Quite splendid.

IMOGEN: What do you mean?

CHIEF MARTIAN: Hasn't he told you? But you should have done ...

TERRY: There wasn't time.

MAX: We had three other possibilities ... all multipara, one was rather young, one was narrow and the other not too willing.

TERRY: I should very much like permission to use Imogen, if she agrees.

The spacegirl approaches IMOGEN, smiling. She takes IMOGEN'S hand, scrapes with a small object across the palm onto a slide, smiles and goes.

CHIEF MARTIAN: How old are you my dear?

TERRY: Thirty-three.

CHIEF MARTIAN: Any complications during pregnancy?

IMOGEN: No. None at all.

CHIEF MARTIAN: Good. Good.

The spacegirl returns and nods to the CHIEF MARTIAN who smiles at IMOGEN.

CHIEF MARTIAN: It seems you're very fit.  
The projections are excellent.

Everyone smiles at IMOGEN.

IMOGEN: (Slowly) Am I ... reading this?

CHIEF MARTIAN: Yes. We want to breed from you.  
It's a matter of some urgency.

IMOGEN: I couldn't consider it.

CHIEF MARTIAN: Sit down, my dear.

He takes her hand.

CHIEF MARTIAN: You see, you are very fortunate.  
You have been chosen as the mother  
of a new species. We Martians  
have eliminated war, we have  
eliminated want, yet we have  
retained all the vitality and quest  
for adventure enjoyed by earth  
subjects. We are alarmed at the  
radio responses from your planet ...  
sooner or later you may destroy  
Earth and this may have repercussions  
on your neighbours.

CHIEF MARTIAN: We wish you no ill ... we don't  
want to colonise you. What we  
want is to interbreed a Martian  
strain ... to jump forward in  
evolution as it were ... to save  
you from destruction. Surely you  
won't refuse?

IMOGEN: But why me?

A spaceman puts a small disc to IMOGEN'S temple, then hands it to the CHIEF MARTIAN.

CHIEF MARTIAN: Good. You have done well Terry ... an excellent bracycephalic head, plenty of compassion ... well above average intelligence ... a splendid specimen.

IMOGEN: Please....

CHIEF MARTIAN: (To TERRY) Your conjunctions were excellent ... you were bound to make a favourable choice ...

TERRY: Oh I like her enormously, I'm looking forward to copulation.

CHIEF MARTIAN: I see you've arranged for it to be in private.

IMOGEN: What?

CHIEF MARTIAN: Terry has been to enormous trouble to arrange the room for you with the things you like. On Mars we reproduce ex utero, so, of course sex is a social activity ... though we fall in love, just as you do. But a woman may choose to copulate with one specimen and breed, by remote control as it were, from another. It's really much more logical. We have been impressed by your recent behaviour ... since you left your home.

IMOGEN: (Out of face)  
It was very irresponsible.

CHIEF MARTIAN: Not by our standards. We find you truthful and courageous.

IMOGEN: It's all very well ...  
She looks around, at the glowing faces.

IMOGEN: I have my family to consider.  
I can't risk myself.

CHIEF MARTIAN: Oh but the risk is minimal. Normal ingestion period for Martians is six seven earth months ... you must expect birth at any time after that. There is no need to fear complications ... your body will certainly abort a foetus if there is incompatibility, you won't produce a monster. The size of the head will not be appreciably larger than an earth child, although we do advise a Caesarian section.

SARA: Can't you see ... you're the most important woman on Earth! I'd give Anything to be in your shoes!

BEN: (In his quiet way) You can save us.

ROY: Yeah man.

IMOGEN: How do I know that?

CHIEF MARTIAN: Other worlds have destroyed themselves. For the first time, we can intervene.

IMOGEN: What will happen if I produce this child?

CHIEF MARTIAN: When the birth has been successful, we shall announce ourselves to the young everywhere. We shall appeal to them to breed with us. We feel sure that they will respond. They know that real change must be made.

IMOGEN: Why don't you take us over?

