

## **Rickety-Rack**

Peter Thomas was in the middle of doing absolutely nothing. He lived in the basement of a townhouse in Clapham Junction, close to the railway line and the old station. Suddenly there was a broken buzz. He looked up and saw a shape, disguised by darkness, through the glass of the door. The broken buzz, buzzed again.

"Hi, Doreen," he said. A cruel wind was swirling down the outside stairs. "Come on in, quick." It was raining cats and dogs. Icy water spilled from the blocked gutter up on the roof, and fell into a noisy pool beside the doorway. "I wasn't sure you'd come." He closed the door behind her.

"I told you I'd come," she said, taking off her soaked coat with deliberate drama. A single look from Doreen could turn grapes into wine. If she was not the girl of Peter's dreams, she was certainly the girl in his dreams.

"What did David say?" David was Doreen's boyfriend—and Peter's best friend.

"Nothing." She hung up her coat and spread herself deliberately on the couch.

"Do you want a drink? I've got coffee, coffee, or coffee."

"I'm spoiled for choice."

"Come to think of it, I have dilute orange as well."

"I wouldn't mind water."

"Nobody drinks water. Don't you know the average cup of London water's been drank seven-thousand times."

"Is that a touch of Northern snobbery?"

"By the same person!"

"Well I never."

"Never? You have to—sometimes," he suggested, with what might have been a beguiling smile. "Everybody does."

Peter was shuffling between the living room and the adjoining kitchen.

"Now, why the hell am I standing up? Oh yes, a drink. What did you want?"

"Coffee," she smiled.

As Peter filled up the kettle, he looked over the red brick counter, separating the kitchen from the living room, secretly admiring Doreen's bosom. She was looking out of the window, pretending to watch the falling cats and dogs, knowing he would take the opportunity to look.

"Still living like a monk, then?" she asked, turning slowly towards him.

"You have something against monks?"

"No—but I'd like to."

"You're a pervert." They were both laughing, pretending something funny had been said.

"It takes one to know one," she replied.

"Actually you're right. My mind's a treasury of all the depravity known to man."

"Ooh, sounds interesting."

Peter brought in the coffee and sat himself down at the table, where the view was prospective.

"I see you got your best cups out for the occasion," Doreen said, taking a sip from a chipped mug with a worn picture of the Union Jack on its side.

"I always treat my guests well."

"I'll remember that, later on."

"I'm sure you will. So, what happened with David?"

"Nothing. I called him. I said I needed some time on my own."

"And?"

"I said I was coming over here."

Peter Thomas watched as she slurped the drink, losing himself in a world of fantasy. He wanted her, but there was a case of ownership involved. He felt the beginnings of an erection, and wondered where it would end.

She seemed to have been saying something.

". . . there's nothing there."

"Sorry, what did you say? I drifted away."

"Where to?"

"Heaven, I think. Or maybe it was hell; where ever they have the most fun. What was it you said?"

"I said I told him I was staying overnight. I mean, nothing will happen . . . will it?" It was an offer. There was no doubt.

"No it won't. It wouldn't be right—even if it would be fun." She looked towards him, into his eyes.

"You're not laughing. It was a joke. Look, the audience thinks I'm funny." He swept his hand royally about the room, showing the imaginary rows of compact people who were rolling on the floor, convulsed with mirth.

"I see," she lied.

They sat, slurping and talking an endless flow of words.

After a while she asked, "Do you have any shorts I can put on?"

"Ah? I don't think so. I think they're dirty." Doreen had come straight from work, and was still wearing her office clothes. "I'll check," he said. The bedroom was connected to the living room by a large opening, six feet across, in the wall. He rummaged through a cupboard.

"No," he called, "they must be in the wash."

"What about a T-shirt?" There were two. He took a large

baggy one and shoved it behind some socks.

"There's this one," he said, holding it out for her to see, "but it might be tight."

"That's fine," she said. He brought it through and she grabbed it and disappearing into the bathroom.

As Doreen changed, the thoughtful silence was accentuated by the sound of falling cats and dogs, and the distant rattle of a passing train.

"You don't mind if I sit in my knickers, do you?" she said, walking back through the kitchen, towards the living room.

"It depends where you sit." She did not answer. Doreen had taken off her bra and her wonderful firm breasts pushed against the stretched shirt. He tried not to look, but failed. Her nipples were hard, pointing at him, accusing him of something.

"You're not laughing again," he said. "It's a good job my audience is here." And he looked at all their smiling faces.

"Good job," she agreed, spreading herself back on the couch, looking at him steadily.

More slippery words: oily desire wrapped in slick humour. The fantasy was like a train, like a train careering through the big boundless black of night, of open space. Not yet there, not yet real, but sending its rickety-rack touch along the empty track, into the bright blinding electric light station.

Words, words and more words: rickety-rack, rickety-rack and more rickety-rack.

So it was: the evening flashed with sexual static. Fantasy rubbing fantasy, sending sparks flying through the room. Even when Doreen talked about David, everything

revolved around their problems in bed.

"It's late," Peter said, finally. It was 1:30 a.m., as the crow flies.

"Do you want to go to bed?"

"In a bit. Are you sleeping on the couch?"

"Where else?"

"My bed, with me."

"Peter." She said his name like a warning.

"Just to sleep. You really have a dirty mind, you know. I was just thinking, it would be more comfortable than the couch."

"Sure."

"Don't you trust me?" Rickety-rack.

"No. I don't trust me either." Rickety-rack. They looked into each other's eyes and lost themselves in fantasy.

