

Chapter 1 Egypt! An Excellent Destination!

‘Look! That’s *her*! Linnet Ridgeway! She’s got millions,’ said Mr Burnaby, the owner of the local pub.

He and his only customer stared as a beautiful young woman jumped out of a large Rolls Royce and hurried into the post office. Such charming girls were seldom seen in the sleepy town of Malton-under-Wode.

‘She’ll bring money into the town,’ remarked the man at the bar. ‘A bit different from Sir George.’

‘That’s true. He had no luck, especially with the horses.’

‘What did she pay for his house?’

‘About sixty thousand, and she’s going to spend that much on changes to the place.’

‘No! Where did she get all that money from?’

‘From an American grandfather, Leopold Hartz,’ Mr Burnaby informed him. ‘He left millions to his daughter, who married Melhuish Ridgeway. Like a Hollywood film, isn’t it?’

They watched the girl leave the post office and drive off.

‘Money *and* good looks,’ complained the man at the bar. ‘It doesn’t seem fair ...’



‘Darling, I think this place is going to be quite *wonderful!*’

The Hon.* Joanna Southwood was sitting in Linnet Ridgeway’s bedroom at Wode Hall.

‘It’s perfect, isn’t it?’ agreed Linnet.

Her face was enthusiastic and alive. Joanna’s long, clever face and strange eye make-up couldn’t compete with Linnet’s

* Hon.: the Honourable, a title that the children of some English lords and ladies are allowed to use

natural beauty.

Joanna picked up a beautiful string of pearls. 'I suppose these are real, aren't they, Linnet?'

'Of course.'

'Most people can't afford real pearls, my dear. These are *amazing*. What *are* they worth?'

'About fifty thousand.'

'Aren't you afraid of having them stolen?'

'No, I always wear them, and anyway they're insured.'

'Let me wear them until dinner time, will you, darling? It would be so exciting!'

Linnet laughed. 'Of course, if you'd like to.'

Joanna put on the pearls and said, 'I really envy you, Linnet. You've got *everything*: money, beauty, perfect health. You've even got *brains*! When's your twenty-first birthday?'

'Next June. I'll have a big, brilliant party in London.'

'And then are you going to marry Charles Windlesham? The newspapers are so excited about the possibility. His big old house could use your attention. Just think! You could rule both Wode Hall and Charltonbury. And he *is* in love with you.'

'I don't really want to marry anyone yet,' Linnet replied.

A telephone call from Jacqueline de Bellefort, Linnet's oldest friend, interrupted their pleasant conversation.

'Jackie!' Linnet shouted. 'I haven't heard from you for *ages*!'

'Darling, I apologize, but now I want to see you urgently,' her friend said. 'Can I come down?'

'Yes, please! I'd love to show you Wode Hall.'

'Right. If my old car isn't in a bad mood, I'll see you in time for afternoon tea. Goodbye, darling!'

'Jackie and I were at school together in Paris,' Linnet told Joanna. 'Her father ran off and left the family without a penny.'

'Darling,' Joanna said, 'if *my* friends lose their money, I stop seeing them *immediately*! They always want to borrow from me.'