CHIEF MARTIAN: But we have no claims. We are not tyrants ... we are not predators ... we are not overcrowded or in want ... we solved these problems a long time ago. We wish to save you from self-destruction, from contamination of space, from aggressive actions which might endanger all life in the universe. The Martian strain will produce a new hybrid, vigorous, beautiful, intelligent.



IMOGEN:                   And bald. (To TERRY) Are you bald?

He puts his hand to his wig.

No, don't take it off ... you're  
strange enough already.

She falls silent.   Then, to the CHIEF MARTIAN.

If I weren't afraid of things going  
wrong ...

She relapses into silence.   Then

I'm sorry ... I can't.  
I don't want to.

All around, faces crumple ... the light goes a little.  
Sara slumps and Max frowns in disappointment.   The space-  
people look sad.

CHIEF MARTIAN:           (Quietly) We shall not insist.  
(To TERRY) I think ... a younger  
specimen. This one has acquired  
channelled responses. She is afraid.

MAX:                    (To IMOGEN) You wouldn't consider  
clinical insemination ... it would  
only take a few moments. Or we  
would implant a fertilised ovum if  
you prefer ...

CHIEF MARTIAN:           Max will remain on earth. He has  
established himself as a medical  
practitioner in London, for this  
purpose ... you would be under his  
care.

IMOGEN wavers.   But her heart fails her.

IMOGEN:                   I'm sorry. I just want to go home.

TERRY moves.   Unobserved by IMOGEN he and the CHIEF  
MARTIAN exchange a glance.   TERRY nods slightly.

CHIEF MARTIAN: (Smiling and jolly) Of course!  
It must all be a terrible shock ...  
I apologise if we have put you in an  
impossible situation, but do stay  
for the party ... our young friends  
have prepared a feast. Is it to be  
... Baked Beans?

The space people light up at this prospect.

SARA: We got your favourite brand!

There is joyous laughter and everyone gets up. The little  
animals play ... the chatter grows. IMOGEN stands,  
anguished and alone. TERRY approaches her ... touches  
her arm.

TERRY: Hullo.

IMOGEN: You weren't straight.

She turns away. TERRY'S mate approaches him.

MATE: You burk, she's too old ... use one  
of the others!

TERRY: (Shakes his head)  
Bad projections, all of them.

MATE: It's a setback.

He moves away. TERRY LOOKS THOUGHTFULLY DETERMINED.

Dancing in the field to the light of flickering fires.  
The Martians and humans clasp each other close, and then  
move apart in slow ritual. One or two couples gaze at  
each other with love.

In the kitchen. Enormous quantities of washing up, the  
platters stacked high. IMOGEN is doing the washing up,  
helped by a small, fattish dark girl. Suddenly TERRY is  
there.

IMOGEN: (Indicating the girl)  
Can't you fix this little Christian  
up with a lion?

TERRY: Certainly.

A spaceman appears and the girl runs off with him, giggling.  
TERRY sits on the edge of the table picking at the food.

IMOGEN: (Working, her back to him) Terry.

TERRY: Yes?

IMOGEN: Stop it.

TERRY: Stop what?

IMOGEN: Trying to get round me.

TERRY: Well, come to that, you're not  
straight either ... you made out  
you liked me.

IMOGEN: I do like you. You know that.

TERRY: Well then.

IMOGEN: (Wheeling on him) In the first  
place I don't trust you ... I don't  
trust any of you ... I've no idea what  
your game is ... in the second I think  
you're all mad and irresponsible, and  
in the third place I'd be shit scared.  
It's bad enough having an ordinary  
child ... you worry that it won't be  
all right ... why don't you use some  
mindless adolescent?

TERRY: Because I wanted you to have it.  
I saw you on the beach ... you gave  
me coffee ... and when the man at the  
bus stop pushed a pound in your hand  
you said "Thanks mush" ... so that he  
wouldn't feel responsible ... that was  
kind. You are kind. I wanted to  
breed ... from you.

IMOGEN is held, then breaks the spell. She picks up her cloth.

IMOGEN: I've got enough kids without a little Martian.

