

MACMILLAN READERS

PRE-INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

Selected Short Stories
by D. H. Lawrence

Retold by Anne Collins

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THE VIRGIN AND THE GIPSY⁹

Lucille and Yvette Saywell were sisters. When Lucille was nine years old and Yvette was seven, a shocking thing happened in their family. Their mother, Cynthia, left their father and ran away with a young, poor man.

The sisters' father, Arthur Saywell, was a vicar¹⁰. He was a handsome man and a good husband. The vicar's neighbours¹¹ were very surprised. Why had the vicar's wife left him?

Lucille and Yvette did not know why their mother had gone away. Perhaps she did not love them. Perhaps they had not been good daughters.

The vicar was offered a job as rector of Papplewick, a small village in the north of England. So the family went to live in the rectory, which stood just outside the village. The rectory was an ugly stone house, with the River Papple running just beside it.

The rector's mother, and his sister Aunt Cissie, came to live with the rector and his two daughters. The rector's mother – or Granny, as the girls called her – was over seventy years old. The rector was very upset that his wife had left. So Granny never spoke about Cynthia to her son. But, secretly, the old woman was pleased that Cynthia had run away. Granny was now the most important person in the house. She controlled everybody else so that they did what she wanted. She liked controlling the family very much. If Cynthia came back, everything would change. And Granny did not want that to happen.

Lucille and Yvette remembered their first home in the south, very clearly. They also remembered their mother. She had been like the sun. She was beautiful and bright, but also dangerous. She had brought light and life to the house, but she had also been selfish.

As Granny grew older, she became almost blind. She could not read and somebody had to lead her about because she could see very little. She did not get out of her bed until midday, but she controlled all the other people in the house.

The rector especially loved his younger daughter, Yvette. Yvette was like her mother in many ways. She was beautiful but careless. The rector spoiled¹² Yvette. And he let her do everything that she wanted. So, as Yvette grew up, she did not care very much about other people's feelings.

The rector's sister, Aunt Cissie, was almost fifty. She spent all her time taking care of Granny. Cissie did not complain¹³, but inside she felt angry. She had no life of her own and no future. She had no time for herself. And she had nothing to look forward to¹⁴. Yvette was young and beautiful. She never tried to understand Aunt Cissie's feelings. So Aunt Cissie was jealous of Yvette and hated her.

When they had finished their education in England, Lucille and Yvette were sent to a school in Switzerland for a year. They returned to the rectory at Papplewick when Lucille was twenty-one and Yvette was nineteen. They were tall, attractive young girls with fresh, bright faces. Their hair was cut short in the modern style.

It was a summer day and Yvette and Lucille were coming back to England. They were crossing the Channel by boat from France. The girls were not looking forward to living at the rectory.

'Papplewick is such a boring place,' said Yvette. 'There are no interesting young men living near the village.'

'Yes, there are!' said Lucille. 'The Framley family lives in the village and Bob Framley is a nice young man. And you know that Gerry Somercotes adores you.'

'But men who adore me are *very* boring,' said Yvette. 'I would like to fall deeply in love.'

'I wouldn't,' said Lucille. 'I would hate to fall in love.'

Perhaps you would hate it too, if it happened.'

'But won't you hate to go back to Papplewick?' said Yvette.

'Not really,' said Lucille. 'But I suppose that we'll get rather bored there. I wish that Daddy would buy a car. We'll have to ride our bicycles everywhere.'

As the ship came closer to the south coast of England, Yvette and Lucille watched the cliffs of Dover. The walls of rock were usually white when the sun shone. But today, the sky was grey and dull, and the cliffs were grey and dull too.

The two girls looked tall and confident¹⁵. But they were just young girls who knew nothing about life. They were like ships that were moving from a safe harbour onto the wide and dangerous sea.

As soon as they went inside the rectory, Lucille and Yvette felt depressed¹⁶. The hard stone walls seemed ugly and unclean. The furniture seemed ugly and unclean too. Nothing was fresh. The food they ate was terrible. Granny was given special things to eat. And grey-faced Aunt Cissie ate very little – only one boiled potato at dinner. She never ate meat. Cissie hated food and eating.