"It's been a strange evening." Peter broke the silence.

"I know. I never meant things to go like this—before I came, I mean. I really didn't." Nothing seemed as clear cut as it should. Nothing seemed totally understandable. Everything blended into everything else. The big boundless black of night, of open space, and the blinding electric light station were fixed together, shackled together by the empty track.

"I'm going to bed," he announced abruptly. "I'll get you some blankets."

The lights were out. The only sound was the sound of falling cats and dogs from outside, splashing into the big puddle. Then the rickety-rack began all over again.

"Are you asleep?" Doreen asked. Looking through the space in the wall, Peter was able to see the shape of Doreen, snuggled up on the couch.

"No. Why?" he answered.

"What are you thinking about?"

"You." He tried to make it sound like a joke, but again only the audience of compact people laughed.

"Sure. Do you want to talk?"

"Not from different rooms. I don't like raising my voice."

"Come in here then," she offered. It was still a game. No, it was like something before a game, and they both insisted the other make the first move.

"I'm naked. You come in here." Hearing the sounds of her arousal, he felt surprised and worried and hopeful. And then she appeared in the space connecting the two rooms, a supernatural vision clothed in darkness. She stood, laughing that laugh as if something funny had been said. From outside, a distant electric street light sneaked in through the bedroom window and drenched her in its silvery waves.

"Get in then." He moved the covers back and she climbed in.

"What now?"

"Talk." Rickety-rack.

The words came out and their bodies moved closer together. If there had ever been any doubt, it now seemed only a question of time before the train would actually arrive in the station.

Peter stroked her back and his erection ached.

"I think you should go back to the couch."

"If it wasn't for David . . ."

"I really want you," he said.

Doreen sat up.

"What are you doing?"

"Going to the couch."

"Why?"

"You just told me."

"Yes but . . ."

"Oh God."

"Oh God."

The wanting seemed like a delicious agony, and their hearts raced and perspiration poured, as if some tremendous exertion were taking place.

She climbed from bed and went back to the couch, leaving Peter feeling at once relieved and frustrated.

Everything seemed mixed up and inexplicable. Suddenly he suspected the train would never arrive. There was a red light on the track, shining; he could almost see it shining. Perhaps some routes were never opened up. Perhaps this red light was permanent. There were millions of tracks, so who decided which would have red lights? At first it seemed like it was himself, but then he knew it was other people. Other people decided. As long as he was tied to other people, there would be red lights.

"You should come back. We'll just sleep."

"You know we won't. I wouldn't be able to resist kissing your back and smelling your skin." Peter lay in silence. Doreen went on, "I'd like to hold you and squeeze you; put my hand around your neck, and stroke you and play with your ears. I'd put my other hand on your chest and move it around slowly, squeezing now and then." She spoke slowly, every word coming from a far off place: that big boundless black of night, of open space.

"Doreen. Don't."

"Don't you like it?" No answer. She went on, "I'd pinch your nipples. Would you like that? I'd pinch them hard and then bite them. Then my hand would move down to your

stomach and I'd keep stroking, slowly. I'd brush up against your cock, but I wouldn't take it. I'd tease you."

"Like now you mean."

"Yes."

"And I'd rub my tits against your chest and you'd feel my hard nipples against you, tickling you, and you'd try to grab hold of them, but I wouldn't let you. I'd go further down, massaging you with my tits all the time, and then push them against your cock. Then I'd grab hold of it. You'd be going mad for it, so I'd grab hold. I'd squeeze it hard and then let go. I'd pull back the covers and go down on you, but I'd only lick it, like a lollipop, holding it straight up with one hand. You'd be moving up and down, trying to get it into my mouth, but you wouldn't. I'd look up at you, into your eyes, and then, and then staring at each other, I'd put it into my mouth. All the way in, sucking hard and watching you watch me.

"What would you do to me?" she asked.

"I'd put my tongue in your ear. I'd bite your neck." They were sharing the same big boundless blackness open space, and the separate rooms were gone. He went on, "Then I'd hold your breasts and push them together and lick both nipples at the same time."

"Oooh yes. And bite them. Bite them and pull me on top of you. I'd open my legs and slip down onto your cock." Doreen wanted to do the talking. She was good at it. She went on, "I'm getting wet just thinking about it. Moving up and down on you, up and down, up and down. I'd lean forward and you could suck on my nipples while we fuck. Up and down, harder and faster." Peter could hear the sound of her breathing, the sound of her moving, touching herself. She went on, "And then you'd cry out and I'd feel you come inside me."

The next morning Peter awoke and heard Doreen stirring.

"Are you awake?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Come in here. We'll talk." Rickety-rack.

"No." She went to the bath room, and when she returned was dressed in her own clothes. She stood in the doorway and they looked intently at each other.

"You're dressed."

"Yes."

"Are you in a hurry to go?"

"No. I just wanted to dress, that's all."

"Come here." She sat on the bed.

"I want you," he said.

"I know."

"No I mean, really. I want to go through the red light."

"What red light?"

"Never mind." He reached out, and with his hand around her neck, pulled her towards him and kissed her open mouthed. Almost immediately, they reached the point of no return. They passed the red light, and felt the intensity of changing dimensions.

The train, puffing and bellowing and steaming and toot toot tooting, came rushing into the bright blinding electric light station. There was something wrong though. The rickety-rack on the track had promised a brilliant and new and clean and shiny engine. But here it actually actually was, an unimpressive collection of used and grimy and paint peeling parts, held together with spit and wishful thinking.