TERRY: Why are you so frivolous? We've told you the future of the world is at stake.

IMOGEN: Perhaps I'm more optimistic than you.

Their gazes lock again.

TERRY: We are working on the baldness thing ... although, I mean, to us you look funny with all that fur on your head.

IMOGEN: Terry, please go away.

TERRY: (Soft) Why?

He begins to move closer. IMOGEN MOVES AWAY.

IMOGEN: Stop making me nervous.

TERRY: I was only going to ask if you'd like a game of chess.

IMOGEN: Chess?

TERRY: Yes.

IMOGEN: All right. I'll play a game of chess with you. (TERRY makes to go) Where are you going?

TERRY: To get the set. It's ... up there.

He goes. Almost immediately there is a thud and a yell, followed by groans. IMOGEN runs to the foot of the stairs.

IMOGEN: Terry ... Terry are you all right?

There is no reply.

Terry!

She runs upstairs. The door of THE room is slightly ajar. From it rolls a chessman. She pauses momentarily and runs into the room.

IMOGEN throws herself through the doorway and stops short.

TERRY, kneeling up on the bed without his clothes. He has taken off his wig.

IMOGEN: (After a long pause)  
You're not painted.

She approaches and looks down at him, contemplating.

TERRY: (Looking up at her) I can't make  
you lose your head, you're too old.  
But you've made men ... So you can  
see ... how beautiful I am.

IMOGEN: Oh I do.

She sits on the bed, her head averted.

TERRY: Don't turn me down.

She turns and lifts her head slowly and looks at him. As he draws close he sees the fear in her eyes. She closes her eyes as he kisses her. Then he pulls away gently.

TERRY: No, you must open your eyes.  
You must like me.

She opens her eyes and looks at him.

He looks at her, his strange eyes coming closer.

She looks at him, close. And now she too has no clothes.

There is a terrific roar and we are below the spacecraft as it lifts slowly. IMOGEN stands, in front of the others, in a long romantic cloak, like something out of Coleridge, waving farewell.

The spacecraft recedes and recedes.

The silent crowd turns away. Max gives IMOGEN an arm. Slowly the young people straggle back to the farm, to their tents and shelters. The fires burn out as the dawn breaks.

On the train, the familiar clickety-click. IMOGEN sways along the corridor. As she walks through an open compartment she passes four men playing cards. One looks up; it is the man she met before. He puts a hand on her arm and whispers.

MAN:                                 Sorry I can't see you today kid ...  
I'm a bit tied up with the boys.

IMOGEN smiles down at him with the overwhelming kindness of the Martians. He is quite dazed.

IMOGEN:                             Oh that's all right.

He leans after her, drawn.

IMOGEN walks up the drive to her house, carrying her bags. She finds her key and walks in. Silence. She walks through, towards the sitting room. JEFF thunders down the stairs and stops at the sight of her, unsure.

JEFF:                                 I thought it might be you.

IMOGEN:                             There was a fast train. Where is everyone?

JEFF:                                 The Baby's with your mother ... the others are swimming. You look marvellous.

She walks through to the terrace. He pauses to pour them both a drink and then follows.

JEFF:                                 Well?

IMOGEN:                             (Takes a drink, then) I slept with a commercial traveller on the train -

JEFF:                                 On the train?

IMOGEN:                             ... on the train ... an Italian waiter ... a man at a bus stop ...

JEFF: At a bus stop ...

IMOGEN: Yes ... and a Martian. The Martian got me pregnant.

JEFF: I see. What about King-Kong?

IMOGEN: Didn't see a sign of him.

She spills her drink slightly and pulls out her handkerchief to mop it up. A drift of sand and the shell fall onto the table. She gazes down for a moment, mesmerised.

IMOGEN: I really meant it about the Martian. Do you mind very much?

JEFF: Isn't it a bit early to tell?

IMOGEN: Oh you know me.

And he grins, giving in, and comes forward and embraces her.

JEFF: What are you going to call it?

They go down the steps together, arm in arm, carrying drinks and talking.

T H E E N D