Granny was now over eighty years old. It was easy for her to control her son. When Arthur Saywell's marriage went wrong, he had realized that life outside the family could be difficult and dangerous. Only life inside the family was safe. So he stayed close to the family and his mother – the most important person in the house.

The countryside¹⁷ round the village of Papplewick was dark and dull, with steep hills and deep, narrow valleys. All the houses in the village were made of stone. Life in Papplewick was as dull as stone too.

Lucille got a job in the city as a secretary¹⁸. She travelled to and from the city every day, by train. Both girls helped the poorer people in the village. But Yvette left the rectory whenever she could. Sometimes she had tea with the wives of

men who worked in the factories. She liked talking to the working men. Their world was very different from her own life in the rectory.

The months passed. Yvette went to lots of parties and dances. Sometimes friends came in their cars and took her to the city. But she never seemed to be really happy. At home, she was often angry, and she was rude to Aunt Cissie.

The girls hated inviting their friends to the rectory. There were only four rooms downstairs – the kitchen, the dining-room, the rector's study and the drawing-room. The drawing-room was the only room where a good hot fire was lit. So Granny always sat in the drawing-room. Whenever the girls brought their friends to the rectory, Granny was sitting in the drawing-room. The girls never felt comfortable and they could not relax when Granny was there.

Granny liked meeting people. She wanted to be introduced to all the girls' friends. She wanted to know who the young people were. She wanted to know where they came from and every detail of their lives. When Granny had this information, she took control of the conversation.

One afternoon, Lottie, Ella and Bob Framley – some of Yvette's friends – came to the house. A young man called Leo Wetherell came too. Granny had not met Leo before, so Yvette had to introduce him to her.

'Granny, this is Mr Wetherell.'

'Mr What-did-you-say?' shouted Granny. 'You must excuse me, I'm a little deaf. I can't hear properly.'

She held her hand towards Leo Wetherell and stared at him with her blind old eyes. Leo felt very uncomfortable.

'We want to go on a picnic¹⁹ tomorrow,' said Ella. 'We're going to Bonsall Head, in Leo's car.'

There was a wonderful view from the top of Bonsall Head. From this high hill, you could see across the countryside for miles around.

‘Did you say Bonsall Head?’ asked Granny.

‘Yes.’

There was a silence.

‘Did you say that you were going in a car?’ asked Granny.

‘Yes,’ said Yvette. ‘In Mr Wetherell’s car.’

‘I hope that he’s a good driver,’ said Granny. ‘The road to Bonsall Head is very dangerous.’

‘Leo is a very good driver,’ said Yvette.

‘Not a very good driver?’ said Granny.

‘He is a very good driver!’ shouted Yvette.

Then Aunt Cissie came into the room. Following her was the maid, who brought tea and a plate of little cakes. Several minutes later, Lucille returned from her job in the town. She was very tired and had black marks under her eyes. When she saw all the people in the drawing-room, she gave a little cry of surprise.

‘You’ve never spoken about Mr Wetherell to me, have you, Lucille?’ said Granny.

‘I don’t remember,’ said Lucille.

‘You can’t have talked about him,’ said Granny. ‘I’ve never heard his name before.’

Yvette was eating the little cakes. Without thinking about anyone else, she took another cake from the plate. Aunt Cissie felt very angry with Yvette. She picked up her own plate, which had one small cake on it, and offered it to Yvette.

‘Would you like my cake too?’ she asked in a voice that was polite, but cold with anger.

‘Oh, thanks!’ said Yvette carelessly, taking Aunt Cissie’s cake as well. Now she had two cakes on her plate. Aunt Cissie’s face showed her feelings – feelings of hate. But Yvette did not notice²⁰ that anything was wrong.

Lucille and Yvette felt very tired when their friends left. The conversation between their friends and Granny had been very difficult. Yvette looked at her grandmother.